The Railway Man and His Children

Mrs. Oliphant

THE RAILWAY MAN

AND

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HIS CHILDREN

BY

MRS. OLIPHANT

AUTHOR OF "HESTER," ETC.

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THE RAILWAY MAN

AND

HIS CHILDREN

CHAPTER I

THE news that Miss Ferrars was going to marry Mr. Rowland the engineer, ran through the Station like wild-fire, producing a commotion and excitement which had rarely been equalled since the time of the Mutiny. Miss Ferrars! and Mr. Rowland! —it was repeated in every tone of wonder and astonishment, with as many audible notes of admiration and interrogation as would fill a whole page. "Impossible!" people said; "I don't believe it for a moment." "You don't mean to say ——" But when Mrs. Stanhope, who was Miss Ferrars' friend, with whom she had been living, answered calmly that this was indeed what she meant to say, and that she was not very sure whether she was most sorry or glad—most pleased to think that her friend was thus comfortably established in life, or

sorry that she was perhaps stepping a little out of her sphere—there remained nothing for her visitors but a universal gape of amazement, a murmur of deprecation or regret—"Oh, poor Miss Ferrars!" the ladies cried. "A lady, of such a good family, and marrying a man who was certainly not a gentleman." "But he is a very good fellow," the gentlemen said; and one or two of the mothers who were conscious in their hearts, though they did not say anything of the fact, that had he proposed for Edie or Ethel they would have pushed his claims as far as legitimate pressure could go, held their tongues or said little, with a feeling that they had themselves escaped the criticism which was now so freely poured forth. They were aware indeed that it would have come upon them more hotly, for it was they who would have been blamed in the case ot Ethel or Edie, whereas Miss Ferrars was responsible for herself. But the one of them who would have been most guilty, and who indeed had thought a good deal about Mr. Rowland, and considered the question very closely whether she ought not as a matter of duty to endeavour to interest him in her Ethel, whose name was Dorothy, took up the matter most hotly, and declared that she could not imagine how a lady could make up her mind to such a descent. "Not a gentleman: why, he does not even pretend to be a gentleman," said the lady, as if the pretension would have been something in his favour. "He is not a man even of

any education. Oh, I know he can read and write and do figures—all those surveyor men can. Yes, I call him a surveyor—I don't call him an engineer. What was he to begin with? Why, he came out in charge of some machinery or something! None of them have any right to call themselves engineers. I call them all surveyors—working men—that sort of thing! and to think that a woman who really is a lady—"

"Oh, come, Maria, come!" cried her husband, "you are glad enough of the P.W.D. when you have no bigger fish on hand."

"I don't understand what you mean by bigger fish, Colonel Mitchell," said the lady indignantly; but if she did not know, all the rest of the audience did. Matchmaking mothers are very common in fiction, but more rare in actual life, and when one exists she is speedily seen through, and her wiles are generally the amusement of her circle, though the woman remains unconscious of this. And indeed poor Mrs. Mitchell was not so bad as she was supposed to be. She was a great entertainer, getting up parties of all kinds, which was the natural impulse of a fussy but not unkindly personality, delighting to be in the midst of everything; and it is certain that picnics and even dinner parties, much less dances, cannot be managed unless you keep up your supply of young men. There were times when her eagerness to keep up that supply and to assure its regularity was put down quite wrongly to the score of her daughters,

which is an injustice which every hospitable woman with daughters must submit to. A sort of half audible titter went round the little party when Colonel Mitchell, with that cruel satisfaction so often seen in men, gave over his wife to the criticism of society. A man never stands by the women of his family in such circumstances; he deserts them even when he does not, as in this instance, actually betray. There was one young man, however, one of the staff of dancers and picnic men, who was faithful to her—a poor young fellow who knew that he had no chance of being looked upon as a *parti*, and who made a diversion in pure gratitude, a quality greatly lacking among his kind.

"Rowland," he said, "is one of the best fellows in the world. He does not shine perhaps among ladies, but he's good fun when he likes, and a capital companion."

"And Miss Ferrars, dear," said one of the ladies soothingly, "is not like my Ethel or your Dorothy. Poor thing, it is just as well, for she has nobody to look after her: she is, to say the least, old enough to manage matters for herself."

"And to know that such a chance would never come again," said one of the men with a laugh—which is a kind of speech that jars upon women, though they may perhaps say something very like it themselves. But to think of Miss Ferrars making a last clutch of desperation at James Rowland the engineer as at a chance which might never occur again, was too much even for an afternoon company

making a social meal upon a victim, and there was a feeling of compunction and something like guilt when some one whispered almost with awe, "Look! there they are."

The party in question were seated in a verandah in the cool of the day when the sun was out of sight. They had all been gasping in semi-darkness through the heat, and now had come to life again to enjoy a little gossip before entering upon the real business of dining and the amusements of the evening. The ladies sat up in their chairs, and the men put themselves at least in a moral attitude of attention as the two figures went slowly across the square. One feels a little "caught" in spite of one's self by the sudden appearance of a person who has been under discussion at the moment he or she appears. There is a guilty sense that walls have ears; and that a bird of the air may carry the matter. It was a relief to everybody when the pair had passed and were seen no more. They went slowly, for the lady had a couple of little children clinging to her hands.

Miss Ferrars was of an appearance not to be passed over, even though she was quite old enough, as her critic said, to manage matters for herself—so old as to have no prospect of another chance did she reject the one unexpectedly offered to her at present. She was a woman a little more than the ordinary height, and a little less than the ordinary breadth—a slim, tall woman, with a very pliant figure, which when she was young had lent itself to all

kinds of poetical similes. But she was no longer young. She must have been forty at the least, and she was not without the disadvantages that belong to that age. She did not look younger than she was. Her complexion had faded, and her hair had been touched, not to that premature whiteness which softens and beautifies, but to an iron gray, which is apt to give a certain sternness to the face. That there was no sternness about her, it was only necessary to see her attitude with the children, who clung to her and swayed her about, now to one side now to the other, with the restless tyranny peculiar to their age, while still she endeavoured to give her attention and a smile to the middle-aged person by her side, who, truth to tell, was by no means so patient of the children's presence as she was. It was the little boy, who was next to Mr. Rowland, and who kicked his legs and got in the way of his footsteps, that brought that colour of anger to his face, and many exclamations which had to be repressed to his lips. Those dreadful little Stanhopes! Miss Ferrars had been by way of paying a visit to the friend of her childhood, and it was very kind, everybody said, of Mrs. Stanhope to stretch such a point for a friend, and to keep her so long. But there were many who knew very well what Evelyn Ferrars had not said even to herself, that she was the most useful member of the Stanhope household, doing everything for the children, though not a word was said of any such duties as those which had insensibly been thrown upon her. Nobody breathed such a word as

governess in respect to Mrs. Stanhope's friend: but people have eyes, and uncommonly sharp ones sometimes at an Indian Station, and everybody knew perfectly to what that long visit had come.

Mr. Rowland was a man of another order altogether. He was not tall, and he was rather broad—a ruddy, weather-beaten man, much shone upon by the sun, and blown about by all the winds. It was not difficult to see at a glance the difference between the two, which the critics in Colonel Mitchell's verandah had pointed out so fully. He was dressed as well as the gentlemen of the station, and had an air of prosperity and wealth which was not often to be seen in the lean countenances of the soldiers; but he was not like them. He was respectable beyond words, well off, a sensible, responsible man: but he was not what is called a gentleman in common parlance. You may say that he was much better, being a good and upright and honest man; but after all that is but a begging of the question, for he might have been all these things and yet a gentleman, and this would have been in every way of the greatest advantage to him. It would have done him good with the young men under him, and even with the overseers and foremen of his works, as well as with the handful of people who made society in the station. Fortunately, however, he was not himself conscious of this deficiency, or, if he was, accepted it as a matter of fact that did no real harm. He did not, as Mrs. Mitchell said,

even pretend to be a gentleman. As he walked along by the side of the lady who had accepted him as her future husband, a great satisfaction betrayed itself in every look and movement. His face was lighted up with a sort of illumination as he turned it towards her—not the transport of a young man, or the radiance of that love-look which makes the most homely countenance almost beautiful, for he was perhaps beyond the age for such exaltation of sentiment; but a profound satisfaction and content which seemed to breathe out from him, surrounding him with an atmosphere of his own. Perhaps there was not the same expression upon the face of his betrothed. It is true that she was disturbed by the children, who hung upon her, dragging her now in one direction now in another; but at least her face was quietly serene, untroubled—peaceful if not glad.

This was the story of their wooing. Mr. Rowland, though he was not looked upon by the Society of the Station as quite their equal, was yet invited everywhere, dining with everybody: and was treated with the utmost hospitality, so that no one could have suspected that any suspicion as to his worthiness was in the minds of these friendly people whom such a sudden event as this threatened marriage had moved to discussion of the claim to be one of them, which indeed he had never made, but which they had all awarded in that ease of social arrangement which herds together a little masterful alien community

in the midst of that vast continent peopled by races so different. To be an Englishman is of itself in India a social grade, and thus Mr. Rowland the engineer had many opportunities of seeing Mrs. Stanhope's friend, both in Mrs. Stanhope's house and the houses of the other magnates of the Station. He had met her at all the entertainments given, and they were many, and he had almost immediately singled her out, not because of her beauty nor of the dependent position which touches the heart of some men, nor indeed for any reason in particular, except that he did single her out. Such an attraction is its own sole reason and explanation. It was not even choice, but simple destiny, which made him feel that here, by God's grace, was the one woman for him. I do not deny that when this middle-aged and perfectly honest and straightforward man asked her to marry him, Evelyn Ferrars was taken very much by surprise. She opened wide a pair of brown eyes which had not been without note in their day, but which had long ceased to expect any homage, and looked at him as if for the moment she thought him out of his senses. Did he know what he was saying?—did he by any strange chance mean it? She looked at him with scarcely a blush, so great was her surprise, making these inquiries with her startled eyes; and there can be no doubt that her first impulse was to say no. But before she said it a sudden train of thought darted out from her

mind, one crowding after the other, an endless succession of ideas and reflections, presented to her in the twinkling of an eye, as if they had been a line of soldiers on the march. And she paused. He was scarcely aware of the hesitation, and resumed again after that moment of silence, pleading his own cause, very modestly yet very earnestly, with a seriousness and soberness which were much more effectual than greater enthusiasm would have been. But by this time she was scarcely aware what he said; it was her own mind that had come into action, saying to her a hundred things more potent than what he was saying, and changing in a moment all the tenor of her thoughts. Evelyn was not perhaps much more of a free agent than Rowland was in this moment of fate. She felt afterwards that she had been stopped and her attention attracted as by the flash of one of those sun-signals of which she had been hearing. She was altogether in a military atmosphere in the Stanhopes' house, and everybody had been explaining that process by which the sun's rays are made to communicate messages from one distant army to another. She was stopped with the "No" on her lips by the flash and radiation through the air of that message. She had not any code of interpretation to note in a moment what it meant. But she paused, almost to her own astonishment; and when she found her voice, it was to ask for a little time to think before she gave her final reply.

When a woman does this, it is almost invariably the case that she decides for the suitor, even the doubt being, I suppose, a point in his favour, and increasing a disposition—a bias towards him rather than away from him. Evelyn had, like most other Englishwomen, a lively and wholesome feeling that love alone justified marriage, and that any less motive was a desecration of that tremendous tie. It is an excellent thing for a race that this superstition should exist, and I am far from desiring to see any lower ground accepted as the basis of a connection upon which the purity and character of all other affections depend. But yet when reason is allowed time to speak, there are many other things which may be permitted to have a voice, and a woman may at least be allowed to take into consideration at forty arguments which at twenty would be indignantly refused a hearing. What Evelyn Ferrars felt as she retired from that interview which had opened to her so many and such extraordinary new suggestions for thought, it is difficult to describe. She had become all at once a sort of battlefield—to keep up the military simile—in which that "No," which had been her first conception of the situation, stood like a force entrenched and on the defensive, somewhat sullen, holding fast upon the mere fact of its existence, emitting a dull roar of artillery now and then, while the attacking forces scoured the plain in endless evolution, pressing on and on. The first

flash of the sun-signal, which she had not been at first able to interpret, turned out to mean a rapid identification of her own position, which was a thing she had not allowed herself to think of while it was without remedy. It was not what she had anticipated when she ventured in her loneliness to come up country in answer to her friend's warm invitation. She had come out to Calcutta with her brother, the last survivor of her family, after the breaking up of home at her father's death; and when he too died soon after, cut off by the sudden stroke which ends so many promising careers in India, the despair of the solitary woman, left in a strange place with few friends and little money, and nobody to come to her help, had been almost without a gleam of light. And in that emergency the Stanhopes had been very kind. The wife had written imploring her heart-broken friend to come to her, offering her all that the affection of a sister could do to supply her loss; the husband had come, what was even more kind, to do what he could for her, and to take her, if she consented, home. They had been more than kind. There had been no alloy of interested motives in that first impulse of generous compassion. It was good to think how frank, how full, how affectionate it had been.

But—oh, what a pity, what a pity, that these beautiful impulses and sincere moments of loving kindness should ever be shadowed by the cold shade of afterthoughts! From the moment when

Mrs. Stanhope weeping received poor Evelyn into her arms, and lavished upon her the caresses and endearments of the most devoted friendship, to that in which Miss Ferrars became the unpaid governess, the useful dependent, and at the same time a member of the family who was apt to be *de trop*, who was not wanted between husband and wife, who was always there and could not be kept to her school-room and out of the way as an ordinary governess would have been—was unfortunately not very long. And indeed it was nobody's fault. The consciousness that she was getting a great deal out of her friend, and that the tables were more or less turned, and it was Evelyn who was conferring the benefit, did not make it easier to Mrs. Stanhope to keep up the effusion and tenderness of the first welcome: and Captain Stanhope was often cross, troubled by harassments of his own, and wishing his wife's friend anywhere but where she was, notwithstanding the fact that her presence was "everything for the children." The situation had grown more and more strained, but there seemed no issue out of it: for it takes a great deal of money to take your passage from the centre of India to England, even when you know where to go and have your living assured when there. And Evelyn had nothing, neither a house to go to nor enough money for the journey. There were moments when she would have given anything in the world—which is a mere figure of speech, for

she had nothing in the world to give—to be able to go away, and relieve her friends of her inconvenient presence; and there were moments when she felt that she was of too much use in the house to deprive them of her services, as if she grudged the expenditure. It was scarcely possible to imagine a position more painful and trying. It was nothing to her that her whole life was absorbed in the service of her friends and their children. Many women are able to make this kind of sacrifice and to stave off all thoughts of the future and what is to become of them after—with a heroic obedience to the Gospel precept of taking no thought for the morrow. But that was not all. For she was at the same time, as she felt, an inconvenience to the very people for whom she was spending her strength: they wanted her very room for other uses. They did not want her constantly between them spoiling their *tête-à-tête*—always to be considered when there was company, and to be invited with them when they went out. The very children got to know that Aunt Evelyn, as they called her, was *de trop* in the house, and yet could neither go nor be sent away.

And here suddenly was the opening of a door which made all things possible. When that mental heliograph flashed in her face, and she became aware of what it meant, Evelyn, for almost the first time, retired into her room and locked her door, and for a whole hour turned a deaf ear to the demands made upon her. The children came

and called in every tone of impatience, Edith, the eldest, tap-tapping upon the closed door for ten minutes continuously, and little Bobby kicking, to the great derangement of the thoughts going on within; but for the first and only time Evelyn held fast. She had plenty to do in that house, more than ever she had done before in her life. In the previous crisis of that existence it had been other people who had done the thinking, and there had been little left for her but to submit. Now, however, the matter was in her hands, and no one else could help her. It was hard work getting her head clear enough to put this and that together; for the mere idea of marriage was very startling and indeed terrifying to the middle-aged woman who had put it out of all her calculations years ago, and who had retained merely the old youthful superstition that its only warrant was love. But was that really so? After all it was not so simple a thing that it could be thus dismissed and classified. It was a very complicated thing and involved many duties. It was not merely an emotional matter, but one full of practical necessities and exertions. To be a true and helpful companion through all the chances of life: to govern a household: to secure comfort and peace of mind and consolation in all circumstances and occurrences for the partner of life: to care for him and his interests as nobody else could do: to adopt his obligations and help him to serve God and to serve men—Evelyn Ferrars felt that she was capable of

all that. It was a worthy office to fulfil, and it was surely the chief part. As for the other side it was undeniable that she shrank from it a little. But he was not young any more than herself. The hour was scarcely over when Mrs. Stanhope herself appeared at the door, half with the air of a mistress who has a right to all her retainer's time, and half with that of a friend anxious to know what was the matter.

"The children tell me they cannot make you hear," she said. "I came myself to see if you were ill, or if anything is wrong."

"You have come just when I wanted you," said Evelyn, "if I may shut the door on the children for ten minutes more. Helen, something very wonderful has happened, and I have been trying to think what I must do."

"What has happened?" said Mrs. Stanhope in alarm.

"Mr. Rowland has asked me to—to marry him," said Evelyn. She did not blush as women do, even when their feelings are but little stirred. She was too anxious to learn what her friend's verdict would be.

Mrs. Stanhope uttered a cry, and rising up hastily, caught Evelyn in her arms. "Oh," she said, "I shall lose you, Eve!" The words and the embrace were full of compunction, of kindness, and remorse; but Evelyn felt the relief, the thankfulness, that suddenly flooded her friend's breast, and her decision was no longer in any doubt.

CHAPTER II

"MR. ROWLAND," said Evelyn with a little tremor, "the first thing I would like to say to you is that we are neither of us very young."

"Miss Ferrars," said the engineer, "you are just as young as it is best and most beautiful to be."

There came a light like the reflection of a sudden flame over a face which she at least thought to be a faded face. She had never at her youngest and fairest received such a compliment, and how it could have come from a plain man who had so little appearance of any poetry about him was bewildering. It was indeed difficult to resume the middle-aged, matter-of-fact tone after such an unexpected break.

"I am forty-two," she said, "and I have not been without experiences in my life. I want you to know what my past has been, before——"

"Whatever you please to tell me," he said with an air of deep respect—"but I must say it is not necessary. I am quite satisfied; your experiences may have been painful—the world isn't over good

to people like you. If you will give me your companionship for the rest of our lives, that is enough for me, and far more than I can ever deserve. I have had my experiences too—"

"I must tell you, however, my story," she said. Women, especially those who have lived in the virginal age for so long, are very conscientious in these matters. They have a much greater respect for love than ordinary people, and think it dishonourable to keep back the knowledge from a future husband of how they have been affected in this way during their past. The love that may have touched them years before they had even heard his name, seems to their over delicacy as if it must be a drawback to them in his eyes—a really guilty secret of which a clean breast must be made before the new and real history is allowed to begin.

"I was," she said with a little hesitation, "engaged to be married at the usual age. It is a long time ago. My father had not met with any misfortunes then. We were living at home. That makes so great a difference in every way. We were of course well known people, friendly with everybody; everything about us was well known. You know in a county people are acquainted with everything about each other—you can't conceal it when anything happens to you, even if you wished to conceal it."

"I never had anything to do with a county," he said, with a sort of respectful acquiescence, in-

terested but not curious—"but I can understand what you mean."

"Well: when my father speculated and was so unfortunate (it was really more for my sake than for any other reason that he speculated—and then he was drawn on) it became impossible to carry my engagement out. The gentleman I was engaged to was not very well off then. We had to think what was best for both of us. We agreed that it would be best to break it off. I should only have been a sort of mill-stone round his neck. People might have expected him to help papa. And his own means were quite limited then. He had not been supposed a good match for me in my wealthy days—and when the tables were turned in this way, we both thought it was better to part."

"And did the fellow let you go—did he give you up? The wretched cad!" cried James Rowland, adding this violent expression of opinion under his breath.

"You must not speak so, Mr. Rowland; it was a mutual agreement. We both, I need hardly say, felt it very much. I—for a long time. Indeed, it has had an influence upon all my life. Don't think I have regretted it," she said eagerly, "for if we had not done it by mutual agreement as we did, with a sense of the necessity—we should have been forced to do it. For, as it turned out, I could not have left my father. He was very much shattered. It cost him a great deal to give up his home. He had been born there, and all his people before him."

"And you, I suppose, were born there too, and all your people before you?"

"I? Oh! that was nothing! Wherever one is with one's own belongings, there is home. It doesn't matter for anything else. But it was more sad than words can say for poor papa. He had to move into the village to a little house. He bore it like a hero, thinking that it was best not to hide himself as if he had done any wrong. Misfortune and loss are not wrong. I want you," she said gently, having raised her head for that one profession of faith, but dropping into the usual quiet tone again, "to know exactly all about us before——"

"And did you ever see that--man again?"

The adjectives that were implied in the pause James Rowland made before he brought out the word "man" were lost upon Evelyn, who probably could not have imagined anything so forcible, not to say profane.

"Yes," she said quietly, "often. We could not help it, to go anywhere he had to go through our village. He removed very soon, which was the kindest thing he could have done."

"The vile cad!" said James Rowland between his teeth.

"What did you say?" she asked with a startled look: but the engineer did not repeat those words.

"I am sure I for one am very much obliged to him," he said, getting up and walking about the

room. "I'm not the man to object. He did the best thing he could have done for me. And you nursed your poor father till he died ; and then you came from one trouble to another."

"Oh, do not speak of that! My poor Harry—my darling brother! to lose his home and his inheritance, and to be banished away from all he loved ; and then, just when life was beginning to smile a little, to die! I cannot speak of that!"

Mr. Rowland walked about the room more quickly than ever. She had covered her face with her hands, and the hot, heavy tears were falling upon her dress like rain. After many hesitations he came up to her, and put his hand on her shoulder. "Is that so bad," he said, "if we really believe that the other life is the better life? We say so, don't we? and no doubt he's got something better to do there than railroads, and likes it better, now he's there."

She looked up at him startled, though the sentiment was common enough. It is a fine thing to be matter of fact on such a subject, and gives faith a solid reality which is denied to a more poetical view.

"I'm not sorry for him," said Rowland. "I'll hope to know him some day. I've always heard he was a fine fellow, incapable of anything that was—shoddy." Our engineer used very good English often, but now and then he knew nothing so forcible as the jargon which has got so much into all talk nowadays, and is a pitfall for a

partially educated man. "But," he said, pressing his hand upon her shoulder, in a way which perhaps a finer gentleman would not have used to call her attention. "There is this to be said, my dear lady. You've had a great deal of trouble, but if I live you shall have no more. No more if I can help it! As long as James Rowland is to the fore nothing shall get at you, my dear, but over his body."

He said it with fervour and with a momentary gleam as of moisture in his eyes; and she, looking up to him with a certain surprise in hers in which the tears were not dry held out her hand. And thus their bargain was made: with as true emotion, perhaps, as if they had been lovers of twenty rushing into each other's arms. No trouble to get at her but over his body! it was a curious touch of romance and hyperbole in the midst of the matter of fact. And how true it turned out! and how untrue!—as if any one living creature could ever come between another and that fate to which we are born as the sparks fly upwards. But the idea of being thus taken care of, and of some one interposing his body between her and every assailant, was so new to Evelyn that she could not but smile. She was the one that had taken care of everybody and interposed her delicate body between them and fate.

"And now," said he, "it's my turn. I was ready when you began. I've more to say, and less; for nobody has ever done me wrong. I am

a widower to start with. I don't know if you had heard that——"

"Yes—I heard it——"

"That's all right then; you did not get to know me under false pretences. But you must know that I wasn't always what I am now. I am not very much to brag of, you will say now—but I'm a gentleman to what I was," he said, with a little harsh emotional laugh.

"Don't please talk in that way, you offend me," she said; "you must always have been a gentleman, Mr. Rowland, in your heart."

"Do you think you could say Rowland plain out? No? Well, after all it would not be suitable for a lady like you—it's more for men."

"I will say 'James,' if you prefer it," she said with a moment's hesitation.

"Would you? Yes, of course I prefer it—above all things: but don't worry yourself. Well, I was saying—Yes, I've been a married man. She lived for five years. She was as good a little thing as ever lived, an engineer's daughter, just my own class. We worked at the same foundry, he and I. Nothing could be more suitable. Poor Mary! it's so long since: I sometimes ask myself was there ever a Mary? did I ever live like that, getting up in the dark winter mornings, coming home to the clean kitchen and the tidy place, bringing her my week's wages. It's like a story you read in a book, not like me. But I went through it all. She was the best little wife in the

world, keeping everything so nice; and when she had her first baby, what an excitement it was!" The honest, middle-aged engineer fixed his eyes on space and went on with his story, smiling a little to himself, emphasizing it a little by the pressure of Evelyn's hand which he held in his own. Curiously enough, as it seemed to her looking on, not much understanding a man's feelings, wondering at them, he was more or less amused by his recollections. She felt her heart soft for the young wife whose life must have been so short: but he smiled at the far-off, touching, pleasing recollection. "She was a pretty creature," he said, "nice blue eyes, pretty light hair with a curl in it over her forehead." He gave Evelyn's hand another pressure, and looked at her suddenly with a smile. "Not like you," he said.

She had a feeling half of shocked amazement at his lightness: and yet it was so natural. Such a long time ago: a picture in the distance: a story he had read: the little fair curls on her forehead and the clean fireside, and the first baby. He was by no means sure that it had all happened to himself, that he was the man coming in with his fustian suit all grimy, and his week's wages to give to his wife. It was impossible not to smile at that strange condition of affairs with a sort of affectionate spectatorship. Mr. Rowland seemed to remember the young fellow too, who had a curly shock of hair as well, and, when he had washed himself, was a well-looking lad. With what a will

he had hewed down the loaf, and eaten the bacon and consumed his tea—very comfortable, more comfortable perhaps than the well-known engineer ever was at a great dinner. He had his books in a corner, and after Mary had cleared the table, got them out and worked at diagrams and calculations all the evening to the great admiration of his wife. He half wondered, as he told the story, what had become of that promising young man.

"Not like you," he said again, 'but much more suitable. If I had met you in those days, I should have been afraid to speak to you. I would have admired you all the same, my dear, for I always had an eye for a lady, with every respect be it said. But she, you know, poor thing, was just my own kind. Well, well! there's always a doubt in it how much a man is the happier for changing out of his natural born place. But I don't think I should like to go back; and now that you don't seem to mind consorting with one who was only a working man——"

Evelyn was a little confused what to say. She was very much interested in his picture of his past life, but a little disturbed that he too should seem no more than interested, telling it so calmly as if it were the story of another: and she had not the faculty of making pretty speeches or saying that a working man was her ideal and the noblest work of God. So she, on her side, pressed his hand a little to call him out of his dream. "You said—the first baby?"

"Oh, yes, I should have said that at once. There are two of them, poor little things. Oh, they have been very well looked after. I left them with her sister, a good sort of woman, who treats them exactly like her own—which has been a great thing both for them and for me. I was very heart-broken, I assure you, when she died, poor thing. I had always been a dreadful fellow for my books, and the firm saw, I suppose, that I was worth my salt, and made a proposal to me to come out here. There was no Cooper's Hill College or that sort of thing then. We came out, and we pushed our way as we could. It comes gradually, that sort of thing, and I got accustomed to what you call society by degrees, just as I came to the responsibility of these railroads. I could not have ventured to take that upon me once, any more than to have dined at mess. I do both now and never mind. The railroad is an affair of calculation and of keeping your wits about you. So is the other. You just do as other men do, and all goes well."

"But," she said, pressing the question, "I want you to tell me about the children."

"To be sure! there are two of them, a boy and a girl. I have got their photographs somewhere, the boy is the eldest. I'll look them up and show them to you: poor little things! Poor May was very proud of them. But you must make allowance for me. I have been a very busy man, and beyond knowing that they were well, and providing for

them liberally, I have not paid as much attention as perhaps I ought to have done. You see, I was full of distress about her when I left England; and out here a man is out of the way of thinking of that sort of thing, and forgets: well no, I don't mean forgets——"

"I am sure you do not," she said; "but are you not afraid they may have been brought up differently from what you would wish?"

"Oh, dear no," he said cheerfully, "they have been brought up by her sister, poor thing, a very good sort of woman. I am sure their mother herself could not have done better for them than Jean."

"But," said Miss Ferrars, "you are yourself so different, as you were saying, from what you were when you came to India first?"

"Different," he said with a laugh. "I should think so, indeed—oh, very different! Things I never should have dreamt of aspiring to then seem quite natural to me now. You may say different. When I look at you——"

She did not wish him to look at her, at least from this point of view, and it was very difficult to secure his attention to any other subject; which, perhaps, was natural enough. The only thing she could do without too much pertinacity was to ask, which was an innocent question, how long it was since he had come to India first.

"A long time," he said, "a long time. I was only a little over thirty. It was in the year —— seventeen years ago. I am near fifty now."

"Then your son?" she said, with a little hesitation.

"The little fellow? Well, and what of him?"

"He must be nearly twenty now."

He looked at her with an astonished stare for a moment. "Twenty!" he said, as if the idea was beyond his comprehension. Then he repeated with a puzzled countenance, "Twenty! you don't say so! Now that you put it in that light, I suppose he is."

"And your daughter——"

"My little girl—" he rubbed his head in a bewildered way. "You are very particular in your questions. Are you afraid of them? You may be sure I will never let them be a subject of annoyance to you."

"Indeed, you mistake me altogether," said Evelyn. "It will be anything but annoyance. It will be one of the pleasures of my life." She was very sincere by nature, and she did pause a moment before she said pleasures. She was not so sure of that. They had suddenly become her duty, her future occupation, but as to pleasures she was far from certain. Children brought up without any knowledge of their father, in the sphere which he had left so long ago, and which he was so conscious was different, very different from all he was familiar with now. It was curious to hear him enlarge upon the difference, and yet take so little thought of it in this most important particular. Her seriousness moved him at last.

"I see," he said regretfully, "that you think I have been very indifferent to them, very negligent. But what could a man do? I could not have them here, to leave them in the charge of servants. I could not drag them about with me from one province to another. What could I have done? And I knew they were happy at home."

"You must not think I am blaming you. I see all the difficulty, but now—now you will have them with you, will you not, and take them back into your life?"

He looked at her with eyes full of admiration and content. "Is that the first thing you want me to do," he said; "the first thing you have at heart?"

"Yes," she said simply, "and the most natural thing. Your children. What could they be but my first interest? They are old enough—that is one good thing—to come to India without pause."

He rose from her side again and returned to his habitual action of walking about the room. "I knew," he said, "from the first moment, that I was a lucky man indeed to meet with you. I have always been a lucky man; but never so much as when you made up your mind to have me, little as I deserve a woman like you. I've that good in me that I know it when I see it: a good woman from the crown of your head to the sole of your foot. There's nothing in the world so good as that. Now, I'll tell you something, and I hope it will please you, for it's chiefly meant to please you

I am very well off. I can settle something very comfortable on you, and I can provide for the young ones. If it pleases you, my dear, we'll turn our backs on this blazing India altogether, and go home."

"Go home!" she said, with startled eyes.

"You'd like it? A country place in England or Scotland—better still, a house that would be your own—that you could settle in your own way, with all the things that please ladies nowadays. I'll bring you home a cartload of curiosities that will set you up in that way. And then you could have the children, and put them through their facings. Eh, my lady dear? You'd like that? Well, I can afford it," he said with subdued exultation, with his hands in those pockets which metaphorically contained all that heart of man could desire. His eyes glowed with pleasure, with triumph, with a consciousness that he was making her happy. Yes! this was what every English lady banished in India must desire. A house in her own country, with every kind of greenness round, and every comfort within—with beautiful Indian stuffs and carpets, and curious things—and the children to pet and guide as she pleased. He was again the spectator, so to speak, of a picture of life, which rose before him, more beautiful than that of old—himself, indeed, the least lovely part of it, yet not so much amiss for an old fellow who had made all the money, and who could give her everything that could please her, everything her

heart could wish for. His eyes, though they were not in themselves remarkable, grew liquid and lustrous in the pleasure of that thought.

As for Evelyn, she sat startled holding her hands clasped in her lap, with many things beyond the satisfaction he imagined in her eyes. Home in England meant something to her which could never be again. She said somewhat faintly —"In Scotland, if you would please me most of all." At which words, for Rowland was a Scotsman, he came to her in a glow of pleasure and took both her hands and ventured, for the first time, to touch her forehead with his lips. The touch gave this elderly pair a little shock, a surprise, which startled her still more.

CHAPTER III

THOSE two people had both a good deal to think about when they parted.

As for Evelyn, the agitation of telling her own story, and the extraordinary commotion which had been produced in her mind by the suggestion of going home, affected her like an illness. As she escaped from the inroad of the Stanhope children, all much surprised and indignant at being kept out, a thing which had never happened in their experience before, and made her way almost like a fugitive to the seclusion of her own room, she felt all the languor and exhaustion of a patient who had gone through a severe bodily crisis. It was over and she felt no pain—on the contrary, that sensation of relief which is one of the most beatific in nature, had stolen through her relaxed limbs and faintly throbbing head. The ordeal was over, and it had been less terrible than she had feared. The man whom she had consented to marry, and with whose life her own would henceforward be identified, had not

disappointed her, as it was possible he might have done. He was not a perfect man. He had been careless, very careless of those children who ought (she thought) to have been his first care. But otherwise he was true. There was no fictitious show about him, no pretension. He had been, she felt sure, as good a husband to that poor young creature who was dead as any man could be. Poor Mary! her story was so simple, so pretty and full of tenderness as he told it. Evelyn had liked him better for every word. Had she lived!—ah, had she lived! That would have been a different matter altogether. In that case James Rowland would probably have become foreman at the foundry, and remained a highly respectable working man all his life, bringing up his children in the natural way to follow his own footsteps. Would it have been perhaps better so? It would have been more natural, far more free of complications, without any of the difficulties which she could not help foreseeing. These difficulties would be neither few nor small. Two children brought up by their aunt Jane, in an atmosphere strongly shadowed by the foundry, to be suddenly transplanted to a large country house full of luxury and leisure, and the habits of an altogether different life—and not children either but grown up, eighteen and twenty! She drew a long breath, and put her hands together with an involuntary drawing together of her forces. Here was a thing to look forward to! But as for

Rowland himself he had come through that ordeal, which was in one sense a trial of his real mettle, carried on before the most clear-sighted tribunal, before a judge whose look went through and through him though not a word was said to put him on his guard, most satisfactorily, a sound man and true, with his heart in the right place and no falseness about him. It was true that in one respect he was very wrong. He had neglected the children: on this subject there could be no doubt. He had no right to forget that they were growing up, that their homely aunt, who was as good to them as if they were her own, was not all they wanted, though it might have been sufficient when they were little children. Miss Ferrars did not excuse him for this, but she forgave him, which was perhaps better.

She regarded the prospect thus opening before her with a half amused sensation of dismay and horror. Oh, it would be no amusing matter! Her mind took a rapid survey of the situation, and a shiver ran over her. It would be she, probably, who would have to bear the brunt. He perhaps would not remark, as a woman would, though he was their father. "A kick that scarce would move a horse may kill a sound divine." Their defects would probably not be apparent to him, and he would have the strong claim of paternal love to carry him through everything. On the whole, perhaps, it was better that there should be something to do of this strenuous description. It

would keep the too-much well-being in hand. Two people very well off, able to give themselves everything they wanted, contented (more or less) with each other, were apt to fall into a state of existence which was not elevated, especially when they were middle-aged and the glamour of youth and happy love, and all the sentiment of that period did not exist for them. Evelyn looked upon married life with something of the criticism of a woman long unmarried. It was often a selfish life. Selfishness never comes to such a climax as when it is practised by two, in each other's interests, and does not seem to be selfishness at all. When the horizon is limited by the wants and wishes of *us*, it is more subtly and exquisitely bound in, than when the centre is *me*. In such circumstances people are incapable of being ashamed of themselves, while a selfish solitary sometimes is. But the children! that restored the balance. There would be enough to keep a woman in her sober senses, to neutralize the deadening effects of prosperity, in that. As she laid herself down upon her bamboo couch to rest a little, she laughed to herself at the picture of too great quiet, too perfect external well-being that had been in her mind. There would be a few thorns in the pillow—it would not be all repose and tranquillity. She might make her mind easy about that.

The other thing that moved her was the suggestion of going home. Home meant to Evelyn

the county in which she had spent her life, the house in which she had been born. Nothing more likely than that the very dwelling was in the market, that he might buy it—that she, the last Ferrars, might recover possession of the house of her fathers. She had heard something to this effect with that acuteness to catch a half-said inference in respect to anything that is of personal interest which is so remarkable. Had it concerned any property on earth but Langley Ferrars, she would never have caught the words: but because it was about her old home she had heard what two men were saying in the crowd of a Station ball—"A property in Huntingdonshire," "dirt cheap," "last man couldn't keep it up." She had divined from this that her home was to be bought, that it could yet be recovered. "Oh no, no," she cried to herself, covering her face with her hands, "not for anything in the world!" To go back there where she had been a happy girl, where all her dreams of love and happiness had taken place, where the famous oaks and bucks of Selston, which was *his* home, were visible from the windows! Oh no, no—oh no, no: that indeed was more than she could bear. In Scotland it would be another matter. It was no doubt the very thing which a kind man without very fine perceptions would do, to buy back her home for her, to take her there in triumph. A thrill of almost physical terror came over her. "Oh no," she said to herself, "oh no, no, no!" These were the two things that disturbed the

dreamy calm of that sensation of trial over, the kind of moral convalescence in which she found herself. They came through the misty quiet with flashes of alarm. But, on the whole, Evelyn felt as if she had been ill and was getting better, slowly coming round to a world which was changed indeed, and had lost something, but also had gained something—a world with no vague outlines in it or uncertainty, but clearly defined, spread out like a map before her. Perhaps there was something to regret in the old solitude to which her subdued life could retire out of all its troublesome conditions, and be its own mistress. But solitude, though it may be soothing, is not cheerful: and if she relinquished that, there was surely something in the constant companionship of one who had the highest regard for her, thought the very best of her, looked upon all her ways and words with admiration which should make up. He was a good honest man. He rang as true as a silver bell. There was nothing in him to be ashamed of. He was kind and genuine, with right thoughts and no false shame, but for that unaccountable failure about the children—a man as good as any she had met with in all her life. And to say there was no romance about the business, was to say the most foolish, untruthful thing. Why, it was all romance, far more than the girl and boy love-story, where they ran away with each other in defiance of every consideration! Here was a sober man, long accustomed to his own way, and to moving lightly

unimpeded about the earth, a prosaic man, thinking a good deal of the world, who had suddenly turned aside out of his way, to take note of a neglected woman in a corner, and to raise her up over the heads of all the people who had pitied her. She would have been more than woman had she not felt that. To be able to do favours where she had received them, to give help with a liberal hand where she had been compelled to accept it in little, and perhaps with a grudge. Was it not romance that she who had nothing should all at once, in the twinkling of an eye, have much and be rich, when she had been poor? It was in reality as great a romance as if he had been King Cophetua and she the beggar maid—almost more so, for Evelyn Ferrars was not beautiful as the day. She was to her own consciousness faded and old. This was stating the case much too strongly, but it was how a woman such as she was judges herself. If James Rowland was not a romantic lover, who was? He was more romantic than any Prince Charming that ever could be.

Mr. Rowland himself went away from this interview with feelings which were almost in a greater commotion than those of Evelyn. He was excited by going back upon the old life which had died out of his practical mind so completely, and which was to him as a tale that is told—yet which lay there, all the same, an innocent sweet memory deprived of all pain, a story of a young man and a young woman, both of whom had disappeared

under the waves and billows of life—the young man, a well-looking fellow in his way, just as much as the young woman who had died. Mr. Rowland, the great engineer, was not even much like him, that hardheaded young fellow with his books, working out his diagrams on the clean kitchen table, and studying and toiling over his figures. How that fellow pegged away! James Rowland at forty-eight never opened a book. His calculations for practical work came to him as easy as a, b, c. He read his paper and the magazines when he saw them, but as for scientific works, never opened one, and did not think much of theoretical problems. And then the little house that was not far from the foundry, and the little clean bright pretty wife always ready and looking out for her husband, and the baby crying, and the young man coming in in his grimy fustian—it was a pretty picture, a charming story such as brings the tears to the eyes. She died, poor thing—they always have a sad end these little tales of real life. This was how he could not help looking at that story which he had just told, though it was the story of his own life. Now that he thought of it he could have given a great many more details, although he had also forgotten many. It was a pretty story. There were a great many such stories in the world, and when the wife died and the little house fell to pieces, it was not at all unusual that the poor young fellow went to the bad. It was a good thing he had not done so in this case.

And then there came back to him with a shock that strange discovery about the children. Good heavens! to think they were grown up, those little things! The little one was a baby when he had seen her last—his paternal feelings had not been very strongly roused. To put them with their mother's sister and persuade her to take the full charge of them had been evidently far the best thing to do. She was a good sort of woman who had no children of her own, and they were to her as if they had been her own, which was everything that could be desired. To make sure that they wanted for nothing, and that they should have kindness and affection *par-dessus le marché* was everything. Even now he did not see what more he could have done. He could not have brought them to India, where for a long time he had no settled place, and where, as everybody knows, children cannot live. He had done on the whole the very best thing for them. But it was startling to think that they were children of eighteen and twenty. Their aunt had sent him their photographs on various occasions, and he had replied in a way which did not displease her by adding on twenty pounds to his next cheque, and beseeching her to have them better dressed. Queer little things they had looked, not like the children at the Station. He had taken it for granted that Jean had not much taste for dress, but that when she grew up, the little one would change that. They got to know by instinct what was becoming

as they grew up, those little things: so he was easy in his mind on that subject. Perhaps he had not thought of going home till it came suddenly into his mind to please Miss Ferrars. Of course that was what would please her most, to have a home in England. She looked like a home in England. She was not a Station lady, full of picnics and dances. A large peaceful country house with fine trees and a beautiful garden, and a green fragrant park in which she could walk with him, that was what looked most like her: and she should have it! If Mr. Rowland had heard of Langley Ferrars, which was in the market, I know very well what he would have done. He would have telegraphed to his man of business in London, regardless of expense, directing him to lose not a moment in securing that place. It would have been the most natural thing in the world for him to do. When a man is rich, a man of James Rowland's mind giving presents is his easiest way of showing his kindly feelings—and it is not a bad way. And all the explanations in the world would never have got it into his kind head that she would not have liked such a present as that. Her own home restored to her, where she could live at ease, not poorly as her ruined father, poor gentleman, had been compelled to do—but lavishly if she liked, carrying things with a high hand, showing all the neighbours, who perhaps had looked down upon her in her poverty, how well she had done for herself. There was nothing which would have pleased James Rowland

more than this. But fortunately he never had heard that Langley Ferrars was in the market. He was not even aware indeed at this early period where his future wife had lived, or what the name of her home had been.

But she had said Scotland, which would be the best of all: and then suddenly had appeared before his eyes a vision of a house which he had often looked at when he went down the Clyde upon a holiday, or when there was some work at Greenock which he was entrusted with, as sometimes happened. Who can tell what visions of this kind steal into the brains of the working men in their noisy excursions, or the foundry lads with their sweethearts? Oftenest it is a cottage, perhaps a little cockney villa on the edge of a loch. "I'd like to tak' ye there," said with glowing eyes and all the ardour of youthful dreams: or, "Eh, man, if there was a bit housie like yon ahint ye, to gang back to when ye were past work,"—such speeches are common in the mouths of the excursionists, who live and die, and are contented enough, in the high "lands" and common stairs of the huge dull town. But James Rowland had been more ambitious What he had remarked most had been a house with a white colonnade round it, standing up on a green knoll at the end of a peninsula which overlooked the Clyde. There was one special spot from which he remembered to have watched for it, through the opening in the trees, not saying anything to any one, not even to Mary, but watching

till it became visible—not a villa, nor a cottage, but a great house, with beautiful woods round it, and soft green lawns sloping downwards towards the noble river-sea, which just there flowed out into the opening of a loch. It suddenly came before him in a moment while he walked through the cantonments towards his own lodging in the arid *enceinte* of the Station. Such a contrast! He felt as if he were again standing on the deck of the river steamboat, watching for the white walls, the pillars of the colonnade, as they appeared through the trees. He knew exactly at what moment the trees would stand aside, ranged into groups and lines, and the house would come into sight. He thought that if he had been blind, he would yet have known exactly when that opening came.

That was the place for him! His heart gave a leap, almost as it had done when Evelyn Ferrars had given him her hand. It was the next thing almost—the fulfilment of a dream older by far than his knowledge of Evelyn Ferrars. Rosmore! To think that he should come to that; that it should be possible for him, the lad who had watched it so often coming in sight, to call it his own! But it was not yet sure by any means whether he would ever call it his own. He was rich enough to buy it, to improve it, to fit it up as it never had been fitted up before, but whether he would get it or not, remained still to be seen. The owner would have to be tempted with a fancy price, more money than it was worth or could bring: for the owner was a

great personage, a man who was not to be supposed ready to offer one of his places to a chance buyer. Rowland did not mind the fancy price, and he enjoyed the thought of the diplomacy that would be required, and all the advances and retirings. It would be a home fit for *her*. She would bring the best people round her wherever she was. It should be hers, that home of his dreams, settled on her—her dower house—when he was out of the way: but he did not wish to think of being out of the way. He preferred to think of happiness and dignity and rest in that stately yet modest place, not too grand, quite simple indeed, not like the castellated absurdities of the Glasgow merchants. Among houses, it was like *her* among women, the most unpretending, the most sincere, everyway the best!

And, then, with a sudden prick of his heart, he remembered the children. Oh, the children! To think that they could be so old as *that*, and that it had remained for her to find it out! Twenty! It was not possible little Archie could be that age. What a little chubby fellow he was, with a face as round as an apple, and little rosy cheeks—so like Mary, her very image. It had always been pleasanter to think of him like that, than to identify the little scrubby boy in the photographs poor Jean kept sending; or the lean lad who, he now remembered, had appeared on the last one. He had torn it up, as certainly a libel on his son, not at all the kind of picture which he could have

wished to set up on his chimney-piece, and point out complacently to visitors as "my boy." He remembered this incident of the photograph perfectly now, and that he refused angrily to accept that as a portrait of Archie. "The photograph you sent me was a mistake, I suppose," he had written to his sister-in-law; "it is quite impossible it could be my boy;" and he forgot what explanation she made. He was not, indeed, very attentive to her letters. He glanced at them to see that the children were well, but he had seldom patience to read all the four pages. Jean's style and her handwriting, and the very look of her letters had been vexatious to him for many years past. They suggested having been written on a kitchen table with a pen that was greasy. The very outside of them coming in the bag along with his business letters and his invitations gave Rowland a little shock. He preferred that other people should not see him receive these queer missives, the very envelopes of which looked common, not like the others. Now it occurred to him, with a pang, that it was no mistake, that the unwashed-looking lad, with the vulgar, ill-cut clothes was probably his son after all. The idea was horrible to him, but he was glad for one thing that he had torn the photograph up, and could not be made to produce it to show Evelyn what manner of youth Archie was—if he was like that! And then the baby, whom he had always thought of as the baby, with all the tenderness that belonged to the name. Tenderness!

but something else as well—indifference, forgetfulness—or he could never have been so blind, and suffered them to grow up like that. It was a very tormenting and uncomfortable thought, and Rowland was anxious to shake it off. He said to himself that photographs never do justice to the subject; that perhaps the boy might be a fine boy for all that: and finally contrived to elude the whole disagreeable subject by saying to himself how clever it was of her to have made that out about their age! What a clever woman she was; not learned, or that sort of thing, but knowing so much, and so perfect in her manner, and such a true native-born lady. This was her grand quality above all. She said just the right thing, at the right time, never compromising any one, hurting nobody's feelings. He was himself rather given to treading on people's toes, and making afterwards the astonishing discovery that they felt it, even though he had meant no harm. But she never did anything like that. She would know how to manage that business about the children, and he had a happy persuasion that everything would go right in her hands.

CHAPTER IV

AFTER all this record of thinkings it will be a relief to do something: which is generally the very best way, if not to settle a problem, at least to distract the attention from it. Mr. Rowland could not now do anything to alter the fact, that he had allowed his children to grow up in a different sphere from that which he intended them to occupy, and that probably the first meeting with them would contain many disenchantments and disappointments. No amount of thinking could now alter this fact, and dwelling upon it was not a way of making himself happier or adding in any way to the advantages of the moment. Like most men who have a great deal to do, and who must keep their brains clear for inevitable work, he had the power of putting disagreeable things away and declining to look at them. "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," is always the maxim of philosophy, whether we take it in its highest meaning or in a lower sense; and it appeared to Mr. Rowland that the best thing he could do was

to carry out his marriage with all the speed that was practicable, and to wind up his affairs (already prepared for that end) so that his return home might be accomplished as soon, and with as much pleasure to everybody concerned, as possible. As he was a very direct man, used to acting in the most straightforward way, his first step was to call on Mrs. Stanhope, who stood in the place of Evelyn's relations, in order to settle with her the arrangements he wished to make.

"I should like, with Miss Ferrars's consent—which I have not asked till I should have talked over the matter with you—that the marriage should take place as soon as possible. I can trust to her excellent sense to perceive that we can have no possible reason to wait."

"Oh, Mr. Rowland!" said Mrs. Stanhope. "Of course it is quite reasonable on your part: but I don't think that Evelyn would like it to be hurried. It is not as if you might be ordered off at a moment's notice, like us poor military people. There is no reason to wait of course; but you can afford to take your time." She said this more from the natural feminine impulse of holding back in such matters, and not allowing her friend to be held cheap, than from any other reason.

"If you mean that you want some time to fill Miss Ferrars's place——"

"Mr. Rowland!" said Mrs. Stanhope again, this time with great indignation, "what do you mean by Miss Ferrars's place? I have known

Evelyn all my life, and she is my dearest friend. Do you think I could fill up her place if I were to try?—and I certainly don't mean to try."

"I meant, of course, in respect to your children," said Mr. Rowland dryly. "You may do without your dearest friend by making an effort; but you can't do without a governess. Excuse me, I am a plain man, and call a spade, a spade."

This brutality of expression reduced Mrs. Stanhope to tears. "I have never treated her like a governess," she said. "If Evelyn's good heart made her help with the children, it was not my asking, it was her own idea. She did it because she liked it. I implored her not to take them out, feeling that you might imagine something of that sort. Men like you, Mr. Rowland, who have made a great deal of money, always, if you will excuse me, impute interested motives. I foresaw as much as that."

"Yes," he said cheerfully, "we are given to think of the money value of things. Not of friendship, you know, and all that, but of time and work, and so forth. We needn't enter into that question, for I'm sure we understand each other. And I don't want to put you to inconvenience. How much time will it take you to fill Miss Ferrars's place?"

Mrs. Stanhope was a clever little woman. She thought for a moment, in natural exasperation, of dismissing him summarily, and refusing to have anything to say to a man who had treated her so;

and then she thought she would not do that. He was rich—he might be useful some time or other to the children ; it would be foolish to make a breach with a friend who would remember nothing but the best of her (she did Evelyn this justice), and who would be kind to the children when they went home, and invite them for their holidays. So she subdued the natural anger that was almost on her lips, and gave vent to a harsh little laugh instead.

"You do always take such a prosaic view, and reduce everything to matter of fact," she said. "I can't afford to have any one in Evelyn's place, if you desire to speak of it so. Evelyn has helped me with the children for love—I must do the best I can for them by myself when you take her away."

"Ah well," said Mr. Rowland, "then it is a real sacrifice, and you will suffer. I dare say you have a great deal to do. Would not little Molly Price be a help to you? She is a nice little girl, and she has nobody belonging to her, and I don't know what the poor little thing is to do."

Mrs. Stanhope made a pause before she replied, looking all the time keenly in the engineer's face as if she would have read his meaning in that way. But he was impassible as a wooden image. "Molly Price is a very nice little girl," she said slowly, trying all the time to make out what he meant, "and she would be of use, though far different from Evelyn. But how could I take up

a girl like that, without any means of providing for her? I had thought of it," Mrs. Stanhope admitted, "but to take up her time just when she might be doing better for herself, and to give her false expectations as to what I could do for her—when it only can be for a few years, till we send the children home."

"I see," said Mr. Rowland; "but the fact is that Molly has a little income of her own, and all she wants is a home."

"A little income of her own!"

"Yes," he said, meeting with the most impenetrable look the lady's eager scrutiny. "Did you not know? enough to pay for her board if necessary. She only wants a home."

"I don't know what you can think of me," said Mrs. Stanhope with a little haste. "I should never ask her for any board. She would have her share of whatever was going; and of course if she liked to help me with the children's lessons—"

"You would allow her to do it, without any compensation? Don't explain, my dear lady—I know the situation perfectly. And in return for that little arrangement you will help me in getting Evelyn to consent to a speedy marriage. As soon as we understand each other, everything will be perfectly straight."

"You are such a dreadful man of business. I am not accustomed to such summary ways," said Mrs. Stanhope, with again a half hysterical laugh.

She was very much afraid of him after this experience. No doubt everybody in the Station had seen through her actions so far as Evelyn Ferrars was concerned, attributing design and motive where none had existed, and not making any allowances for the unconscious, or only half conscious way in which she was led into taking an advantage of her friend. But nobody had ever ventured to put it into words. She was over-awed by the clear sight and the courage, and also a little by the practical help of this downright man.

"Yes," he said, "I'm nothing if not a man of business. Well now, there is another matter. I want it to be a very grand affair."

She looked at him with eyes more wide open than ever, and with perceptions more fine than his, and a little gasp of restrained horror in the thought—what would Evelyn say?—Evelyn who hoped it would be got over so quietly, that it might not be necessary to let people know: as if everything was not known from one end to another of the Station almost before it was fully shaped in the brain from which it came!

"Yes," he said, "I see you're horrified—and, probably, so would Miss Ferrars be: so I want you to take the responsibility of everything, and put it on the ground of your gratitude to her, which must take some shape. I need not add, Mrs. Stanhope, if you will do this for me, that a cheque is at once at your disposal—to any amount you may think necessary."

Anger, humiliation, injured pride, a quick perception of advantage, a rapid gleam of pleasure, the thrill of delightful excitement at the thought of a great deal of money to spend, all darted through Mrs. Stanhope's mind, and glittered in her eager eyes. The disagreeable sentiments finally died away in the others which were more rational. To have the ordering of a great entertainment regardless of expense, and everybody at her feet, the providers of the same, and the guests, and indeed the whole community eager either for commissions or invitations! This was a temptation more than any woman could resist.

"Mr. Rowland," she said, "you are a very extraordinary man. But I must warn you that Evelyn will not like it, and she knows that we cannot afford it. Oh, I will try, if you have set your heart upon it, and just say as little to her as possible. I suppose something like what Mrs. Fawcett had when Bertha was married? And you must give me a list of all the people you want to invite."

"The Fawcetts' was a very humdrum affair," said Rowland critically, "quite an ordinary business. We must do a great deal better than that. And as for the invitations, ask everybody—beginning with the Governor. He'll be at Cumsalla about that time, and it will be a fine opportunity for him to visit the Station in a semi-official way; and the General commanding, and the Head of the district, and—"

"The Governor and the General!" Mrs.

Stanhope gasped. She lay back in her chair in a half-fainting condition, yet with a keen conviction running through her mind like the flash of a gold thread, that to receive all these people in his own house, at a magnificent entertainment, would be such a chance as never could have been anticipated for Fred!

"*Carte blanche*," said Mr. Rowland, pressing in his enthusiasm her limp and hesitating hand.

Evelyn Ferrars came in a moment after with the children. She gave a smile to her future husband, and a glance of surprise at her friend, who had not yet recovered from that shock of emotion. "What are you plotting?" she said: but did not mean it, though it was so near their real occupation. As for Mr. Rowland he was equal to the occasion, his faculties being so stirred up and quickened by the emergency that he was as clear about it as if it had been a railway or a canal.

"We are plotting against you," he said, "and I think I have got Mrs. Stanhope to enter into my cause."

She looked from one to another with a little rising colour, divining what the subject would be. For once in her life Mrs. Stanhope was the dull one, not understanding her ally's change of front. She thought he was about to betray the conspiracy into which he had just seduced her, and that Evelyn's dislike and opposition would put an end to the delightful commotions of the marriage

feast. "Oh," she cried, "don't tell her. She will never consent."

"She is so very reasonable that I hope she will consent," said Rowland. "My dear, it is just this, that there is no reason in the world why we should wait. I would like to be married as soon as the arrangements can be made. I think you won't refuse to see all the arguments in favour of this: and that there are very few against it."

Evelyn grew red and then grew pale, and finally with a little catch in her breath asked how long that would be.

"About three weeks," said Rowland, holding her hand and patting it as if to soothe a child.

Her limbs trembled a little under her, and she sat down in the nearest chair. "It is a little sudden," she said.

"My dear——let's get it over," said Rowland, his excitement showing through his usual sobriety like a face through a veil. "It's a great change, but it is the first that is the worst. You and I, as soon as we're together, will settle down into each other's ways, and be very happy. I know *I* shall, and some of it 'll rub off upon you. There's nothing in the world you can wish for that I sha'n't be ready to do. It is only the first step that will be a trouble. Let's get it over," he cried, with a quiver in his voice.

This is not the usual way in which a man speaks

to his bride of their marriage, but it is a very true way if people would be more sincere. And especially in the circumstances in which he and she stood, not young either of them, and taking fully into consideration all the mingled motives that go to make a satisfactory union of two lives. Mrs. Stanhope, to whom the conventional was everything, listened in horror, wondering how Evelyn would take this; but Evelyn took it very well, agreeing in it, and seeing the good sense of what her betrothed said. It was the first step that would be the worst. After that habit would come in and make them natural to each other. And to get over that first step, and to settle down quietly to the mutual companionship in which she too felt there was every prospect of satisfaction and content, would no doubt be a good thing. It was somewhat overwhelming to look forward to such a tremendous change so soon. But she agreed silently that there was no reason for delay, and that all he said was perfectly reasonable. "I cannot say anything against it," she said quietly. "I have no doubt you are right. It seems a little sudden. I could have wished a little more time."

"To think of it?" he said quietly. "Yes, my dear, if you had not made up your mind, that would be quite reasonable. But you have quite made up your mind."

"Yes," she said, "I have made up my mind."

"Then thinking of it is no longer of any use—because it is in reality done, and there's no way

out of it. So the best thing is to carry the plan into execution, and think no more. Come," said Rowland, with an air of great complaisance, " I'll yield a little. I'll say a month—that will leave quite time enough for everything," he said, with a glance at Mrs. Stanhope, to which she replied with a slight, scarcely perceptible nod of the head. And then it was all arranged, without difficulty and without any knowledge on Miss Ferrars' part of the negotiations that had gone on before. Evelyn was much overwhelmed by the present her friend insisted upon making her, of her wedding dress, which turned out to be of the richest satin, and trimmed with the most beautiful lace, to the consternation of the bride, who remonstrated strongly. " How could you think of spending so much money? It is robbing the children—and it is far too grand for me." " My dear," said Mrs. Stanhope, the little hypocrite, " if you think how much you have done for the children, and saved me loads of money! I can afford that and more too out of what I have saved through you." Evelyn was confounded by this generosity, both of gift and speech; but as the dress did not arrive until the day before the ceremony, there was not much time to think about it, and her mind was naturally full of many subjects more important. The same cause kept her even from remarking the extraordinary fuss in the Station on the wedding day—the flags flying, the carpets that were put down for the bride's procession, the decorations of

the chapel. She scarcely saw them indeed, her mind being otherwise taken up. And when the Governor was brought up to her to be introduced, and the General followed him, both with an air of being royal princes at the least, amid the obsequious court of officers, Evelyn was easily persuaded that it was because they had chosen this day to make their inspection, and that their presence at the Station was quite natural. "How fortunate for you that they are both here together," she said to Mrs. Stanhope. "Now surely Fred will get what you want so much for him." "Oh, he will get it, he will get it!" Mrs. Stanhope cried, hysterically. "Thanks to you, you darling, thanks to you!" "What have I to do with it?" said Evelyn. She was now Mrs. Rowland, and her mind was full of many things. It was a nuisance to have so many people about, all drawn, she supposed, in the train of the great men. As for the great men themselves, they were, of course, like any other gentlemen to Evelyn: they did not excite her by their greatness. She was a little surprised by all the splendour, the sumptuous table, the crowd of people; but took it for granted that one half at least was accidental, and that though it was quite unappropriate to an occasion so serious as a middle-aged marriage, it might be good for Fred Stanhope, who had so long been after an appointment, which always eluded his grasp.

Thus the bride accepted, without knowing it,

the extraordinary honours that were done her, while all the Station stood amazed by the number and greatness of the guests. The Lieutenant-Governor came without a murmur to compliment the great engineer. He would not have done it for Fred Stanhope, who was Brevet-Major, and thought himself a much greater man than Rowland. Neither would the General commanding have come to Fred unless he had known him in private, or had some special interest in him. But they all collected to the wedding of the man who had made the railroads and ditches—a proof, the military people thought, how abominably they were neglected by Government, though it could not sustain itself without them, not for a day! They were, however, all of them deeply impressed by the greatness that had come upon Miss Ferrars, whom they had pitied and patronized, or even snubbed during her humiliation—by the splendour of her dress, and of the breakfast, and of the bridegroom's presents to her—and still more by the manner in which she received the congratulations of the big wigs without the least excitement, as if she had been all her life in the habit of entertaining the great ones of the earth. "Give you my word," said the little subaltern Bremner, who was an ugly little fellow, and had not much to recommend him, "she was not a bit more civil to the best of them than she was to me." "Looked as if she had been used to nothing but swells all her life," said another. "And as if

she thought one just as good as another." On the whole, it was this that struck the company, especially the gentlemen, most—that she was just as civil to a little lieutenant as she was to the General commanding. The ladies had other things to distract their minds, the jewels, the bridal dress, the table. Such a commotion had never been made in the Station before by any marriage: the Colonel's daughter's wedding feast was nothing in comparison: and that this should all be for the poor lady who had been nothing more than nursery governess to the Stanhopes, was quite bewildering. When the pair went away, the whole Station turned out. It was, of course, quite late when they started, as they were only going as far as Cumsalla. The Station was lit with coloured lamps, which blazed softly in the evening dusk, turning that oasis in the sand into a magical place. And the big moon got up with a bound into the sky, as she sometimes does when at the full, thrusting her large round lustrous face into the centre of all, as if to see what it meant. "By Jove! she's come out to look at you too," said the bridegroom to his bride. He was considerably excited, as was but natural—enchanted with the success of all his plans, and the *éclat* of the whole performance. It was altogether a trying moment—for perhaps something of a vulgar fibre in the man was betrayed by his eagerness that it should be "a grand affair," and his delight in its success.

But fortunately Evelyn was not in possession of

her usual clear-sightedness, and she was still of opinion that the presence of the great people had been accidental, and the extraordinary sumptuousness of all the preparations a piece of loving extravagance on the part of the Stanhopes, which should not, if she could help it, go without its reward. "I hope," she said, "the moon is loyal, and means it as a demonstration for the Lieutenant-Governor, as all these rejoicings have been already to-day."

"Not a bit of it," said Rowland; "all the demonstrations have been for you. The Governor and the General were only my—I mean, Fred Stanhope's guests."

Evelyn thought her husband must have had too much champagne; but she would not let this vex her or disturb her, seeing that it was so great an occasion. She calmed him with her soothing voice, and did not show the faint movement of fright and alarm that was in her breast.

"I am very glad they were there, anyhow," she said, "for Fred's sake. I hope he will get that appointment now. It was a fortunate chance for him."

"It was no chance at all," said Rowland, half piqued at her obtuseness. "I dare say it will be good for him as well: but it was all to do honour to you, my dear. I was determined that you should have all the honour and glory a bride could have. These swells came for you, and all that is for you, the illuminations, and everything. But

when I saw you among them, Evelyn, I just said —how superior you were to everything of the sort. Talk about women's heads being turned! You went from one place to another, and looked down upon it all like a queen."

"Hush! hush!" she said; "indeed I did not look down upon anything. I did not think of it. I am very different from a queen. I am setting out upon a great voyage, and my mind is too full of that to think of swells, as you call them. You are the swell that occupies me most."

"You are *my* queen," said Rowland in his pride and delight, "and I am not good enough to tie your shoe: for I've been thinking of a great flash to dazzle them all, while you were thinking of— look back, there's the bouquet going off! nobody in this presidency has seen such fireworks as they've got there to-night. I wanted every black baby of them all to remember the day of Miss Ferrars's wedding. And now when I look at you, I'm ashamed of it all, to think such folly as that should be any honour to you!"

These devoted sentiments, however, were not the prevalent feeling at the Station, where there was a ball after the fireworks with everything of the most costly and splendid description, and where the healths of the bride and bridegroom were drunk with acclamations in far too excellent champagne. The ladies who had daughters looked out contemptuously over the heads of the subalterns to see if there was not another railway

man in the background who would give a similar triumph to one of their girls. But young railway men are not any more satisfactory than young soldiers, and there was not another James Rowland far or near. When it was all over, Helen Stanhope rushed into her husband's arms with tears of joy, "You have got it, Fred," she said, "you have got it! and it's all on account of that kind thought you had (for it was your thought) when you went and fetched Evelyn Ferrars home out of her misery. It's brought a blessing as I knew it would."

Fred pulled his long moustache, and was not very ready in his reply. "I wish we hadn't got so tired of it, Nelly. It might be a kind thought at the first, but neither you nor I kept up to the start. God Almighty didn't owe us much for that."

"Oh, don't be profane," cried his wife, "taking God's name in vain! She didn't think so. What would she have done without us? And it's all thanks to her that we have got it at last."

CHAPTER V

ROWLAND was able to carry out the programme which he had made for himself. He was a man to whom pieces of what is called luck are apt to come. Luck goes rather against the more serious claims of deserving, and is a thing which many of us would like to ignore—but it is hard to believe there is not something in it. One man who is just as worthy as another gets little that he wants, while his neighbour gets much ; one who is just as unworthy as another gets all the blows while his fellow sinner escapes. Mr. Rowland had always been a lucky man. The things he desired seemed to drop into his mouth. That white house on the peninsula looking down upon the Clyde, with its noble groups of trees, its fine woods behind, its lochs and inlets, and the great noble estuary at its foot, proved as soon as he set his heart upon it procurable. Had you or I wanted it, it would have been hopeless. Even he, though his luck was so great and he possessed that golden key which opens so many doors, was not able to move the noble proprietor to a sale: but he was

permitted to rent it upon a long lease which was almost as satisfactory. "I should have preferred to buy it outright and settle it upon you, Evelyn," he said to his wife as they sat at breakfast in their London hotel, and he read aloud the lawyer's letter about this coveted dwelling. "But when one comes to think of it, you might not care for a big house in Scotland after I am out of the way. It was to please me, I know, that you fixed on Scotland first. And then you might find it a trouble to keep up if you were alone."

"There is no occasion for thinking what I should do when I am alone, thank heaven," said Mrs. Rowland; "there is little likelihood of that."

"We must be prepared for everything," he said with a beaming face, which showed how little the possibility weighed upon him.

"However, perhaps it is just as well. Now, my dear, I will tell you what I am going to do. I am going up to the north to see after it all. You shall stay comfortably here and see the pictures and that sort of thing, and I shall run up and prepare everything for you, settle about Rosmore on the longest term I can get, look after the furniture a bit: well—I should like, you know, to look after the children a bit, too."

"To be sure you would," she said cheerfully. "You know I wanted you to have them here to meet us; but I understand very well, my dear James that you would rather have your first day with them alone."

"It's not that," he said rising and marching about the room—"it's not that. I'd rather see you with them, and taking to them than anything else in the world—but—perhaps I'd better go first and see how the land lies. You don't mind my leaving you—for a few days?" He said this with a sort of timid air which sat strangely on the otherwise self-confident and consciously fortunate man, so evidently inviting an expression of regret, that Evelyn could scarcely restrain a smile.

"I do mind very much," she said: and he was so genial, so kind, even so amusing in his simplicity, that it was strictly true. "I don't like at all to be left alone in London; but still I understand it perfectly, and approve—though I'd rather you stayed with me."

"Oh if you approve," he said, with a sort of shame-faced laugh of satisfaction, "that is all I want; and you may be sure I'll not stay a moment longer than I can help. I never saw such a woman for understanding as you are. You know what a man means before he says a word."

It was on his wife's lips to tell him that he said innumerable words of which he was unaware, about quite other matters, on every kind of subject, but all showing the way his thoughts were tending, but she forbore; for sweet as it is to be understood, it is not so sweet to be shown how you betray yourself and lay bare your secrets unwittingly to the eye of day. It was not difficult to divine that his mind was now very much taken up by the thought of his

children, not merely in the way of love and desire to see them, but from an overmastering anxiety as to how they would bear his wife's inspection, and what their future place in his life would be. In his many thoughts on the subject, he had decided that he must see them first and judge of that. During the three months in which he had been seeing with Evelyn's eyes and perceiving with her mind, various things had changed for James Rowland. He was not quite aware of the agency, nor even that a revolution had taken place in him, but he was conscious of being more and more anxious about the effect which everything would produce on her, and specially, above all other things, of the effect that his children would produce. And he had said and done many things to make this very visible. For his own part he thought he had concealed it completely, and even that she gave him credit for too much feeling in imputing to him that eagerness to see them, to take his boy and his girl into his arms, which she had just said was so natural. He preferred to leave that impression on her mind. The feelings she imputed to him would have been her feelings, she felt sure, had she been coming home to her children after so long a separation. He could not say even to himself that this was his feeling. He had done without them for a very long time, perhaps he could have gone on doing without them. But what would Evelyn say to them? Would they be fit for her notice? Would they shock and startle her? What manner of beings

would they seem in her eyes? It was on the cards that did she show any distaste for them, their father, who was their father after all, might resent it secretly or openly—for the claims of blood are strong; but at the present moment this was not at all in his thoughts. His thoughts were full of anxiety to know how they would please her, whether they were worthy to be brought at all into her presence. Mrs. Rowland would fain have assured him that his anxiety was unnecessary, and that, whatever his children were, they would be her first duty; but she was too understanding to do even this. All that she could do to help him in the emergency, was to accept his pretext and give him her approval, and tell him it was the most natural thing in the world. Useless to say that she was anxious too, wondering how the experiment would turn out. Whether the lowly upbringing would be so great a disadvantage as she feared, or whether the more primitive laws of that simpler social order would develop the better faculties, and suppress the conventional, as many a theorist believes. She was no theorist, but only a sensible woman who had seen a good deal of the world, and I fear that she did not believe in that suppression of the conventional. But whatever it was, she was anxious, as was natural, on a matter which would have so large an influence upon her entire life.

"I'll tell you what you can do to amuse yourself," he said, "when you're tired of the pictures and all that Go to Wardour Street, Evelyn, and if you see

anything that strikes your fancy, buy it. Buying is a great amusement. And we shall want all sorts of handsome things. Yes, I know. I'd put it into the best upholsterer's hands and tell him to spare no expense. But that's not your way: I've learnt as much as that. And then there are carpets and curtains and things. Buy away—buy freely. You know what is the right thing. What's the name of the people in Regent Street, eh? Well, go there—buy him up if you please—the whole shop. *I* don't care for those flimsy green and yellow things. I like solid, velvet and damask, and so forth. But what does that matter if you do? I like what you like."

"Do you want me to ruin you, James?" she said.

He laughed with that deep laugh of enjoyment which moneyed men bring out of the profoundness of their pockets and persons. "If it pleases you," he said. He was not afraid. That she should ruin him, was a very good joke. He had no desire for an economical wife. He wanted her to be extravagant, to get every pretty thing that struck her fancy. He had a vision of himself standing in the drawing-room which looked out upon the Clyde, and saying to everybody, "It's my wife's taste. I don't pretend to know about this sort of thing, except that it costs a lot of money. It's she that's responsible." And this anticipation pleased him to the bottom of his heart.

He went away next day, taking the train to Glasgow, not without sundry expressions of contempt for the arrangement of the Scotch trains,

and the construction of the railways. "We do things better in India," he said. He was very compunctious about going away, very sorry to leave her, very anxious that she should have everything that was possible to amuse her while he was gone; and exceedingly proud, yet distressed, that she should insist upon coming to the railway with him. It was such an early start for her, it would tire her, it was too much trouble, he said, with a beaming countenance. But when the train started, and Mr. Rowland was alone, he became suddenly very grave. He had not consented to her wish to have the children to meet them in London, because of the fancies that had seized him. If he could only have gone on paying largely for the children, knowing nothing but that they were happy and well, he would on the whole have been very thankful to make such an arrangement. But not only would it have been impossible to do so, but his wife would not have permitted it. She it was who talked of duty in respect to them who planned everything that would have to be done. For his part, he would have been quite content to let well alone. But how often it happens that you cannot do that, but are compelled to break up rational arrangements and make fictitious ones, visibly altering everything for the worse. Rowland in his prophetic soul felt that this was what he was about to do. He was going to take his children out of the sphere they belonged to, to transport them to another with

which they had nothing to do. And his mind altogether was full of compunctions. He had not after all shown their photographs or their letters to his wife. It would be less dreadful, he thought, that they should burst upon her in their native vulgarity and commonness all at once, than that she should be able to divine what like they were, and look forward to the meeting with horror. Naturally he exaggerated the horror Evelyn would be likely to feel, as he depreciated her acuteness and power of divining the motive which made him so certain that he could not find the photographs. Evelyn knew the situation, indeed, almost as well, perhaps in some ways better, than he did. She divined what was to be expected from the two young people brought up upon a very liberal allowance by the aunt whose husband had been a working engineer in the foundry. She was sincerely sorry for them, as well as a little for herself, wondering how they would meet her, feeling it almost impossible that there should not be a little grudge and jealousy, a determination to make a stand against her, and to feel themselves injured and supplanted. She followed her husband in her mind with a little anxiety, hoping that he would not show himself too enlightened as to their deficiencies. And then there would be their aunt to reckon with, the mother's sister, the second mother. How would she bear it if the young people whom she thought perfect failed to please their father? It would be thought to be the

stepmother's fault even before the stepmother appeared on the scene.

Evelyn returned to her hotel after seeing her husband off, with a countenance not less grave than his, and a strong consciousness that the new troubles were about to begin. She had shaken off her old ones. As for that familiar distress of not having any money, it had disappeared like last year's snow. It is a curious sensation to be exhorted to be extravagant when you have never had money to spend during your whole life, and there are few ladies who would not like to try that kind of revolution. Evelyn felt it exhilarating enough for a short time, though she had no extravagance in her; but she soon grew tired of the attempt to ruin her husband which gave him so much pleasure. She bought a few things both in Wardour Street and in the shop in Regent Street to which he had alluded, finding with a little trouble things that were not flimsy and diaphanous. But very soon she got tired, and by the third day it was strongly impressed upon her that to be alone, even with unlimited capacity of buying, is a melancholy thing. She had said to herself when she came to London that to recall herself to the recollection of old friends was the last thing she would desire to do. There was too much sorrow in her past: she did not want to remind herself of the time when she, too, used to come to London for the season, to do as everybody did, and go where everybody went. That was so

long ago, and everything was so changed. But it is strange how the firmest resolution can be overset in a moment by the most accidental touch. She was sitting by herself one bright morning, languid, in the bare, conventional sitting-room of the hotel, which was by no means less lonely because it was the best sitting-room, and cost a great deal of money in the height of the season. She had received a letter from her husband, in which she had been trying hard to read between the lines what were his ideas about his children, whether they had pleased him. The letter was a little stiff, she thought, guarded in its expression. "Archie is quite a man in appearance, and Marion a nice well-grown girl. They have had every justice done them so far as their health is concerned," Mr. Rowland wrote; but he did not enter into any further details. Was he pleased? Had the spell of nature asserted itself? Did he fear her criticism, and had he determined that no one should object to them? Evelyn was much concerned by these questions, which she could not answer to her own satisfaction. The thing she most feared was the very natural possibility that he might resent her interference, and allow no opinion to be expressed on the subject, whatever might be his own. And it vexed her that he said nothing more, closed his heart, or at least his lips, and gave no clue to what he was thinking. It was the first time this had occurred—to be sure, it was the first time he had communicated his sentiments

to her by way of writing, and probably he had no such freedom in expressing himself that way as by word of mouth. Whatever the fact might be, Evelyn felt herself cast down, she scarcely knew why. She vaguely divined that there was no satisfaction in his own mind, and to be thrust away from his confidence in this respect would be very painful to her, as well as making an end of all attempts on her part for the good of the children.

Evelyn was in this melancholy mood, sitting alone, and with everything suspended in her life, feeling a little as if she had been brought away from India where she had at least a definite known plan and work, to be stranded on a shore which had grown cold, unknown, and inhospitable to her, when in the newspaper which she had languidly taken up she saw suddenly the name of an old friend. She had said to herself that she would not seek to renew acquaintance with her old friends: but it is one thing to say that when one feels no need of them, and another to reflect when you are lonely and in low spirits, that there is some one in the next street, round the next corner, who would probably receive you with a smile of delight, fall upon your neck, and throw open to you the doors of her heart. Evelyn represented to herself when she saw this name that here was one of whom she would have made an exception in any circumstances, one who would certainly have sought her out in her trouble, and

would rejoice in her well-being. She half resisted, half played with the idea for half the morning—at one time putting it away, at another almost resolved to act upon it. And at length the latter inclination carried the day. Part of the reluctance arose from the fact that she did not know how to introduce herself. Would any one in London have heard of the wedding far away at an obscure station in India? Would any one imagine that it was she who was the bride? She took out her new card with Mrs. James Rowland upon it, in a curious shamefacedness, and wrote Evelyn Ferrars upon it with an unsteady hand. But she had very little time to entertain these feelings of uncertainty. It was so like Madeline to come flying with her arms wide open all the length of the deep London drawing-room against the light, with that shriek of welcome. Of course she would shriek. Evelyn knew her friend's ways better, as it proved, than she knew that friend herself.

"So it is you! At last! I meant to go out this very day on a round of all the hotels to find you; but I couldn't believe you wouldn't come, for you knew where to find me."

"At last!" said Evelyn astonished. "How did you know I was in London at all?"

"Oh, my dear Eve, don't be affected," cried this lively lady, "as if a great person like Mr. Rowland could travel and bring home his bride without all the papers getting hold of it! Why, we heard of your wedding dress and the diamonds

he gave you, almost as soon as you did. They were in one of the ladies' papers of course. And so, Evelyn, after waiting so long, you have gone and made a great match after all."

"Have I made a great match? Indeed I did not know it. I have married a very good man which is of more consequence," said Evelyn, with almost an air of offence. But that, of course, was absurd, for Lady Leighton had not the most distant idea of offending.

"Oh, that goes without saying," she said lightly; "every new man is more perfect than any other that went before him. But you need not undervalue your good things all the same. I suppose there were advantages in respect to the diamonds? He would be able to pick them up in a way that never happens to us poor people at home."

"I dare say he will be glad to tell you if you want to know; but, Madeline, that is not what interests me most. There are so many things I should like to hear of."

"Yes; to be sure." said Lady Leighton, growing grave; "but, my dear, if I were you I wouldn't inquire—not now, when everything is so changed."

"What is so changed?" said Evelyn, more and more surprised.

Her friend made a series of signals with her eyes, indicating some mystery, and standing, as Evelyn now perceived, in such a position as to screen from observation an inner room from which she had come. The pantomime ended by a tragic whisper: "He is

there—don't see him. It would be too great a shock. And why should you, when you are so well off?"

"Who is there? And why should I not see, whoever it is? I can't tell what you mean," Mrs. Rowland said.

"Oh, if that is how you feel!" said her friend; "but I would not in your place."

At this moment Evelyn heard a sound as of shuffling feet, and looking beyond her friend's figure, saw an old man, as she supposed, with an ashy countenance and bowed shoulders, coming towards them. At the first glance he seemed very old, very feeble; some one whom she had never seen before—and it took him some time to make his way along the room. Even when he came near she did not recognize him at first. He put out feebly a lifeless hand, and said, in a thick, mumbling tone: "Is this Evelyn Ferrars? But she has grown younger instead of older. Not like me."

Evelyn rose in instinctive respect to the old man whom she did not know. She thought it must be some old relative of Madeline, some one who had known her as a child. She answered some indifferent words of greeting, and dropped hastily, as soon as she had touched it, the cold and flabby hand. It could be no one whom she had known, though he knew her.

"Oh, Mr. Saumarez," said Lady Leighton, "I am so sorry this has happened. I do hope it will not hurt you. Had I not better ring for your man?

You know that you must not do too much or excite yourself. Let me lead you back to your chair."

A faint smile came over the ashen face. "She doesn't know me," he said.

Oh, heaven and earth, was this *he!* A pang of wonder, of keen pain and horror, shot through Evelyn like a sudden blow, shaking her from head to foot. It was not possible! The room swam round her, and all that was in it. *He!* The name had been like a pistol shot in her head, and then something, a look, as if over some chilly snowy landscape, a gleam of cold light had startled her even before the name. "Is it —— is it? I did not know you had been ill," she said, almost under her breath.

"Yes, it is my own self, and I have been ill, extremely ill; but I am getting better. I will sit down if you will permit me. I am not in the least excited; but very glad to see Mrs. Rowland and offer her my congratulations. I am not in such good case myself—nobody is likely to congratulate me."

"I do not see that," said Lady Leighton. "You are so very much better than you have been."

"That's very true. I may be congratulated so far. I should offer to call at your hotel on Mr. Rowland, but I fear my strength is not to be trusted. I am more glad than I can tell you to have seen you looking so well and happy, after so many years. Lady Leighton, I think I will now accept your kind offer to ring for my man." He put out

the grey tremulous hand again, and enfolded that of Evelyn in it. "I am very glad, very glad," he said with emphasis, in a low but firm tone, Lady Leighton having turned away to ring the bell, "to have seen you again, and so well, and so young, and I don't doubt so happy. My wife is dead, and I am a wreck as you see——"

"I am very sorry, very sorry."

"I knew you would be: while I am glad to have seen you so well. And I have two children whom I shall have to leave to the tender mercies of the world. Ah, we have trials in our youth that we are tragical about; but believe me these are the real tragedies of life," he said.

And then there came something almost more painful still. His servant came into the room and put on his coat and buttoned him into it as if he had been a child, then raised him smartly from his chair, drew an arm within his own, and led him away. The two ladies heard them go slowly shuffling down stairs, the master leaning upon the servant. Evelyn had grown as pale as marble. She remembered now to have seen an invalid chair standing at the door. And this was he who had filled her young life with joy, and afterwards with humiliation and pain. "Oh," she cried, "and that is he, that is he!"

"I wish I could have spared you the sight," said Lady Leighton, "but when he saw your card—he looked at it, when I dropped it out of my hand: people ill like that are so inquisitive—I knew how

it would be. Well, you must have seen him sooner or later. It is as well to get it over. He is a wreck, as he says. And oh, the contrast, Evelyn! He could not but see it—you so young looking, so happy and well off. What a lesson it is."

"I don't want to be a lesson," said Evelyn, with a faint smile. "Don't make any moral out of me. He was a man always so careful of himself. What has he done to be so broken down?"

"Can you ask me what he has done, Evelyn? He has thought of nothing but himself and his own advantage all his life. Don't you think we all remember——"

"I hope that you will forget—with all expedition," cried Evelyn quickly, "I have no stone to cast at him. I am very, very sorry." The moisture came into her kind eyes. Her pity was so keen that it felt like a wound in her own heart.

"Oh, Evelyn, I would give the world this had not happened. I did all I could to keep you from seeing he was there. Such a shock for you without any warning! I know, I know that a woman never forgets."

"Oh," said Mrs. Rowland, hastily, "that has nothing to do with it. I never was sentimental like you; and a spectacle like that is not one to call up tender recollections, is it? But I am very sorry. And he has children, to make him feel it all the more."

"Yes," said Lady Leighton doubtfully, "he has children. I must tell you that he still has a way of

working on the feelings. Oh, poor man, I would not say a word that was unkind; but now that he has nothing but his troubles to give him an interest, he likes, perhaps, to make the most of his troubles. I wish you had not had this shock to begin with, dear Evelyn—your first day at home."

CHAPTER VI

DOES a woman never forget? It was not true perhaps as Lady Leighton said it, but it would be vain to say that Evelyn was not moved to the bottom of her heart by the sight of her former lover. He, about whom all the dreams of her youth had been woven, who had deserted her, given her up in her need, and humiliated her before all the world. To see him at all would not have been without effect upon her, but to see him so humiliated in his turn, so miserable a wreck, while she was in all the flush of a late return to youth and well-being, happy in a subdued way, and on the height of prosperity, gave her a shock of mingled feeling, perhaps more strong than any she had experienced since he rent her life in two, and covered her (as she felt) with shame. But it was not any re-awakening of the extinguished fire which moved Evelyn. She could not forget, it was true, and yet she could easily have forgotten the relation in which she had stood to him, and her old adoration of him, at all times the visionary love of a girl giving a hundred fictitious excellences to the hero she had chosen. This was not what had occurred

to her mind. Had she seen him in his ancient supremacy of good fortune—a well-preserved, middle-aged Adonis, smiling, perhaps, as she had imagined, at her late marriage with a rich *parvenu*, keeping the superior position of a man who has rejected a love bestowed upon him, and never without that complacent sense of having "behaved badly," which is one of the many forms of vanity —the sight would not have disturbed her, except, perhaps, with a passing sensation of anger. But to see him in his downfall gave Evelyn a shock of pain. It was too terrible to think of what he had been and what he was. Instead of the sense of retribution which her friend had suggested, Evelyn had a horrified revulsion of feeling, rebellious against any such possibility, angry lest it should be supposed that she could have desired the least and smallest punishment, or could take any satisfaction from its infliction. She would have hated herself could she have thought this possible. There is an old poem in which the story of Troilus and Cressida, so often treated by the poets in its first bloom, has an after episode, an administration of poetic justice, in which all the severity of the mediæval imagination comes forth. The false Cressida falls into deepest misery in this tragic strain, and becomes a leper, the last and most awful of degradations. And while she sits with her wretched companions, begging her miserable bread by the roadside, the injured Troilus, the true knight, rides by. Evelyn, though I do not suppose she had ever seen

Henryson's poem, felt the same anguish of pity which arose in the bosom of the noble Greek. If she could have sent in secret the richest offering, and stolen aside out of the way not to insult the sufferer even by a look, she would have done it. Her pity was an agony, but it had nothing in it akin to love.

Lady Leighton, however, did not leave her friend any time to brood over this painful scene. She had no intention to confine to a mere interchange of courtesies this sudden reappearance upon the scene of a former companion whom, indeed, she could not help effectually in the period of her humiliation, but to whom now, in her newly acquired wealth, Madeline felt herself capable of being of great use. And it must not be supposed that it was purely a vulgar inclination to connect herself with rising fortunes, or to derive advantage from her friend's new position that moved her. It was in its way a genuine and natural desire to further her old companion, whom she had been fond of, but for whom she could do nothing when she was poor and her position desperate. The love of a little fuss and pleasant meddling was the alloy of Lady Leighton's gold, not any mercenary devotion to riches or thought of personal advantage. It was certainly delightful to have somebody to push and help on who could be nothing but a credit to you; to whom it would be natural to spend much money; and who yet was "one of our own set" and a favourite friend.

On the second day accordingly after that meeting which had been so painful an entry into the old world, Lady Leighton came in upon Evelyn as she sat alone, not very cheerful, longing for her husband and the new home in which she should find her natural place. She came with a rustle and bustle of energy, and that pretty air of having a thousand things to do, which is distinctive of a lady in the height of the season. "Here you are, all alone," she said, "and so many people asking for you. Why didn't you come to luncheon yesterday? We waited half an hour for you. And then we expected you at five o'clock, and I had Mary Riversdale and Alice Towers to meet you, who had both *screamed* to hear you were in town. And you never came! And of course they thought me a delusion and a snare, for they had given up half a dozen engagements. Why didn't you come?"

"I am very sorry," Evelyn said.

"That is no excuse," cried her friend. "You were upset by the sight of that wretched Ned Saumarez. And I don't wonder; but I believe he is not half so ill as he looks, and up to a good deal of mischief still. However, that is not the question. I have come about business. What are you going to do about a house?"

"About a house?"

"I came to be quite frank with you to-day. When your husband comes back you ought to have something ready for him. My dear Evelyn, I am going to speak seriously. If you want to

know people, and be properly taken up, you must have a house for the rest of the season. A hotel is really not the thing. You ought to be able to have a few well-chosen dinner parties, and to see your friends a little in the evening. There is nothing like a speciality. You might go in for Indian people. Let it be known that people are sure to meet a few Eastern big-wigs, and your fortune would be made."

"But——" cried Evelyn aghast.

"Don't tell me," said Lady Leighton solemnly, "that you don't want to know people, and be properly taken up again. Of course you don't require to be pushed into society like a mere millionaire who is nobody. You are quite different. People remember you. They say to me, 'Oh, that is the Miss Ferrars of the Gloucestershire family.' Everybody knows who you are. You have nothing to do but to choose a nice house—and there are plenty at this time of the season to be had for next to nothing—and to give a few really nice dinners. Doing it judiciously, finding out when people are free, for of course it does happen now and then that there will be a day when there is nothing going on, you can manage it yet. And everybody knows that your husband is very rich. You could do enough at least to open the way for next season, and make it quite simple. But, my dear, in that case you must not go on wasting these precious days without deciding on anything and living in a hotel."

"You take away my breath," said Mrs. Rowland. "I have not the least desire to be taken up by society. If I had, I think what I saw the other day would have been enough to cure me; but I never had the smallest thought—my husband is rich, I suppose, but he does not mean to spend his money so. He means to live—at home—among his own people."

Evelyn's voice, which had been quite assured, faltered a little and trembled as she said these last words.

"Among his own people!" said Lady Leighton, with a little shudder. "Do you mean to say——! Now, my dear Evelyn, you must forgive me, for perhaps I am quite wrong. I have heard about Mr. Rowland. I have always heard that he was—that he had been——" Madeline Leighton was a person of great sense. She saw in Evelyn's naturally mild eyes that look of the dove enraged, which is more alarming as a danger signal than any demonstration on the part of the eagle. She concluded hastily, "A very excellent man, the nicest man in the world."

"You were rightly informed," said Mrs. Rowland, somewhat stiffly. "My husband is as good a man as ever lived."

"But to go and settle among—his own people! perhaps they are not all as good as ever lived. They must be a little different to what you have been used to. Don't you think you should stipulate for a little freedom? Frank's people are as good

as ever lived, and they are all of course, so to speak, in our own set. But if I were condemned to live with them all the year round, I should die. Evelyn! it is, I assure you, a very serious matter. One should begin with one's husband seriously you know. Very good women who always pretend to like everything they are wanted to do, and smother their own inclinations, are a mistake, my dear. They always turn out a mistake. In the first place they are not true any more than you thought me to be the other day. They are cheating, even if it is with the best of motives. And in the end they are always found out. And to pretend to like things you hate is just being as great a humbug as any make-believe in society. Besides, your husband would like it far better if you provided him with a little amusement, and kept his own people off him for part of the year."

"I don't think society would amuse him at all," said Evelyn, with a laugh. "And besides, he has no people that I know of—so that you need not be frightened for me—except his own children," she added, with involuntary gravity.

Lady Leighton gave vent to an "O!" which was rounder than the O of Giotto. Horror, amazement, compassion were in it. "He has children!" she said faintly.

"Two—and they, of course, will be my first duty."

"Girls?"

"A girl and a boy."

"Oh, you poor thing!" said Lady Leighton,

giving her friend an embrace full of sympathy. "I am so sorry for you! I hope they are little things."

Evelyn felt a little restored to herself when she was encountered with such solemnity. "You have turned all at once into a Tragic Muse," she said; "you need not be so sorry for me. I am not—sorry for myself."

"Oh, don't be a humbug," said Lady Leighton, severely; "of all humbugs a virtuous humbug is the worst. You hate it! I can see it in your eyes."

"My eyes must be very false if they express any such feeling. To tell the truth," she added smiling, "I am a little frightened—one can scarcely help being that. I don't know how they may look upon me. I shouldn't care to be considered like the step-mother of the fairy tales."

"Poor Evelyn!" said Lady Leighton. She was so much impressed as to lose that pliant readiness of speech which was one of her great qualities. Madeline's resources were generally supposed by her friends to be unlimited: she had a suggestion for everything. But in this case she was silenced—for at least a whole minute. Then she resumed, as if throwing off a load,

"You should have the boy sent to Eton, and the girl to a good school. You can't be expected to take them out of the nursery. And for their sakes, Evelyn, if for nothing else, it is *most important* that you should know people and take your place in society. It makes all my arguments stronger

instead of weaker: you must bring Miss Rowland out—when she grows up."

Evelyn could not but laugh at the ready advice which always sprang up like a perpetual fountain, in fine independence of circumstances. "Dear Madeline," she said, "there is only one drawback, which is that they are grown up already. My step-daughter is eighteen. I don't suppose she will go to school, if I wished it ever so much—and I have no wish on the subject. It is a great responsibility; but provided they will accept me as their friend——"

"And where have they been brought up? Is she pretty? are they presentable? She must have money, and she will marry, Evelyn; there's hope in that. But instead of departing from my advice to you on that account, I repeat it with double force. You *must* bring out a girl of eighteen. She must see the world. You can't let her marry anybody that may turn up in the country. Take my word for it, Evelyn," she added solemnly, "if it was necessary before, it is still more necessary now."

"She may not marry at all—there are many girls who do not."

"Don't let us anticipate anything so dreadful," said the woman of the world. "A step-daughter who does not marry is too much to look forward to. No, my dear, that is what you must do. You must bring her out well and get her off. Is she pretty? for, of course, she will be rich."

"I don't know. I know little about the children. My husband has been in India for a long time. He does not himself know so much of them as he ought."

A shiver went through Lady Leighton's elegant toilette. She kissed her friend with great pity. "I will stand by you, dear," she said, "to the very utmost of my ability. You may be sure that anything I can do to help you;—but put on your bonnet in the meantime. I have a list of houses I want you to look at. You can look at them at least—that does no harm; if not for this season, it will be a guide to you for the next. And it is always more or less amusing. After that there are some calls I have to make. Come, Evelyn, I really cannot leave you to mope by yourself here."

And Evelyn went. She was lonely, and it was a greater distraction after all than buying cabinets in Wardour Street, and looking over even the most lovely old Persian rugs. Looking at houses, especially furnished houses, to be let for the season, is an amusement which many ladies like. It is curious to see the different ideas, the different habits of the people who want to let them, and to contrast the house that is furnished to be let and the house that is furnished to be lived in, which are two different things. Lady Leighton enjoyed the afternoon very much. She pointed out to her friend just how she could arrange the rooms in every house, so that the liveliest hopes were left in the mind of each householder; and by the time

they got back to Madeline's own house to tea, she declared herself too tired to do anything but lie on the sofa, and talk over all they had seen. "It lies between Wilton Place and Chester Street," she said. "The last is the best house, but then the other is better furnished. That boudoir in Wilton Place is a little gem: or you might make the drawing-room in Chester Street exceedingly pretty with those old things you are always buying. The carpets are very bad, I must allow, but with a few large rugs—and it is such a good situation. Either of them would do. And so cheap!—a mere nothing for millionaires like you."

Evelyn allowed, not without interest, that the houses were very nice. She allowed herself to discuss the question. Visions floated before her eyes of old habits resumed, and that flutter of movement, of occupation, of new things to see and hear, which forms the charm of town, caught her with its fascination. To step a little, just a little, not much, into the living stream, to feel the movement, though she was not carried away by it, was a temptation. At a distance it is easy to condemn the frivolity, the hurry, the rush of the season; but to touch its glittering surface over again after a long interval of banishment, and feel the thrill of the tide of life which is never still, which quickens the pulse and stimulates the mind, has a great attraction in it. Evelyn forgot for the moment the shock which had so driven her back from all pleasant projects. She allowed herself to see with

Madeline's eyes. No doubt it might be pleasant. It was now June, and a month of society in the modified way in which a late arrival, so long separated from all old acquaintances, can alone hope to enjoy it, would not be too great an interruption to the home life, and it would leave time to have everything done at Rosmore. And it would postpone a little the introduction to many new elements of which she was afraid. She had been disappointed when her husband left her, to have the entrance upon her new life postponed at all, and the period of suspense prolonged. But that feeling began to give way to other feelings—feelings more natural. After the unutterably subdued life she had led in India, and before the novel and strange existence which was now waiting for her, as the mother and guide of human creatures unknown to her, might not a moment of relaxation, of individuality, be worth having? She had been Mrs. Stanhope's friend without any identity, with a life which was all bound up in the obscure rooms of the bungalow; and she was Mr. Rowland's wife, the mother of his children, the head of his house, in an atmosphere altogether novel to her, and which of her, in her natural personality, knew nothing. Society was not her sphere, yet it was the nearest to any sphere in which she could stand as herself. And she allowed herself to be seduced. She thought that perhaps for a little James might enjoy it. Chester Street is very near the Park. To walk out in the June mornings, when even the

London air is made of sunshine, to the Row and see the dazzling stream flow by—the beautiful horses, the beautiful people—girls and men whom it was a sight to see—to meet every five minutes an old acquaintance, to hear once more that babble about people and personal incidents which is so trivial to the outsider, but always attractive to those who know the names and can understand the situations about which everybody talks! And in the evening, to sit at the head of the table with perhaps a statesman, perhaps a poet, somebody of whom the whole world has heard, at her right hand, penetrating even the society chatter with a thread of meaning! Evelyn forgot for the moment various things that would not be so pleasant—that her husband would like to entertain a lord, but would not probably know much more about him, however great he might be—that he might be inclined to tell the price of his wine, and laugh the rich man's laugh of satisfaction at the costliness of everything, and the ruin that awaited him in London. These little imperfections Evelyn was perhaps too sensitive of, but on this occasion they stole out of her mind. She began to discuss Chester Street with a gradually growing satisfaction. Or Park Lane? There was a house in Park Lane—and for a hundred pounds or two of rent, if he liked the scheme at all, James would not hesitate. She was quite sure of him so far as that was concerned.

"Chester Street has its advantages," said Lady

Leighton. "It is such a capital situation; and yet quite modest, no pretension. It is more like you, Evelyn. So far as Mr. Rowland is concerned, I feel sure, though I don't know him, that he would prefer Belgrave Square, and the biggest rent in London."

"How do you know that?" said Evelyn with an uneasy laugh.

"Because I know my millionaires," said Lady Leighton gravely. "But for the end of the season, and an accidental sort of thing as it will be, I should not recommend that. Next year if you come up in May, and on quite *lancé;* but for this year, when you are only feeling your way—Chester Street, Evelyn! that's my idea—and a few small parties, quite select, to meet some Indian man. I don't want you to have just a common success like the vulgar rich people. Dear no! quite a different thing—a success *d'estime*—a real good foundation for anything you might like to do after. You might take Marlborough House then—if you could get it—and stick at nothing."

"We shall not attempt to get Marlborough House," said Evelyn, with a laugh, "nor even anything more moderate. Mr. Rowland does not care for town. But I confess that you have beguiled me, Madeline, with your flattering tongue. I think —I should rather like—if he approves of the idea."

"My dear, it is surely enough if you approve of the idea. He is not going to make you a black slave."

"My husband is sure to approve of what I do," said Evelyn, with a little dignity. "But I prefer to consult him all the same. He may have formed other engagements. It may be necessary to go up to Rosmore at once. But I confess that I should like—if there is nothing else in the way."

"And that is all," cried Lady Leighton, "after all my efforts! Well, if it must be so, telegraph to him—or at least tell him to answer you by telegraph: for that house might still be swept up while you are hesitating. Oh, I know it is rather late for a house to be snapped up. But when you want a thing it immediately becomes a chance that some one else will want it too. I shall look for you to-morrow to luncheon, Evelyn: now, mind that you don't fail me, and we'll go out after and settle about it, and do all that is necessary. Shouldn't you like now to go and look at a few more Persian rugs? and that little Chippendale set you were telling me of? The next best thing to spending money one's self is helping one's friend to do it," said Lady Leighton. "Indeed, some people think it is almost more agreeable: for you have the pleasure, without the pain of paying. Come, Evelyn, and we can finish with a turn in the Park before dinner. I always like to get as much as possible into every day."

It was indeed a necessity with the town lady to get as much as she could into her day. If she had not gone to choose the rugs on her friend's account, she would have had to make for herself

some other piece of business equally important. There was not an hour that had not its occupation. Looking at the houses had filled the afternoon with bustle and excitement: and doing all that was necessary, *i.e.* re-arranging all the furniture, covering up the dingy carpets, choosing new curtains, &c., would furnish delightful "work" for two or three. Lady Leighton had never an hour that was without its engagement, as she said with a sigh. She envied her friends who had leisure. She had not a moment to herself.

And Evelyn wrote a hurried letter to her husband about the Chester Street house, and the pleasure of staying in town for a week or two, as she put it vaguely, and introducing him to some of her friends. She even in her haste mentioned Lord and Lady Leighton, knowing that he had a little weakness for a title—a thing she was sadly ashamed of when she came to think. But the best of us are so easily led away.

CHAPTER VII

THE bustle of this afternoon's occupation, which left her no time to think before she was deposited at her hotel for her late dinner, put serious thoughts out of Evelyn's mind; and even when that hasty meal, over which she had no inclination to linger, was ended, and she had relapsed into the comfort of a dressing gown, and lay extended in an easy chair beside the open windows, hearing all the endless tumult of town, half with a sense of being left out, and half with self-congratulations over her quiet, she was little inclined to reflection. The echo of all that she had been doing hung about her, and that pleasant little commotion of choice, of arrangement and organization, which is involved in a new house and new settlement, absorbed her thoughts. They went very fast, setting a thousand things stirring. There is nothing that moves the woman of to-day more than the task of making a house pretty and harmonious, and forming a version of home out of any spare hired dwelling. Evelyn had anticipated having this to

do for Rosmore. But James had somehow taken it out of her hands. He had gone to prepare it for her, not thinking that she would have liked much better to have a share in the doing. And now to think of having her little essay for herself, and setting up a temporary home out of her own fancy, turning a few bare rooms into a place full of fragrance and brightness, pleased her fancy. She listened to the carriages flying past with an endless roll of sound, so many of them conveying society to its favourite haunts, to one set of brilliant rooms after another, to new combinations of smiling faces and beautiful toilettes, with a half melancholy half pleasing excitement. To be above, and listen to that sound, is always slightly melancholy, and Evelyn could not but think a little of the pleasure of emerging from the silence of solitude, of seeing and being seen, of finding friends from whom she had been long parted, and a dazzling vision of life which was all the brighter from being partially forgotten, and never very perfectly known. From where she sat she could see the glare of the carriage lamps, and now and then some glimpses of the persons within—a lady's white toilette surging up at the window, or a brilliant shirt-front looking almost like another lamp inside. It amused her to watch that stream flow on.

And then there came over her a dark shadow the vision of the man who had been so young and so full of life when she saw him last, and who was so death-like and fallen now. The thought chilled

her suddenly to the heart. She drew back from the window, and wrapped herself in a shawl, with the shudder of a cold which was not physical but spiritual. In the midst of all that ceaseless loudness of life and movement and pleasure, and of the visions which had visited her own brain of lighted rooms, and animated faces, and brilliant talk—to drop back to that wreck of existence, the helpless man leaning upon his servant's arm, bundled up like a piece of goods, unresisting, compelled to submit to those cares which were an indignity, yet which were necessary to very existence! The echo came back to Evelyn's heart. If there was in her mind, who in reality cared for none of these things, a little sentiment of loneliness as she saw the stream of life go by, what must there be in his, to whom society was life, and who was cut off from all its pleasures? Her imagination followed him to the prison of his weakness, his melancholy home, with this imperative servant who tended and ruled all his movements, for his sole society. God help him! What a condition to come to, after all the experiences of his life!

Should she ever meet him again, she had asked herself, partly with a vaguely formed wish of saying some word of kindness to so great a sufferer, partly with a shrinking reluctance to give herself the pain of looking upon his humiliation again? But it was almost as great a shock as on the first meeting to see him coming along the park as she walked to Lady Leighton's next day. He was

being drawn along in his wheeled chair by the man who had bundled him up so summarily on the previous occasion. Evelyn would have hurried on, but he held out his hand appealingly, and even called her name as she endeavoured to pass. "Won't you stop and speak to me?" he said. It was impossible to resist that appeal. She stood by him, looking down upon his ashy countenance, the loose lips and half-open mouth which babbled rather than talked, and which it required an effort at first to understand. "Will you sit down a little and talk?" he said. "It's a pleasure I don't often have, a talk with an old friend. Sit there, and I'll have my chair drawn beside you. I hope you won't think yourself a victim, as I fear some of my friends do——"

"Oh, no," she said anxiously, "don't think so: I—was going to see Madeline—but it will not matter——"

"Oh, she can spare you for half-an-hour."

It was with dismay that Evelyn heard this, but how could she resist the power of his weakness and fallen estate? He had his chair drawn up in front of the one she had taken, very near her, and with a gesture dismissed his servant, who went and took up his position with his back against a tree, and his eyes upon the master who was also his patient. The sight of this reminder of his extreme weakness and precarious condition was almost more than Evelyn's nerves could bear.

"We are a wonderful contrast, you and I," he

said; "you so young and fair, just entering upon life, and I leaving it, a decrepid old man."

"You know," she said, "that I am not young and fair any more than you are old. I am grieved to see you so ill; but I hope——"

"There is no room for hope. To go on like this for many years, which they say is possible, is not much worth hoping for, is it? Still, I would bear it for various reasons. But I am not likely to be tried. I am a wreck—and my wife only lived two years—I suppose you knew that."

"I had heard that Mrs. Saumarez died."

"Yes—I'd have come to you for consolation had I dared."

"It was better not," said Evelyn, while a subdued flash of indignation shot out much against her will from her downcast eyes.

"That was what I thought. When a thing does not succeed at first it is better not to try to get fire out of the ashes," he said didactically; "but between us two, there is no difficulty in seeing which has the best of it. I should like to call and make Mr. Rowland's acquaintance. But you see the plight in which I am. It is almost impossible for me to get up a stair——"

"My husband—does not mean to remain in London," she said hurriedly. "We are going to Scotland at once."

"To a place he has bought, I suppose? I hear that he has a great fortune—and I am most heartily glad of it for your sake."

She replied hurriedly, with a slight bow of acquiescence. It was the strangest subject to choose for discussion: but yet it was very difficult to find any subject. "You told me the other day," she said, "about your children."

"I am very thankful to you for asking. I wanted to speak of them. I have a boy and girl, with only a year between them—provided for more or less; but who is to look after them when I am gone? Their mother's family I never got on with. They are the most worldly-minded people. I should not like my little Rosamond to fall into their hands."

There was a pause: for Evelyn found that she had nothing to say. It was so extraordinary to sit here, the depositary of Edward Saumarez's confidences, listening to the account of his anxieties—she who was so little likely to be of any help.

"How old is she?" she managed to ask at last.

"Rosamond? How long is it since we were—so much together? A long time. I dare say more than twenty years."

"Something like that."

"Ah well," he said with a sigh, "I married about a year after. They're nineteen and twenty, or thereabouts. Rosamond, they tell me, ought to be brought out; but what is the good of bringing out a girl into the world who has no one to protect her? Nobody but a worldly-minded aunt who will sell her for what she will bring—marry her off her hands as quickly as possible; that is all she

will think of. It may seem strange to you, but my little girl is proud of me, dreadful object as I am."

"Why should it seem strange? It would be very unnatural if she was not."

"She is the only one in the world who cares a brass farthing whether I live or die." As Evelyn raised her eyes full of pity, she was suddenly aware that he was watching her, watching for some tell-tale flush or gesture which should give a tacit denial to what he said. He, like Lady Leighton, was of opinion that a woman never forgets, and dreadful object as he allowed himself to be, the man's vanity would fain have been fed by some sign that the woman beside him, whom he had abandoned so basely, whose heart he had done his best to break, still cherished something of the old feeling, and was his still. He was disconcerted by the calm compassion in her eyes.

"Eddy is as cold as a stone," he said; "he is like his mother's people. He doesn't see why an old fellow like me should keep dragging on. He minds no more than Jarvis does—less, for I am Jarvis's living, and to keep me alive is the best thing for him. But it would be better for Eddy, he thinks, if I were out of the way."

"Please do not speak so; I don't believe that any son really entertains such thoughts."

"Ah, that shows how little you know. You have not been in society all these years. Eddy is philosophical, and thinks that I have very little

good of my life, which is true enough, and that he would have a great deal, which is quite as true."

"Even if it were so, he would not be his own master—at nineteen," Evelyn said.

"Twenty—he is the eldest. Of course he would be better off in that case. He would have more freedom, and a better allowance; and he would be of more importance, not the second but the first."

"Oh," she cried with horror, "do not impute such dreadful motives to your own child."

He shook his head, looking at her with an air of cynical wisdom—a look which made the countenance, so changed and faded with disease, almost diabolical to contemplate. Evelyn turned her eyes away with a movement of horrified impatience. And this was not at all the feeling with which Saumarez meant to inspire the woman who had once loved him. He was unwilling even now to believe that she had entirely escaped out of his power.

"Evelyn," he said, putting forth again that large nerveless hand, from the touch of which she shrank—"let me call you so, as in the old days. It can do no one any harm now."

"Surely not," she said; "it could do no one any harm."

He had not expected this reply; if she had shrank from the familiarity and refused her permission, he would have been better pleased. Helpless, paralytic, dreadful to behold, he would

fain have considered himself a danger to her peace of mind still.

"I have to accept that," he said, "like all the rest. That it doesn't matter what I say, no man could be jealous of me. Evelyn!—I like to say the name—there's everything that's sweet and womanly in it. I wish I had called my little girl by that name. I thought of it to tell the truth."

"Nothing could have been more unsuitable,' cried Evelyn, with a flush of anger. "I hope you did not think of it, for that would have been an insult, not a compliment to me. Mr. Saumarez, I think I must go on. Madeline expected me at——"

"Oh, let Madeline wait a little! She has plenty of interests, and I have something very serious to say. You may think I am trying to lead you into recollections—which certainly would agitate me, if not you. You are very composed, Evelyn. I ought to be glad to see you so, but I don't know that I am. I remember everything so well—but you—seem to have passed into another world."

"It is true. The world is entirely changed for me. I can scarcely believe that it was I who lived through so many experiences twenty-two years ago."

"I feel that there is a reproach in that—and yet if I could tell you everything—but you would not listen to me now."

"I am no longer interested," she said gently, "so many things have happened since then: my father's

death, and Harry's. How thankful I was to be able to care for them both! All these things are between me and my girlhood. It has died out of my mind. If there is anything you want to say to me, Mr. Saumarez, I hope it is on another subject than that."

The attempt in his eyes to convey a look of sentiment made her feel faint. But fortunately his faculties were keen enough to show him the futility of that attempt. "Yes," he said, "it is another subject—a very different subject. I shall not live long, and I have no friends. I care for nobody, and you will say it is a natural consequence of this that nobody cares for me."

She made a movement of dissent in her great pity. "It cannot be so bad as that."

"But it *is*. My sister's dead, you know, and there is really nobody. Evelyn, I have a great favour to ask you. Will you be the guardian of my boy and girl?"

"The guardian—of your children?" She was so startled and astonished that she could only gaze at him, and could not find another word to say.

"Why should you be so much surprised? I never thought so much of any woman as I do of you. I find you again after so many years unchanged. Evelyn, you are changed. I said so a little while ago: but yet you are yourself, and that's the best I know. I'd like my little Rosamond to be like you. I'd like Eddy, though he's a rascal, to

know some one that would make even him good. Evelyn, they are well enough off, they would not be any trouble in that way. Will you take them—will you be their guardian when I am gone?"

Evelyn was not only astonished but frightened by what he asked of her. She rose up hastily. "You must not think of it—you must not think of it! What could I do for them? I have other duties of my own."

"It would not be so much trouble," he said, "only to give an eye to them now and then; to have them with you when you felt inclined to ask them—nothing more. For old friendship's sake you would not object to have my children on a visit once a year or so. I am sure you would not refuse me that?"

"But that is very different from being their guardian."

"It would not be, as I should arrange it. You would give them your advice when they wanted it. You would do as much as that for any one, for the gamekeeper's children, much more for an old friend's—and see them now and then, and inquire how they were getting on? I should ask nothing more. Evelyn, you wouldn't refuse an old friend, a disabled, unhappy, solitary man like me?"

"Oh, Mr. Saumarez!" she cried. He had tried to raise himself up a little in the fervour of his appeal, but fell back again in a sort of heap, the

exertion and the emotion being too much for his strength. The servant appeared in a moment from where he had been watching. "He oughtn't to be allowed to agitate himself, ma'am," said the man reproachfully. Evelyn, alarmed, walked humbly beside the chair till they came to the gate of the Park, terrified to think that perhaps he had injured himself, that perhaps she ought to humour him by consenting to anything. He was not allowed to say any more, nor did she add a word, but he put out his hand again and pressed hers feebly as they parted. "Can I do anything?" she had asked the servant in her compunction. "Nothing but leave him quite quiet," said the man. "It might be as much as his life is worth. I don't hold with letting 'em talk." Saumarez was one of a class, a mere case, to his attendant. And Evelyn felt as if she had been guilty of a kind of murder as she hurried away.

She found Lady Leighton waiting for her for lunch, and slightly disturbed by the delay. "I have a thousand things to do, and the loss of half-an-hour puts one all out," she said, with a little peevishness; "but I'm sure you had a reason, Evelyn, for being so late."

"A reason which was much against my will," said Evelyn, telling the story of her distress, to which her friend listened very gravely. "I should take care not to meet him again," said Lady Leighton, with a cloud on her brow. "You listen to him out of pure pity, but weak and ailing as he

is, it would be sweet to his vanity to compromise a woman even now."

"I do not understand what you mean," said Evelyn; "he could not compromise me, if that is it, by anything he could do, were he all that he has ever been."

"You don't know what your husband might think," said her friend; "he wouldn't like it. He might have every confidence in you—but a man of Ned Saumarez's character, and an old lover, and all that—he might say——"

"My husband," said Mrs. Rowland, feeling the blood mount to her head, "has no such ideas in his mind. He neither knows anything about Mr. Saumarez's character, nor would he even if he did know. You mistake my feeling altogether. It is not anything about my husband that distresses me—it is the trust he wants me to undertake of his children."

"Oh, you may make yourself easy about that, Evelyn. That was only a blind. It is little he thinks about his children. He'll get you to meet him and to talk to him, professedly about them—oh, I don't doubt that! but that's not what he means. You don't know Ned Saumarez so well as I do," cried Lady Leighton, putting out her hand to stop an outcry of indignation; "you don't know the world so well as I do; you have been out of it for years, and you always were an innocent, and never did understand—"

"Understand! that a man who is dying by

inches should have—such ideas. A man on the edge of the grave—with a servant, a nurse, looking after him as if he were a child."

"It's very sad, my dear, especially the last, which is incredible, I allow. How a man like that can think that a woman would—But they do all the same. You might be led yourself by pity, or perhaps by a little lingering feeling—or—well, well, I will not say that, I don't want to make you angry—perhaps by a little vanity then, if I may say such a word."

"Madeline, I think you know far too much of the world."

"Perhaps," said Lady Leighton, not without a little self-complacence. "I have had a great deal of experience in life."

"And too little," said Evelyn, "of honest meaning and truth."

"Oh, as for that! but if you think you will find truth or honest meaning, my dear, in Ned Saumarez, you will be very far wrong; and if he can lead you into a mess with your husband, or get you talked about——"

"He will never get me into a mess with my husband, you may be certain of that, Madeline."

"Oh, if you will take your own way, I cannot help it," cried Lady Leighton. "I have done all I can. And now come down to lunch. At all events we must not quarrel, you and I."

The lunch, however, was not a very successful one, and Evelyn refused to take any further action

about Chester Street, and was so determined in her resistance that her friend at last gave up the argument, and with something very like the quarrel she had deprecated, allowed Mrs. Rowland to depart alone for her hotel, which she did in great fervour of indignation and distress. But as she walked quickly along the long line of the park, she perceived with a pang of alarm and surprise, the invalid's chair being drawn across the end of the ride, into the same path where she had met Saumarez an hour or two before. Was it possible that Madeline could be right? Was he going back to wait for her there? She stood but for a moment and watched the slow, mournful progress of the chair, the worn-out figure lying back in it, the ashen face amid the many wraps. A certain awe came over her. She had been long out of the world, and had never been very wise in such matters: and who could believe that a man in the last stage of life should be able to amuse himself by schemes at once so base and so frivolous? She turned back half ashamed of herself for doing so, and went home another way. It might be, she said to herself with a compunction, that all he meant was after all what he thought his children's interest: then with a thrill of self-suspicion asked herself, was this the vanity by which Madeline, too clear sighted, had suggested she might be moved? Oh, clearly the world was not a place for her! The mere discussion of such possibilities abashed and shamed her. Her simple husband who could not cope with these fine people,

and upon whom probably they would look down—her home, far from all such ignoble suggestions, her own difficulties, which might be troublesome enough, but not like these—how much better they were! Her heart had been a little caught by the aspect of the old life from which she had been separated so long, and she had begun to think that with all the advantages her new position gave her it might be pleasant to resume those of the old one, and venture a little upon the sea of society, which looked so bright at the first glance. Had she yielded to this temptation no doubt the good Rowland would have followed her guidance, pleased with anything she suggested, delighted for a time with the fine company, giving up his chosen life for her sake. And it is very probable that, had Lady Leighton foreseen the disgust with which her warning would fill her friend's mind, she would have been chary about giving it, and would have preferred to let Evelyn take her chance of compromise and danger. The worst of society is, that it deadens the mind to the base and vile, taking away all horror of things unclean, by inculcating a perpetual suspicion of their existence. But no such deadening influence had ever been in Evelyn's mind. She sent another letter to her husband by that afternoon's post, which, in the midst of various tribulations of his own, made that good man's heart leap. She told him that she had changed her mind about staying in London, that it was odious to her: that she counted the hours till he should return,

that she longed for Rosmore, and to see the Clyde and the lochs, and the children, and "our own home." James Rowland, though he was not a sentimental man, kissed this letter; for he was in great need of consolation, having in full measure his own troubles too.

CHAPTER VIII

EVELYN scarcely went out at all next day. She paid a visit to some of the old furniture shops in the morning, which was a direction quite different from that in which she would be subjected to any painful meeting—and realized once more her husband's simple maxim that there was great diversion in buying. She did buy, within a certain range, expensive articles—things which she knew Madeline Leighton would covet but could not afford, with a kind of pleasure in the unnecessary extravagance which she was half ashamed of, half amused by when she realized it. The old marqueterie was solid and beautifully made, and had borne the brunt of years of usage ; it was not a hollow fiction like the fabric of society which Lady Leighton and such as she expounded as unutterably vile, yet clung to as if it were the only thing true. Evelyn declared to herself that she would have no house in Chester Street. To cover up the old faded carpets with pretty Persian rugs, and make the dingy rooms fine with temporary

fittings-up which did not belong to them, was, like all the rest, a deception and disgust. The pretty things should be for her own house, where they would be placed to remain as long as she lived, where they would be like herself, at home. But except the time she spent in these shops, which was not very long, she did not go out all day. And she had, it must be allowed, got very tired of her own company, when in the afternoon the door was opened suddenly, and a servant appeared to announce some one, a young lady, about whose name he was very doubtful, for Mrs. Rowland. He was followed into the room by the slim figure of a girl looking very young but very self-possessed and unabashed, with an ease of manner which Evelyn was not accustomed to see in her kind. This young lady was dressed very simply, as girls who are not "out" (as well as many who are) are specially supposed to be. The grey frock was spotless, and beautifully made, but it was absolutely unadorned, and she had not an ornament or a ribbon about her to break the severe grace of her outline. But to make amends for this, she had the radiant complexion which is so often seen in English girls—a complexion not yet put in jeopardy either by hot rooms and late hours, or by the experiences of Ascot and Goodwood and Hurlingham; her hair was very light, not the conventional gold. She came forward to Evelyn with the air of a perfect little woman of the world. "I am Rosamond Saumarez," she said, holding out

her hand; "my father told me I was to come to see you." Evelyn stumbled up to her feet with a startled sensation, bewildered by a visit so absolutely unexpected. The young lady took her extended hand, and shook it affably, then with a little air of begging Mrs. Rowland to be seated, like a young princess, drew forth for herself a low chair.

"He said I need not explain who I was, for that you would know."

"Yes," said Evelyn. "You must forgive me for being a little confused."

"Oh, I dare say you were having a little doze. It is so warm; and don't you find the noise soothing? There is never any break in it: it goes on and on, and puts one to sleep."

"I don't find it has that quality," said Evelyn, half affronted to have it supposed that she was dozing. "It is strange for me," she said, "to meet your father's children. I knew him only as a young man."

"Oh, yes, I know," said the young lady, nodding her head with an air of knowing all about it, which confused Evelyn still more.

"He told me he had two children, I think. Are you the eldest?" she asked almost timidly.

"Oh, no, Eddy is the eldest: but I'm the most serious. I have got the sense of the family, everybody says. Eddy is with a crammer trying hard to pass the army examination; but he never will: he hates books, and is very fond of his fun,

That may be natural, but you will agree that it is not very good for getting on in life."

"I suppose not," said Evelyn

"No, certainly; and so much is thought of doing something nowadays. I suppose father was not very much in the way of working when you knew him, Mrs. Rowland: and yet he is as hard upon Eddy as if he had done nothing but what was good all his life."

"Your father is a very great sufferer, I fear," said Evelyn, who had entirely lost her presence of mind, and did not know what to say.

"Oh, no, not so much as you would think. Of course he's very helpless: Jarvis has to do everything for him. But I don't think he really minds—not so much as people would think. He likes to be pitied and sympathized with, and to look interesting. Poor father! he thinks he looks interesting; but perhaps you thought it went too far for that. Some people are quite afraid of him as if he might die on their hands."

"Oh, no," cried Evelyn, faltering; "nobody would be so cruel; but it must be very terrible for you."

"Well," said Miss Saumarez, "we have been used to it a long time, it looks quite natural to us. But some people are frightened. It isn't a thing, however, that kills, I believe. It may go on for years and years."

"And you"—Evelyn felt that it was almost an irreverence to talk to this young lady as to a school-girl, but still it was to be supposed she was

one—you are still in the school-room, busy with lessons yet?"

"I don't think I have ever been much in the school-room," said the girl. "It has been rather difficult to manage my education. Father liked to have me at home when I was a little thing. I used to make him laugh. We tried several governesses, but they were not very successful; either they preferred to take care of *him* or they quarrelled with me. I don't think I was a very nice child," said Miss Rosamond impartially. "It wasn't a good school, was it, to have all kinds of pettings and bon-bons because I was funny and could make him laugh, and then turned out, as if I had been a little dog, when he was cross."

"My dear!" said Evelyn, dismayed.

"Oh, I am afraid you think me *awful*," said Rosamond, "but really it is all quite true."

"It is a long time since I was a girl like you," said Mrs. Rowland, "and we were not allowed to be so frank and speak our mind; that is the chief difference, I suppose."

"Oh, I have always heard from all the old ladies that I am dreadful. But certainly the thing we do nowadays is to speak our mind—rather a little more than less, don't you know. We don't carry any false colours, or pretend to pretty feelings, like the girls in the story-books. What humbugs you must have been in your time!"

"I don't think we were humbugs," said Evelyn. She was beginning to be amused by this frank

young person, who made her feel so young and inexperienced. It was Evelyn who was the little girl, and Rosamond the sage, acquainted with the world and life.

"Father says so; but then he thinks all people are humbugs. He says we really can think of no one but ourselves, whatever we may pretend."

"But you mustn't believe in that," said Evelyn. "It is a dreadful way of looking at the world. Nobody can tell how much kindness and goodness there is unless they have been in circumstances to try it, which I have. You must not enter upon life with that idea, for it is quite false."

'What! when father says so? Oughtn't I to believe that he knows best?"

"Oh, when your father says so!" said Evelyn, startled. "My dear, I don't think your father can mean it. He may say it—in jest——"

"Oh, don't be afraid, Mrs. Rowland," cried the girl cheerfully. "I don't take everything he says for gospel. He's a disappointed man, you know. He never got exactly what he wanted. Mother and he did not get on, I am told: and there is every appearance that Eddy will be a handful, as I suppose father was himself in his day. And then he's paralyzed. That should be set against a lot, shouldn't it? I always say so to myself when he is nasty to me."

"I am very glad that you do," said Evelyn with tears in her eyes. "It should indeed stand against a great deal. And as you grow older you

will understand better how such dreadful helplessness affects the mind——"

"Oh," cried Rosamond, breaking in, "if you think there's any softening of the brain or that sort of thing, you are very, very much mistaken. If you only knew how clever he is! I have heard him take in people—people, you know, like my uncle the bishop, and that sort of person, with an account of pious feelings, and how he knows it is all for his good, and so forth. You would think he was a saint to hear him—and the poor bishop looking so bothered, knowing too much to *quite* believe it, and yet not daring to contradict him It was as good as a play. I shrieked with laughter when he was gone, and so did father. It was the funniest thing I ever saw."

"My dear!" cried Evelyn again, wringing her hands in protestation; but what could she say? If she had been disposed to take in hand the reformation of Edward Saumarez's daughter, it could not be by adding to her unerring clear sight and criticism of him. "Do you see much," she said, in a kind of desperation, "of the bishop?" with a clutch at the moral skirts of some one who might be able to help.

"Oh, no, only when he comes to town. They don't ask us now to the Palace, for I am sure he never can make up his mind about father, whether he is a real saint or—the other thing. Aunt Rose is the relation you know, not the bishop. It is by mother's side, so they naturally disapprove of papa."

Evelyn did not at all know how to deal with this girl, who was so cognizant of the world and all its ways. Rosamond was even more a woman of the world than Madeline Leighton. She believed in less, and she seemed to know more, and her calm girlish voice, and the pearly tints of her infantine radiance of countenance produced upon the middle-aged listener a sensation of utter confusion impossible to describe. She asked hurriedly, with an endeavour to divert the easy stream of words to another subject, "Have you any friends of your own age, my dear, to amuse yourself with?"

"Oh, plenty," said Rosamond, "quantities! There are such crowds of girls; wherever one goes, nothing but women, women, till one is sick of them. I have a very great friend whom I see constantly, and who is exactly of my way of thinking. As soon as we are old enough we both mean to take up a profession. I have not quite decided upon mine, but she means to be a doctor. She is studying a little now, whenever she can get a moment, and looking forward to the time when she shall be old enough to put down her foot. Of course they will try to forbid it, and that sort of thing. But she has quite made up her mind. As for me, I have not such a clear leading as Madeline. I am still quite in doubt."

"Madeline!" said Evelyn. "I wonder if by chance that is Madeline Leighton whom I saw the other day?"

Miss Saumarez nodded her head. "But you

must promise," she said, "not to betray us to her mother. Of course we quite allow that we are too young to settle upon anything now. She is only seventeen. I am nearly two years older, but then, unfortunately, I have not the same clear vocation. And of course something must be allowed for natural hindrances, as long as father lives."

"I hope you will never leave him," said Evelyn warmly. "It is true I am old-fashioned, and do not understand a girl with a profession ; but everybody must see that in your case your duty lies at home."

"If anybody who was a very good match wanted to marry me," said the girl with a laugh, "would you then think that my duty lay at home?"

Evelyn felt herself reduced to absolute imbecility by this bewildering question. "My dear—my dear —you know a great deal too much ; you are too wise," she said.

"But that's not an answer," said Rosamond, "you see the logic of it, and you daren't give me an answer. You just beg the question. I must go away now ; but father told me I was to ask you if I might come again."

"If you care to come to such an old-world, old-fashioned, puzzled person as I am," said Evelyn with a troubled smile.

"I should like it, if I may. Father says you are the real good, and a great many people I know only pretend. I should like to know better what

the real good was like, so I will come again to-morrow, if I may."

"Come, but not because I am the real good. I am a very puzzled person, and you who are only a little girl seem to know a great deal more than I."

Rosamond smiled, for the first time a bright and childlike smile. She had smiled and even laughed in the course of her prelections as the same required it. But for the first time her face lighted up. "Oh, perhaps you will find there is not so much in me as you think," she said, giving her hand to the middle-aged and much-perplexed person before her, after the fashion of the time. I forget what the fashion of the time was in those days. People had not begun at that period to shake their friends' hands high into the air as if they were grasping a pump handle. Evelyn stood and looked after her aghast, not capable of sitting down or changing out of that pose while the girl went away. She crept out, half ashamed of doing so, into the balcony, to watch her as she appeared in the crowded road outside: and after a moment, Rosamond came forth, accompanied by a large mastiff, who performed several gambols of joy about her as she stepped out into the stream of people. Evelyn watched her going along, keeping, so to speak, the crown of the causeway, she and her dog giving place to no one. She was on her right side of the pavement, and to be hustled out of her course was an impossibility. Her strong, confident step, her half masculine dress, jacket and

hat like those of a youth, were wonderful and terrible to the woman who had never moved anywhere without an attendant. She stared after this wonderful young creature with a bewilderment which almost took from her the power of thought.

Later in the day Lady Leighton came in, penitentially, and in a softened mood. "I was very silly to frighten you," she said; "I can't think what made me such a fool. I forgot that you were you, and not any one else. I was right enough so far as ordinary society goes, only not right in respect to Evelyn Ferrars."

"Evelyn Rowland, doubly removed from your traps and snares of society," said Evelyn with a smile.

"Well—be it so;—but I hope you are not really going to give up that delightful plan about the Chester Street house, because I was silly and spoke unadvisedly with my lips. If punishment were to come upon a woman for every time she did that——"

"No great punishment," said Evelyn. "You will come and see me in my own house, and that will be better than seeing me at Chester Street—or not seeing me—you who have never a moment to yourself."

"That is true. I never have a moment to myself," said Lady Leighton. "I am going off now to St. Roque's to see about getting Mr. Pincem, the great surgeon, to look very specially after a favourite patient of mine: and then I must come back to

Grosvenor Place to a drawing-room meeting: and then—but I can sandwich you in between the two, Evelyn, if you want to go over any of those houses again."

"I don't want to go over any of them again, thanks. I was quite satisfied with Chester Street if I had wanted any. Perhaps, however, I ought to let the people know."

"Oh, never mind the people," said Lady Leighton, "if you actually mean to give it up and throw me over; for it is me you ought to think of. And why? because I told you that Ned Saumarez, though he is paralyzed, was as great a flirt as ever——"

"Don't let us have it all over again," said Evelyn. "I take no interest in it. By the way, I have just had a strange visitor—his daughter, Madeline. She tells me that your daughter is her dearest friend."

"His daughter? Oh, Rosamond! yes, she and Maddy run about everywhere together, and plot all manner of things."

"Are you not afraid of their plottings—two wild girls together?"

"I afraid! oh dear, not I; they will probably both marry before they have time to do any mischief. That puts all nonsense out of their heads. I know! they are going to walk the hospitals, and heaven knows what; relieve the poor and also see life. I never contradict them—what is the use? Somebody will turn up in their

first or second season with enough of money and sufficiently presentable. And they will be married off, and become like other people, and we shall hear of their vagaries no more."

"They will then have every moment occupied, and more things to do than hours to do them in, Madeline, like you."

"Precisely like me," said the woman of the world; "and an excellent good thing, too, Evelyn, if you would allow yourself to see it. Do you think it would be so good for me if I had more time to think? My dear, you know many things a great deal better than I do, but you don't know the world. There are as many worries in a day in London as there are in a year out of it. That is, I mean there are in society, both in London and the country, annoyances such as you people in your tranquillity never can understand. I am not without my troubles, though I don't wear them on my sleeve. I do what is far better. I am so busy, I have not time to think of them. There are troubles about money, troubles about the boys, troubles about—well, Leighton is not always a model husband, my dear, like yours. And it will be well for the girls if they do as I do, and don't leave themselves too much time to think."

"They seem," said Evelyn, glad to turn the seriousness of this speech aside and not to seem curious (though she was) about her friend's troubles, "to exercise the privilege of thinking very freely at their present stage. But this poor girl has no

mother, and no doubt she has been left a great deal to herself."

"I know you don't mean that for a hit at me," said her friend; "though you may perhaps think a woman with so much to do must neglect her children. Madeline is every bit as bad as Rosamond, my dear. They mean no harm either of them. They want, poor darlings, to work for their living and to see life. It is a pity their brothers don't share their youthful fancies. The boys prefer to do nothing, and the kind of life they see is not very desirable. But by the blessing of Providence nothing very dreadfully bad comes of it either way. The girls find that they have to marry and settle down, like their mothers before them; and the boys—well, the boys! oh, they come out of it somehow at the end."

And to the great amazement of Evelyn, this woman of the world, this busy idler and frivolous fine lady suddenly fell into a low outburst of crying, as involuntary as it was unexpected, saying, amid her tears: "Oh, please God, please God, they will all come through at the end!"

Mrs. Rowland was a woman who had known a great deal of trouble, but when she was thus the witness of her friend's unsuspected pain, she said to herself that she was an ignorant woman and knew nothing. She had not believed there was anything serious at all, not to say anguish and martyrdom, in Madeline Leighton's life. She held her friend in her arms for a moment, and they kissed each

other; but Evelyn did not ask any question. Perhaps Lady Leighton thought she had told her everything, perhaps she had that instinctive sense that everybody must know, which belongs to the class who are accustomed to have their movements chronicled, and all they do known. For she offered no explanation, but only said, as she raised her head from Evelyn's shoulder and dried her eyes, with a little tremulous laugh in which the tears still lingered, "I am as sure of that as I am that I live. If we didn't think so, half of us would die."

Not two minutes after this she returned to the charge again about the house in Chester Street. "Will you really not think of it again, Evelyn? It would be such a pleasure to have you near: and, my dear, I should never say a word about any Platonic diversion that amused you. On the contrary, I'd flirt with Mr. Rowland and keep him off the scent.—Oh, let me laugh: I must laugh after I have cried. Well, if you have decided, I don't mind saying that you are quite as well out of Ned. Saumarez's way. Sending the girl to see you was a very serious step. And he is a man that will stick at nothing. Perhaps it is all the better that you are going away."

"That is the strongest argument you could use," said Evelyn, "to keep me here."

"Perhaps that was what I intended," said Lady Leighton; "but, dear, how late it is, I must go." She had reached the door when she suddenly

turned back. "What time did you fix for our visit to you, Evelyn? I must work it into our list. Without organization one could never go anywhere at all. It must be between the end of October and the middle of December. Would the 10th of November to the 20th suit you? Or is that too long? One must be perfectly frank about these matters, or one never could go on at all."

"It must be when you please, and for as long as you please, dear Madeline," said Mrs. Rowland. She added, "I fear, you know, it will be rather dull. I don't know whether there is any society, and James——"

"I will put it down 10th to 15th," said Lady Leighton seriously noting this consideration. And then she gave her friend a hasty embrace and hurried away.

How strange it all was! Evelyn felt as if she had peeped through some crevice behind the lively bustling stage, and suddenly seen what was going on behind the scenes. There had been little behind the scenes in her own life. It had been sad but it had all been open as the day. And now when she stood at the beginning of a new life, she had nothing to wound, nothing to make her reluctant that any word should leap to light, even that story of hers which had been so near tragedy, of which Edward Saumarez had been the hero. She almost blushed at the importance she had given that story, now that she had seen again the man who had been the hero of it. It seemed to lose

all the dignity and tragic meaning which had been the chief thing in her life for so long.

While Evelyn was thinking this, a letter was put into her hand, in which her husband bade her do exactly as she pleased about the Chester Street house. "If you like to stay there for a little, my dear, and see your old friends, I shall like that best; and if you prefer to come home with me at once, and take possession of Rosmore, that is what I shall like best. It is for you to choose: and in the meantime I am coming back to town, to do whatever you like to-morrow night."

To-morrow of the day on which the letter was written meant that very day upon which Evelyn received it. She had not pretended to be in love with her good middle-aged husband, she, a subdued middle-aged woman. But what a haven of quiet, and plain honest understanding, and simple truth and right she seemed to float into when she realized that he was coming back to her to-night.

CHAPTER IX

JAMES ROWLAND left his wife in London with a certain satisfaction which was very unlike the great affection he had for her, and the delight which day by day he had learned more and more to take in her society. He was a man full of intelligence and quickness of mind notwithstanding various roughnesses of manner; and he never had known before what it was to have such a companion; a woman who understood almost all he meant, and meant a good deal which he was delightfully learning to understand: bringing illustrations to their life which his imperfect education had kept from him, and making him aware of a hundred new sources of satisfaction and pleasure. But his very admiration for Evelyn had deepened in his mind the first stab of anxiety which her hand had involuntarily given. He had never got over the shock of finding out that his children, instead of being the little things he had invariably gone on thinking them to be, had reached the age of early manhood and womanhood, and that he knew nothing whatever about them.

He had tried at first to laugh at this as a simple evidence of his own folly, but the little puncture of that first wound had gone on deepening and deepening. He felt it only in occasional thrills at first, when it had given him about as much annoyance as a stray pang of rheumatism; but as he travelled home, every day's nearer approach made the ache a little keener. It was the only thing in his experience of which he had said nothing to Evelyn—although from the day of their arrival in London it had begun to gnaw him like the proverbial fox under his mantle. He grew restless, unable to settle to anything, continually wondering what they would be like, how they would receive him, if they would be a credit to him or the reverse, how Evelyn would receive them, and how they would take to Evelyn. Their stiff little letters about his marriage, which were almost the first letters of theirs which he had read with any attention, had been received at Suez on the way home. And they had redoubled his anxiety and his restlessness. He did not show them to Evelyn, which was very significant of their unsatisfactory character to himself. Had they been "nice" letters, he would have been too anxious to place them in her hands, to see her face light up with interest. But they were not, alas! nice letters. They were very stiff, formal productions. They acknowledged that their father had a right to please himself, and that they had no claim to be taken into consideration. "What we expected was different, but it is you, as Aunt Jean says, that are the master, and we hope

that your lady will not look down upon us, or keep us away from you." This was not the sort of thing which he could show to Evelyn, anxious as she was to do everything a mother could do for his children. And all this made him very restless: he wanted to escape from her, to go and inspect them before she saw them, to try even, if that were possible, to lick them into shape before they came under her eyes. He had not been afraid of the venture of his new marriage, nor of the perils by land and sea to which he was continually exposed ; but he was very much afraid of the effect of the boy and girl whom he felt himself to have neglected, and who were now rising up as giants in his path. In these circumstances Rowland snatched anxiously at the pretext of going to see Rosmore and prepare it for his wife's reception. What he really wanted was to see the children and decide what could be done to prepare them.

It was consequently with a sense of escape that he waved his hand to Evelyn from the carriage window, thinking, with a touch of pride, what a lady she looked, in her plain dress, standing there upon the platform to see him off, among the crowd, not one of whom was like her. He was very proud of his wife. He thought she looked like a princess standing there so simple, with no outward sign to show what she was, but a look, to which any one would bow down. But, as the train rushed away into distance, and the long lines of the houses and streets flew past, James Rowland laid himself back, and thanked heaven that he had escaped, that he

had found a pretence to get away, and that he would thus be able to see the worst for himself. Dwelling upon this view of the subject so long had made him scarcely conscious of any pleasure in the anticipation of meeting his children. Had he not been married had he come back without any special direction of his thoughts towards them, he would no doubt have looked forward with a certain pleasure to meeting his two little things, and perhaps the disenchantment of finding them grown up would have amused him, and paternal feeling excused the imperfections which he now so much feared to find. It never, however, could have pleased Rowland to find in his son a half-educated lout, or in his daughter a pert little girl, on the original level of the foundry, which was the haunting fear in his mind now; so that in any case a great disappointment would in all probability have awaited him. His apprehensions became stronger and stronger as he approached the end of his journey, when they would be proved right or wrong. He recalled to himself what the aunt had been, whom in his foolishness he had been so glad to confide them to, as one who would cherish them as if they were her own—a rosy-cheeked, cheerful lass, with a jest for any lad who addressed her; perfectly modest and good, but with the freedom of the overflowing young community, which above all things loved its fun—not equal to his Mary, who had always showed a little shrinking from the fun, and never kept company with any one but with him alone. Jean appeared very clearly before him as he

searched the memories of his youth—a trig, comely, clever lass, full of health and spirits. She would be, no doubt, buxom now, terribly well off by means of the lavish cheques he had sent, and his daughter would be much as she had been. Oh, she had been a good steady lass, there had been nothing to find fault with; but to think of a daughter like Jean filled the good man with horror. What could he do with her? What could Evelyn do with her? Cold beads of perspiration came out on his forehead. And then the lout of a boy! This was how he had got to think of them who ought to have been the stars of his horizon. And it would not be their fault, it would be his fault. He was thankful to the bottom of his heart that he would see them first, and get the shock over, and have time to think how it could be broken to Evelyn. But he was not the less afraid of the first sight of them, afraid of proving all his prognostications true.

He had not warned his sister-in-law of his arrival, and it was again an escape to him to postpone the meeting till next day, and in the meantime to go to the best hotel he could find. This was many years ago, and I don't know what may be the case now: but then the hotels in Glasgow were not very excellent, that great city being, I suppose, too much occupied with its manifold businesses to make preparation for tourists and idle visitors as Edinburgh does; and Mr. Rowland did not find himself in the lap of luxury to which that masterful rich man was accustomed. This probably discouraged him still

more, for it must be said that next morning, instead of going to see his children, he took an early train and went down to Rosmore, thus putting off for another day the possibility of ascertaining definitely what there was to fear. He was conscious that it was a cowardly thing to do: and it was an unnatural thing—heartless, even, some people might say; but then his terrors for the moment had taken the place of his merely instinctive and quite undeveloped paternal love.

Rosmore was not disappointing, that was certain! He took a steamer from the opposite side of the Clyde, in order that he might see it first, as he had been used to do when he was a young man, and all such advancement seemed as far above him as the throne. His heart beat as the rustling, bustling, crowded steamboat came to the spot where the white colonnade had always been visible among the noble groups of trees, which withdrew a little just there, and stood about in clumps and gatherings to let the view be seen. There it stood upon its green knoll unchanged, the sloping green sward stretching down towards the salt, dazzling water, the windows caught and shining out in the sun. It was by good fortune—which everybody knows is not invariable in these regions—a beautiful day, and to Rowland it seemed paradise to see the heavy clouds of the foliage open, and the white pillars come in view. He landed upon the side of the peninsula where a little salt water loch runs up into the bosom of the hills. It is characteristic of a Scot in all countries that

he never sees a landscape which does not remind him, to its own disadvantage, of some landscape at home. But Rowland, who had been a great deal about the world, went a step further and declared to himself that he had never seen anything to equal that "silver streak" of sea-water, with the noble line of mountains stretching across the upper end. They were beautiful in themselves, their outlines as grand against the sky and intense sunshine as if they had been as lofty as the Himalayas; but this was only half their fascination. It was the capricious Northern lights and shadows that made them so delightful, so unlike anything but themselves. In the East the sunshine drags and becomes tedious: it goes on blazing all day long without change. But the North is dramatic, individual, full of vicissitude, making a new combination every minute, never for half an hour the same. He stood and watched the clouds flying over the hills, like the breath of some spell-bound giant, now one point and now another coming into light; and the little waves dancing, and the soft banks reflected like another enchanted country under the surface of the water. The sight uplifted in his bosom the heart of the homely man who had no raptures to express, but felt the beauty to the depths of his being. "I've travelled far, but I never saw anything like it," he said to the agent, who had met him on the little pier, and who backed him up with enthusiasm, partly because he was of the district too, and prone to believe that there was nothing equal to Rosmore in

the world, and partly because he was a good man of business, and liked to see a wealthy tenant in such a good frame of mind.

But it would be difficult to describe the emotions of James Rowland as he walked through the beautiful woods and entered the house. He had never been in the house before. Naturally, at the time when he first conceived his passion for it, the young foundry man, however clever, could never have had any means of entering into such a place; and to tell the truth, he did not much know what was required by a family of condition in an English or rather Scotch house. He knew the luxury of the East, and how to make a bungalow comfortable, but the arrangements of a mansion at home were strange to him.

He followed the agent accordingly with a little awe, which he carefully concealed, through the suites of rooms, libraries, morning rooms, boudoirs, all sorts of lavish accommodation, with the uses of which he was practically unacquainted. But he did not betray his ignorance. On the contrary he was very critical, finding out the defects in the old-fashioned furniture as if he had been accustomed to such things all his life.

"This looks as old as Methuselah," he said. "Why, the things must be mouldy. I should think they can't have been touched for a hundred years."

"More than that," said the agent, "and that's just why the ladies like it. It is called Countess

Jean's boudoir. Everything is just as it was when she came home a bride. The ladies will not have it touched."

"Oh, I know that decayed style is the fashion," said Mr. Rowland without winking an eyelid: "but you can't imagine we will put up with these old hangings? You must have them cleared away."

"We'll do that, if it's your desire; but the hangings are real tapestry—the oldest in Scotland. The Earl will be just delighted to have them back."

"Now I look at them," said Rowland, "I believe my wife will like them. For my part I like fresh colours and rich stuffs. I like to have bright things about me. I find it all a little dingy, Mr. Campbell. You must put your best foot forward and have it put in complete order. And a great many other things will be wanted. We have got a boat-load," said the engineer with exhilaration, "of Indian toys and stuff. My wife's fond of all that sort of thing. We have curios enough to set up a shop."

"Ah," said the agent respectfully, "you have had unusual opportunities, Mr. Rowland: and ladies are so fond of picking things up."

"Yes," said Rowland, "my wife has wonderful taste—she knows a good thing when she sees it."

"Which is very far from being a general quality," said the appreciative agent. "Mrs. Rowland, I make no doubt, will turn Rosmore into a beautiful place."

"It is a beautiful place to begin with," said the new tenant; "and it would be a strange place that would not be improved when my wife got it into her hands," he added with a glow of pride. He wanted much to confide to the agent that she was a lady of one of the best English families, and full of every accomplishment; but his better sense restrained him.

What exultation he felt in his bosom as he stood under the white colonnade and gazed at the great Clyde rushing upon the beach at the foot of the knoll, and the steamer crossing (which it did by the influence of some good fairy just at this moment) the shining surface, and all the specks of passengers turning in one direction to catch that glimpse of Rosmore. So many times had he gazed at it so—and now for the first time, in the other sense, here he was looking down upon the landscape from his own door. It was not the satisfied appetite of acquisition—it was something finer and more ethereal—a youthful ideal and boyish sentiment carried through a whole life. He had dreamed of this long before there had been any conscious aim at all in his mind; and now he had actually attained the thing which had so pleased his boyish thoughts. James Rowland took off his hat as he stood under the white colonnade. The agent thought he was saluting somebody in the passing steamer, and murmured, "They'll not see you; it's farther off than it looks;" but Rowland was saluting One Who

always sees, and Who does not so often as ought to be receive thanks thus warm and glowing from a grateful heart. "And for Evelyn too, who is the best of all!" he said within himself.

The agent gleaned enough to perceive that Mr. Rowland was exceedingly proud of his wife, and formed an exaggerated, and consequently rather unfavourable opinion of this unknown lady. He thought she must be a *connoisseuse* with her boat-load of curiosities, which indeed, to tell the truth, were things that Rowland had "picked up" himself in many advantageous ways, before he had even seen his wife, and which Evelyn was not acquainted with at all. Mr. Campbell thought she must be a fantastic woman, and would, as he said, transmogrify the good honest old house, and turn it into a curiosity shop, or "chiney" warehouse—which was an idea he did not contemplate with pleasure. However, this was no reason why he should undervalue so rich and so easily pleased a tenant. He made the most ample promises as to what should be done, and the expedition with which everything should be accomplished—and accompanied Rowland to the boat, introducing him to the minister and to various local authorities on the way. "This is Mr. Rowland that has taken Rosmore. Ye'll likely see a great deal of him, for he means to make his principal residence here.—It's the great Rowland, the Indian engineer and railway man," he said aside, but not quite inaudibly, in each new-comer's ear.

The local potentates looked with admiration and interest at the new-comer. Any possible inmate of Rosmore would have been interesting to the minister, who had not much society in the parish, and had a natural confidence in the social qualities of a man who was so rich. The "merchant" who had long dreamt of a railway up the side of the loch, which would bring Glasgow excursionists in their thousands to Rosmore, gazed with awe on the new inhabitant who had but to look upon a country destitute of means of locomotion, and lo! the iron way was there. Other points of interest abounded in the new inhabitant. He would quicken life in the parish in every way: probably his very name would secure that second delivery of letters for which the whole peninsula had been agitating so long. The steamboat would certainly call summer and winter at the pier, now that the House would be occupied and visitors always coming and going; and the decoration of the church, which was so much wanted, would, the minister thought, be secured now that such a wealthy inhabitant had been added to the resources of the parish. They all gave him a welcome which was as flattering as if he had been a royal prince. "It's been a distress to us a' to see the House standing empty so long, and I'm very glad to make Mr. Rowland's acquaintance. It will be good for us a' to have a man like him among us." How did they know what manner of man he was, except that he was rich? But James Rowland

did not ask himself that question. In his present mood he was very ready to believe that, as he was delighted to come, so his new neighbours would be delighted to have him there; and he knew as well as they did that it would be a good thing for them to have a rich and liberal new parishioner at hand. He liked the looks of the minister, and the schoolmaster, and the merchant, and he was pleased that they should like him. He walked down to the pier attended by a little train; and it was quite a feather in the cap of Mr. Foggo of Pitarrow, one of the smaller heritors of the parish, that he happened to be going across to the other side, and would consequently travel with the great man. "I'll talk to him about the kirk and see what he's willing to give," said this gentleman, exhilarated by the thought that a good subscription from the new-comer would save a good deal of money to the heritors. "But only don't be hasty; don't be rash; don't let him think that his siller is the first thing we are thinking of," said the minister. "Gangrel body! what would we be thinking of *but* his siller," said the laird. But this, which was the only thing that was not complimentary, was not said aloud.

Thus Rowland was escorted to the boat, the frequent messenger between that solitude and the busy world, while Pitarrow followed, giving way to him as if he had been the Earl himself. The boat already felt as if it partially belonged to him, the crew, too, being all interested and impressed.

He looked back from the deck upon the line of the Rosmore woods, and the profile of the house, which showed itself through them, a different view yet a delightful one: and listened with affability while the different places on the loch were pointed out to him. The evening was perfect as the day had been. The light had died off the deep waters of the loch, though it still played upon the hills, and its low rays struck full in the eyes, so to speak, of the white colonnade, bathing the house in a dazzle of light. What a place to come home to, to settle down in, to see from afar as he approached, and recognize as his own! He figured to himself returning from an absence, hastening through the woods, received by Evelyn at the door. What a beautiful dream to be fulfilled at last! What a refuge from all the labours and the tumults of life! He listened vaguely to what Pitarrow was saying, and granted cordially that it would henceforward be his duty to come to the aid of the parish and to help to beautify the church, and would have given him a cheque on the spot, had there been pen and ink handy. But of course he had not taken his cheque-book with him upon that day's excursion, important as it was.

He got to the railway in this blissful state of mind, uplifted, his feet scarcely touching the ground. And then all at once his face grew sad and set. The light went out of it and a blank came in place of the animated and lively

expression. He had done all that he wanted to do for the moment at Rosmore. Now another duty awaited him, a duty he should have turned to first, which was indeed the most important duty of all. Now there was no longer any escape for him: he must see his children, and that without any further delay.

CHAPTER X

NEXT morning James Rowland woke with the churning of the waves under the little Clyde steamboat in his ears, as if he were again on the deck waiting for the opening in the trees, and the sight of the white colonnade on the summit of its knoll, which brought with it the dazzle of the sunshine, the purity of the sweet fresh air, the twitter of the birds. How pleasant to have such a vision at waking, to realize with delight that all those pleasant things were henceforth to be the every-day circumstances of his life! But the next moment a cloud came over his face, for he recollected what it was that must be his occupation to-day. No shirking it any longer—no possibility of persuading himself that something else ought to be done first. That had been possible the first day: to see that their future home was comfortable—to make sure that it would be ready for them, surely that was a duty? But now he had accomplished it, and knew all about the house, there was nothing further to keep him back. I hope the reader will

not think this perplexed father unnatural or unkind. As a matter of fact, he would have been, and probably would be, after this first obstacle was got over, the kindest, the most fond of fathers. It was the consciousness of the great gulf between what, when he last saw his children, would have been right and natural for them, and what would be suitable and indeed necessary now —between what he himself was then, and what he was now, that overwhelmed him. They might be, in their hearts, everything the prudent father could desire, and yet be quite out of place at Rosmore, where he himself, if a little unpolished, would nevertheless be quite in his proper place. If they had been but the little children he remembered, who could have been trained into anything! Alas, these possibilities were all over. He dressed himself slowly, sighing from time to time, with an oppression on his heart that he could not account for, wishing now, after all, that Evelyn had been with him, who perhaps would have known better how to deal with the emergency. And he breakfasted very slowly, reading the *Herald* in detail, and brooding over the paragraphs of local news which he did not understand after so many years of separation from Glasgow and its interests. At last the moment came when he could delay no longer. He had read the papers; he had finished his breakfast: he rose with a sigh and took his hat.

There is a street in Glasgow which I remember

long ago, and which was then called the Sauchiehall Road. Something picturesque in the name has kept a place in the recollection of a child, over—let us not imagine how many years; but it may be that a recollection so far off has confused the outlines of the street, or that in this age of change it may be completely altered, perhaps overrun with tall tenements, perhaps fallen into irremediable decay. In like manner I am not sure that it was the Sauchiehall Road in which the young Rowlands lived with their aunt, though I think it was; and the reader may here excuse the possibility of topographical error. It was a street in which there were many, according to a description exclusively and characteristically Scotch, "self-contained" houses of a small description, such as are not very usual in Scotland. So far as I remember, they were of a generally grimy kind, built in that dark-complexioned stone which adds so much gloom to the often cloudy skies and damp atmosphere of the western city. These houses presented an aspect of faded gentility, and of having seen better days. But they were at the same time very attractive to people without any pretence at gentility, to whom the dignity of a front door and a house self-contained, in distinction to the more usual circumstances of a flat, was very tempting.

It was in one of these houses that Mrs. Brown, who was Rowland's sister-in-law, had established herself with her charges. It was one that was

supposed to be among the best of the long row. It had a yard or two of what was called garden in front, almost filled with an elder-berry tree, on which there were some dusty indications of coming blossom; and as the house had been recently painted, and had a bank of flowers in the parlour window, it was easily distinguishable from its neighbours, which were generally faded and dingy in appearance. To describe the beating of the heart with which Mr. Rowland knocked at that freshly-painted green door would be almost more than words are equal to: a lover at the crisis of hope and fear, not knowing what was to be the answer to his suit, could not have been more agitated than this sober-minded, middle-aged man. It occurred to him at the last moment not to give his name, but to trust to his sister-in-law's recognition of him, and thus have his first view of his children entirely without any warning. He had scarcely done this, however, before he began to think that to have given them the fullest warning would have been better, so that his first impression should have been of their very best aspect prepared to please him. But this was only after it was too late to change.

"Wha'll I say?" said the servant girl, so decidedly bearing that aspect that she could not have been called the maid, or the servant, or anything but the girl. She was wiping her hands with her apron to be ready to take a card, and a cap had been stuck on rather at random

upon a mass of curly and not very well-tended hair.

"You can say it's a gentleman to speak to Mrs. Brown," said Rowland, stepping into the parlour, which was rather dark with its flowers banked up against the window, though the flowers themselves seemed to flourish luxuriantly. There was something horribly familiar to him in the aspect of the room. He had seen nothing like it for many years, and yet he recognized it in a moment. It was the best room of the respectable mechanic—the parlour in which his wife put all her pride. There was a round stand, covered with a glass shade, of wax flowers in the centre of the table, and it stood upon a still larger mat surrounded with raised flowers worked in crochet in coloured wools standing primly up around. There were a few books laid round like the rays of a star: the *Course of Time* and other grimly orthodox productions of that character. The chairs and sofa were covered with long "antimacassars," also worked in wool in stripes of different colours; the mantelpiece was loaded with small pieces of china—girls with lambs, jugs with little pictures upon them, and other such impressive articles, and photographs. Hung over it in the place of honour, Mr. Rowland shivered to see his own portrait, flanked on one side by the picture of a bungalow in which he had once lived, and on the other by a group of football players, with names written underneath, one of them being conspicuously marked as "Archie."

Rowland, however, was breathing too quickly to allow him to go up to it, and prepare himself for the appearance of his son. He felt more like running away, and keeping up a fiction of being in India still.

While he was looking round him in consternation and alarm, he was suddenly aware that the door had opened, and a little bright figure in coloured muslin and many floating ribbons had come in. She twisted herself as she walked, with a swaying and movement of all the bright-coloured ribbons, and came forward with an apparent intention of shaking hands with the stranger. But stopping at the distance of a step or two, said with another twist, "Oh, I thought I knew you! Was there anything you might be wanting that I could do?"

"I am waiting to see Mrs. Brown," he said.

"Oh! that's aunty," said the girl. She looked at the elderly visitor with a slight air of contempt, as if a man who could prefer to see aunty instead of herself was a most curious specimen of humanity. And then she laid down upon the table a parasol she had been carrying, and her gloves, and a small basket of flowers. "I've just been out to the nursery garden to get a flower," she said, "I'm awfully fond of flowers. D'ye like them?—Will I give you one for your button-hole —if you're one of aunty's friends?"

"You are very kind," said the tremulous father, "but had you not better wait till you see if aunty recognizes me for one of her friends?"

"Oh, it's no matter," said the girl, "a flower is neither here nor there—and she'll not be fit to see a gentleman for a good while. She likes to put on her best gown, and her cap with the red ribbons, like the lady in the *Laird of Cockpen*—D'ye know the song?"

"I used to know it long ago—before I went to India——"

"Oh, you've come from Ingia? Papa's out there—I wonder if you've come from papa. Archie and me, we are always wishing he would send for us. It would be awful fun. But he says he's coming home. I hope he'll not come home. I hope he'll send for us out there. Isn't it far better fun out in Ingia than it is here?"

"I don't know about the fun here. Do you remember your father?" he asked.

"No," said the young lady indifferently, "I was a little baby when he went away: and he must think I'm a little baby still, for he never sends me things that you might think he would. I've seen girls that had grand necklaces and things, and bangles. Bangles are very much worn here now. But papa never sent me any. I had to buy what I wear."

She held out a wrist to him laden with these ornaments of the flimsiest description, wires of silver manufactured to suit a sudden demand.

"I am sure that he would have sent you things like these had he thought you cared."

"What for would I not care?" said the un-

conscious girl with great reasonableness. She turned the bangles round and round upon her outstretched arm, holding it up to see how they looked, and not unwilling, perhaps, that the visitor should see how slim and white it was. The girl was pretty in her way. She had a wonderful amount of ribbons, a necklace with several lockets suspended round her neck, and about a dozen bangles on each arm. What with looking at these, letting them drop upon her arm to judge the effect, glancing at her figure reflected in the little flat glass on the mantelpiece, and casting stealthy looks aside at the stranger to see how all these pretty ways moved him, she had the air of being so fully occupied that there was no wonder it did not occur to her to compare his elderly brown face with the portrait of her father hanging over the mirror on the wall.

"Is your brother at home?" Mr. Rowland said.

"Archie! oh no, he's never at home. It's past the season for football, perhaps you know, but he's taken to cricket to fill up his time. He's not a dab at cricket," the girl said with a laugh. "It's more an English game than a Scotch game, and Archie is awfully Scotch. He goes on about the flag and that nonsense. Now, I never mind; I like people just to be pleasant, whether they are English or Scotch."

"That is the most sensible way," said the father.

"Do you hear aunty," said the girl, "rummaging about to get herself dressed, as if you would ever

notice what kind of a gown she had on! I always put on a nice frock in the morning, and then I am fit to be seen all the rest of the day."

"But perhaps," said Mr. Rowland, "you have had more advantages than your aunt has had. You have been at school, and learnt a number of things."

"Oh, yes, I've been at school," said the girl. "I was at Miss Gibbs's in St. Vincent Square. It's rather a grand place, but I have my doubts about what we learnt there. Aunty sent me because it was so grand—the parents coming in their carriages —Mr. MacColl's daughters, that has the splendid shop in Buchanan Street, and people like that. Miss Gibbs only took me because she was told about papa being so rich. The MacColls have a pony trap of their own, and a boy in livery to drive about with them," said Marion, with a discontented face. "If my papa is really so rich, I don't see why I shouldn't have a pony trap too."

"When he comes home——" Rowland began.

"Oh, when he comes home! I once thought I would like that, though both Archie and me would have liked it better if he had sent for us out to Ingia. But maybe you don't know what has happened? Papa has married again! He's married a governess, or something of that kind, that has just caught him for his money. Aunty says there are no fools like old fools. And what will we be now? We might just as well be anybody's children as belong to a man that has got a

new wife. She is just sure to put him against us to get all the money for herself——"

It was all Rowland could do not to spring up and silence with an angry hand this little pert voice, with its ignoble complaint. He was very angry, but he subdued himself. "I should like to see your brother," he said curtly, for just then the door had been heard to open by a latch-key, and some one had come in.

"Archie," said Miss Marion, elevating her voice, but without any other movement. "Come in here. Here's a gentleman that knows papa."

The door of the room was ajar. It was pushed open, more gently than might have been expected, by a tall lad, his face highly coloured by the still unsubdued flush of violent exercise. His countenance was of a milder, perhaps feebler, type than that of his sister, and his dress and manner were something between those of an assistant gentleman in a shop and a young clerk. His clothes were good enough, but not very well made or carefully kept. Rowland's heart gave a leap, however, when this head looked in, for the boy had his mother's eyes—kind, honest, well-meaning eyes, devoid of guile. They looked in with an inquiry in them, and then brightened up. The door opened wide, and the young man came in and went up to Rowland, holding out his hand: "If he's from papa," he said, a little broadly—(papaw would be nearer the sound, yet not so much as that), "he's very welcome." In the delightful

revulsion the father felt unspeakably grateful, though there was little to call forth that sentiment.

"I've been telling him," said Marion, holding up her arm again in order that her bangles might drop back with a tinkle, which evidently was agreeable to her, "that we're very disappointed that papa didn't send for us to Ingia, and then we would have taken care of him and stopped this awful marriage, which will just be our destruction. And it would have been awful fun out there."

"You will think we've no business to speak of his marriage in that way. And neither we have," said the youth. "He's old enough to judge for himself."

"Old enough!" said Marion; "just so old that the parliament should stop people from making such fools of themselves. But there's no fools like auld fools, as aunty says."

"I don't go so far as that," said Archie, with an air of impartiality, "but of course it was a great disappointment. We've been brought up to think everything would be ours; and then, as my aunt says, there will perhaps be a large young family, and everything spoiled for May and me."

A flush such as would not have misbecome a young lover—a glow of warmth and pleasure—came over Rowland. He scarcely noticed the boy's reflection, for the curious shade of gratification which the last part of his speech gave him. A large young family;—not that perhaps: but the suggestion seemed to fill his veins with new life.

It was at this moment that a sound was heard upon the stairs, announcing Mrs. Brown's speedy appearance: a rustling of silk, and tinkle of ornaments, and some half-whispered remarks to the servant girl—"Ye tawpy! why did ye no show the gentleman into the drawing-room? He's just in the parlour, and that's not the place for visitors. When I give a ring to the bell, mind that ye're ready wi' the cake and wine."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Brown, appearing in the room, and using her full and sonorous voice, "May, what tempted ye to bring a gentleman into this small bit of a room—just a family parlour, no fit for visitors, and the drawing-room standing useless up the stair? I havena heard your name, sir, but I'm sure I'm glad to see ye. I was in the middle of some femily business, and I could not get away before."

Her appearance, however, contradicted this excuse. Mrs. Brown had put on a silk dress of a brilliant colour, which she called ruby, and which glistened and rustled exceedingly. She wore a big locket on her ample bosom; her watch, a large one, was twisted into her belt, depending from a long and heavy gold chain, which was round her neck. She had a number of rings upon her fingers. Her cap was an elaborate construction trimmed with ribbons of the same colour as her dress. Her appearance, indeed, as, large and ruddy and full of colour, she came in through the narrow doorway, turned the very atmosphere in the room to a rosy hue.

"Jean," said Rowland, rising from his chair.

She gave a scream, and gazed at him with wondering eyes. "Wha are ye?—wha are ye?—for I'm sure that I've seen ye before. The lass has no sense to ask a visitor his name."

"Is it possible that ye don't know me, Jean?"

"God bless us!" she said, "it's just Jims Rowland himself! Eh, man, I'm glad to see ye, Jims. Is it just you!—bairns, it's your papaw. Lord bless me that I should have been such a time putting on my cap, and Jims Rowland waiting for me down the stair."

"Papa-w!" with about half of a W at the end of the last syllable, said Archie.

"Papa!" said Marion. They were both discomfited, but the girl least. She fell back a little upon the bodyguard as it were of her brother. "It was *you* that said that about the new family," she whispered in Archie's ear.

"I am not denying it," said Archie. "He had no business to come in like this and take us unawares."

Mrs. Brown gave Rowland a fat hand to shake, and then she subsided into a chair and began to cry. "Eh, to think it should be you! and sae mony years come and gane since ye parted with us a'—and such things as have happened. Ye was but young then, and your heart was running on many a thing out of common folks' way—and to see ye back again looking little the worse, and a' your fancies fulfilled! It's just the maist wonderful thing I ever heard of. But, eh! Jims Rowland,

you're an awfu' changed man from what ye were when ye went away."

"I am seventeen years older," Rowland said.

"It's no that—but you're far different. You were a heart-broken lad then. 'Twas for the loss of your wife, my bonnie sister Mary—and now you're back with a new lady to put out her very name from the airth."

"I think," said Rowland in his own defence, "that not to marry again for more than sixteen years was surely enough to show my respect for her memory."

"I never thought you would have married again," said Mrs. Brown. "Mony a time it's been said to me, 'He'll get another wife out yonder'—but I would never believe it. I just could not think it true. Eh, man, when ye had a bonny dochter o' your ain grown up, and just real well qualified to be the mistress of her faither's house——"

"Jean," said Mr. Rowland, with seriousness, "I have a great regard for you. You've been, no doubt, a careful guardian of the children—but I cannot answer to you for what I do."

"Na, na, I never imagined it. Ye just acted to please your ain sel', considering nobody. I'm no finding fault—I'm just wondering. And there's the bairns. What think ye of them? Are they no a credit to any house? and a pleasure to the eyes and a comfort to the heart?"

She drew Marion forward with a vigorous hand and placed the two side by side, confronting their father, who sat and gazed at them helplessly. Two

well-grown, well-looking young creatures they were indeed. But Rowland gazed at them with a gradual dying out of all light from his face; his lip dropped, his eyes grew blank. What could he say? Nothing: there was little to find fault with, nothing that could be expressed in ordinary words. A sort of dread came over him as he looked at them, the boy and girl of whom he knew nothing; who had speculated on him, a being of whom they knew nothing, as to what he would do for them, send for them to India, which would be awful fun, or disappoint them of their lawful expectation of being his heirs. He might never have known what were their sentiments, and perhaps would have remained remorseful all his life, thinking himself to blame in not responding to their affection, but for this unintentional revelation. And now it astonished him to find himself in face of the two who had formed such clear opinions of their own as to what his duty was, and how he had deviated from it. They thought his duty was to take care of and provide for them—and he thought their duty was to regard their unknown father with affection and submission. And neither one nor the other had come true. He could not make any reply to their Aunt's appeal. He got up and went to the window, and walked about the little room, knocking against the furniture. "This is a pokey little place you are in," he said by way of getting rid of some of the vexation in his mind. "I could have wished that you had been in a better house."

"It's a very good house," said Mrs. Brown. "This is just the femily parlour—but if ye'll come up to the drawing-room, ye'll see what a nice room it is. It's just as pleasant a house as there is in Glasgow, if maybe no so big as in some of those new crescents and squares out on the Kelvin Road. But everybody knows that the Sauchiehall Road is one of the best pairts. What ails ye at the house? it is just a very good house, quite good enough for the bairns and me."

Rowland could make no reply. He stood and stared blankly out of the window into the elder-berry tree, and said no more.

CHAPTER XI.

"YOU will stay to your dinner?" Mrs. Brown said. The moment that these words, prompted by an inalienable Scotch hospitality, whose promptings are sometimes less than prudent, had left her lips, she reddened suddenly, and cast an alarmed look at Marion, who, for her part, was still standing, contemplating her father, with a look in which a little defiance was concealed under a good deal of curiosity. The girl was considering how to approach and mollify this unknown parent, who, after all, was papa, the giver of all things, and upon whom was dependent the comfort, not to say grandeur of life to come. It was a pity she had spoken so unadvisedly about his wife, but that, after all, was his own fault. Marion had some experience in novels, which supply so many precedents to the ignorant and young, and knew what a meeting between a father and his children ought to be. He ought to have taken them into his paternal arms. She, the girl, ought to have thrown herself upon his bosom in tears and rapture. He ought to have lifted his

eyes to the skies or the ceiling, and have said : "Just like this was her mother when I saw her first!" None of these things had been done, and the girl was a little at fault. To look at his back as he stood at the window, evidently out of temper, discouraged and discouraging, was a thing that suggested no kind of original procedure to her mind. And she was consequently of no manner of comfort to her anxious aunt, who had instantly remembered that the mid-day dinner of the family was nothing but hotch-potch. And how was she to set down a rich man, who fared sumptuously every day, to a dinner of hotch-potch? Marion's mind was occupied with much more important things. How was she to do away with the disadvantages of that first introduction, and make herself agreeable to papa? A girl in a novel, she began to think, would steal up to him and put her arm through his, where he stood looking out into the elderberry tree, and lean her head upon his shoulder, and perhaps say, "Dear papa!" But Marion's courage was not quite equal to that. As for Archie, he simply stood still and stared, too completely taken by surprise to make any movement whatever, contemplating his father's back with unspoken disappointment and dismay.

"Weel," said Mrs. Brown, after waiting in vain for a response, seizing dexterously the opportunity of escape; "I'll just leave ye to make acquaintance with one another, for I have things to see to in the house; and Marion, you'll just see that your papa has a glass of wine, for the dinner, as you're

aware, is no till two o'clock. I'll send in the girl with the tray—she ought to have been here before now—and I'll leave you two to entertain your papaw."

Then there followed another rustling of the silken gown, and tinkle of the long gold chain, with its bunch of *breloques*, after which came another tinkle, that of glasses, as "the girl" brought in a tray with two decanters, a large plate of shortbread, and one of another kind of cake. The wax flowers had to be lifted from the centre of the table to make room for this, and the process occupied a little time and a good deal of commotion, of which Rowland was conscious with increasing irritation and annoyance. He began to feel, however, that the position was ridiculous, and that to stand at the window, with his back to the other occupants of the room, was certainly not to make the best of the situation in any way. He turned round accordingly, and threw himself into a chair, which rocked under him. The strangeness alike and familiarity of the scene were more bewildering to him than words could say. Mrs. Brown, in the wealth which he had supplied, had done all she could to be genteel, poor woman, according to her lights. The tray with the port and sherry was her best rendering of what a proper reception ought to be. In the foundry days it would no doubt have been a little whisky and a bit of oatcake. The instinct was the same, but, according to all the good woman knew, this was

the most lofty and cultured way of setting it forth.

"Will you take port wine or sherry wine, papa?" Marion said.

"I will take nothing, thank you. Shut the door, I beg. I want to speak to you, my dear." He turned towards her, but his look stopped short at Archie—at Archie, the loutish lad whose lowering forehead was bent over his mother's honest blue eyes.

"I did wrong not to tell you at once who I was. I suppose I had some absurd idea that you might recognize me. To make up for this, I'll forget all the foolish things you have said about my wife. As they arise from simple ignorance, and you have had unfortunately no acquaintance with ladies, I'll look over all that, and we'll begin square."

Marion listened, standing with the decanter in her hand. "Will you really take nothing, papa; not a little sherry to keep you going till dinner-time?" she said.

"My aunt," said Archie, "is a very good woman; she has been everything that is kind to us, and my own mother's sister—more than the grandest lady in the land. If she is not a lady, neither was my mother, I suppose?"

"Your mother was—like nobody else, nor to be compared with anybody else," said Rowland hastily. "But you are quite right to stand up for your aunt. I don't doubt she has been very kind to you."

"Oh," said Marion, turning her head, "no more than was just her duty, papa. We've done a great deal for her. There is just as much to be said on the one side as the other. You can take a piece of shortbread, Archie, and a wee drop of the sherry wine will do you good."

The lad pushed her hand away somewhat rudely. "I wish," he said, "you wouldn't interrupt what papaw says."

The girl broke off a little piece of the cake for herself. She poured out a little of the port and sipped it. "Aunty will be vexed if she thinks it hasn't been touched," she said, munching and sipping. Rowland turned his look from her to that pair of blue eyes which were like his Mary's. They were the only comfort he had in the strange circumstances. He addressed himself to them as to something in which there was understanding in this uncongenial place.

"I am afraid, my boy," he said gently, "that we've all been wrong. I first for forgetting that you were growing into a man. It was only my wife's enquiries, anxious as she was to hear everything about you, that showed me my dreadful mistake in this respect. And your aunt has been wrong, which was very excusable on her part, in forgetting that your bringing up, for the position you are likely to have, should have been different. Where have you been at school?"

"I've been at a very good school," said Archie; "it's no fault of the school. I've maybe been a

little idle. Aunty always said—that is, I thought, as there was plenty of money, what was the use of being a galley slave. So I just got through."

"And what *is* the use," said Marion, "of toiling like the lads that have to go up for exams. when you are such a rich man, papa, and he will never need to work for his living. It's always a nice thing to get grand prizes; but he was not going in for anything, and what for should he have risked his health, that was of far more consequence?"

"Let's alone, May. I was maybe wrong, but that was my own opinion, papaw."

"Don't say papa," said Rowland, glad to give vent to a little of the intolerable impatience that possessed him. "Call me father. You talk about exams. and working for your living. Do you know what a young man of the upper classes, far better than you, is doing at your age?—I don't mean the fops and the fools—I hope," he said with some vehemence; "a son of mine will never be either the one or the other. Do you know what they do? They work in their colleges till they are older than you, or they go and travel, or they're away with their regiment. There are idle ones but they are no credit, any more than an idle working lad is a credit. Are you doing anything, boy?"

Archie's countenance fell a little. "I'm in two or three debating societies," he said; "there's a

great many students in them. We have very good debates. I've read a paper twice ; on the Scotch question and about local government."

"What's the Scotch question?" said Mr. Rowland ; but like other careless inquirers, he did not wait for an answer. "At your age," he said, "you are better employed learning than teaching, in my opinion."

"Oh, papa," said Marion, who had finished her cake and her wine, "it's not teaching! He doesn't get anything for it. He subscribes to keep up the society. It's quite a thing a gentleman might do."

"Hold your tongue, May," said her brother.

"Quite a thing a gentleman might do!—and he is not a gentleman, but only a wealthy engineer's son," said Rowland with a sudden flash of mortified pride. The boy in his badly-cut clothes filled him with an exasperation not less keen that it was mingled with tenderness for his mother's eyes, and the ingenuous expression in his own countenance. "I've been a fool!" he said ; "I thought, I suppose, that you would take my rise in life like nature, and start from where I ended. I hoped you would turn out like—the lads I've been accustomed to see. How should you? They all started from gentlemen's houses, and had it in their veins from their birth."

His two children stood opposite to him listening to this tirade, which they only half heard and did not half understand. They were quite bewildered

by his heat and vehemence and apparent displeasure. What was it that made him angry? Marion thought that her brother was very like a gentleman, and he thought that she was very like a lady. It was the utmost length of their ambition. The MacColls, whose father had the splendid shop in Buchanan Street, were not so like ladies as May, though they had a carriage with a pair of ponies. And as for Archie, he was of opinion that he was himself one of those manly and independent thinkers, whose mission it was to pull down the aristocrats, and to abolish caste wherever it might appear.

Mr. Rowland took another turn to the window, and wiped his forehead and came back to his chair. He was very anxious to subdue himself, since the defects of the two young people were not their fault, nor were they at all likely to be cured in this way. He tried even to put on a smile as he said to Marion, "And what are you doing with yourself?"

"Oh," said the girl, "I'm just like Archie. I am doing nothing to speak of. Aunty has always said it was not necessary, and there is very little to do. It's no profit making our things at home, for you can buy them cheaper in the shops. At first aunty used to make Archie's shirts, but they never fitted him, and it was no saving. So I just fiddle about and plague everybody, aunty says."

"And who are the people you plague?" said her father.

"Oh!" The young lady hung her head a little and blushed and laughed. "Well! there's Archie and aunty first of all; and then there's Archie's debating boys, as we call them; and the philosophers—fine philosophers to be so minding what a lassie says!" She laughed again consciously. "I am sure I never say a word to them but nonsense," she cried.

Mr. Rowland drew a long sigh out of the bottom of his heart. He had not thought much of the young ladies at the station, the General's daughters and the others; but Marion, as she stood with her head down and that foolish laugh conscious of her effect upon the philosophers, and proud of it, was still another species less honourable to womankind. What Evelyn would say! flashed across his brain like an arrow. But it was not her fault, poor thing; and he could not mend it. It was his duty, at least, as her father, to bear with her, to find no fault. For, after all, this was the natural outlet for a girl who had no other interests in her life.

"You must have," he said, "a little sense to talk to me now and then, for I am past the time for nonsense. There is nobody," he added with a little hesitation, "who will teach you that better than my wife."

"Oh!" said Marion: then she raised her eyes quickly, "she will be awfully clever, and know everything—for wasn't she a governess when you were married to her, papa?"

"No, she was not a governess," he said quickly. "That is a delusion which you seem to have got into your minds. Let me hear no more of it. She was a Miss Ferrars, of Langley Ferrars, one of the oldest families in England—as different from me in origin as she is superior to me in every quality. If you were in the very least like her, I should hope one day to be proud of you, Marion. But you will have to get rid of a great many defects first."

Marion made a little *moue* which was not unnatural. It was of course a very unwise speech on her father's part—but it is difficult under such exasperation to be always wise. She felt it, however, more prudent to take no notice, but to do her best to find out what were his intentions; which was a matter of the utmost importance to all.

"If you please, papa, are we going to live on here with aunty?" she asked.

The question gave him a startling sensation of relief: was it possible that this might be done? Would it not be kinder to leave them in the life to which they were accustomed? Poor Jean would probably break her heart if her children were taken away. They were more her children than his, he reflected; and money was no object. He could arrange their income so as to give Archie the freedom of a young man, without obliging the poor boy to qualify himself suddenly for the rarified atmosphere of Rosmore. This calculation

passed through Rowland's mind with the speed of light. What a happy untying of the knot would it be! He would not require to saddle himself with the discomfort and disappointment which probably would result from any attempt to prepare them for Rosmore. And they would not like Rosmore. It would be dull for them. No debating societies or philosophers' clubs to enliven their evenings. And the arrangements of the house would be so different. Oh, if he could but solve the question that was before him in that easy way!

But then there occurred to him—the person who would suffer most, the one and only person who would oppose any such compromise with his duty —Evelyn! He dared not appear before her with the information that he had left his children behind because it was their original sphere, because they would be no credit, an impracticable pair. He could imagine the look with which she would listen, the astonishment in her face. As likely as not she would get her bonnet at once, and, before he could stop, set out to fetch them home. That was the sort of thing she would do. She would have no evasion, not even that about breaking their aunt's heart. In that case, she was capable of suggesting that the aunt should be brought to Rosmore, but not that the responsibility of the children should be shuffled off. What a world of thoughts can be disposed of in a minute or two! this whole course of argument, question and reply,

ran through his mind while Marion's short question was being put, and before he could make up his mind what to say in reply. He played with it for a moment, still keeping that blissful possibility before him—"What would you like best?" he asked.

The girl and the boy looked at each other—they too had a multitudinous flood running through their minds, rushing like a mill race. They had an agreeable life enough so far as their instincts went: nothing to do—which, being on the very edge of the world that has to work hard for its living, and does not like it, was delightful to them, just as work is delightful to those whom nature provides with nothing to do. But then they were tired of this life all the same, as most people are, if the possibility of a fundamental change is put before them. And though they were rather afraid of their father, and what he might require from them, the excitement of the change to a great house, horses and carriages, and all the splendour they had dreamt of was a strong counterbalance. They did not take Aunty Jean's heart much into consideration: and it would certainly be a terrible break-down from the vague future of glory before them, which all their friends believed in, did they step back into the monotony of Sauchiehall Road and the guardianship of Aunty Jean. They consulted each other with their eyes, and then Marion replied, "We would rather be with you, papa."

"It is with me you ought to be," said Rowland,

with a sigh. "I have taken a house down the Clyde, which you may have seen if you have ever been down that way. You see it from the water as you come across. It is called Rosmore——"

"Rosmore!" they both said with bated breath.

"You know the place? It is a place I've always wanted since I was a lad like Archie. I used to stand on the deck and glance at it, but never said a word to anybody. That's where I am going to live."

"For a little while—for the salt water?" said they.

"For altogether; for as many years, I hope, as I live."

"Oh!" they said again together, looking at each other. Rosmore was far more splendid than anything they had imagined. They had been with their aunt down to a cottage on the peninsula for the benefit of what Mrs. Brown picturesquely called "the salt water," *i.e.*, the sea-bathing: so they knew something of what it was. It was very grand, but perhaps a little oppressive to imaginations accustomed only to the cottage. Their eyes, looking at each other, had a question in them. They were overawed, but a little frightened too.

"I suppose—there will be a carriage, or a gig, or something. It is a long, long way up from the pier."

"There will, I hope, be carriages enough for anything that is required, and horses to ride, and

most things that may be found necessary. Archie, I hope," said the father, unconsciously replying to Marion, "can ride?"

At this the boy burst into a great laugh. "I do not know, for I never did try," he half sang, half said, with a big voice, inclining to be bass, but uncertain yet. His face grew red and his eyes shone. He communicated his pleasure to his sister by a look, but this time she did not respond.

"And I——" she said, with a contraction of her soft girlish forehead, "will have to bide at home."

"No," said Rowland, feeling at last a little pleasure in the idea of changing so entirely the lives of his children, and surrounding them with every good thing, "you will find plenty of pleasant things to do. But," he added, pausing, "what will become of the poor Aunt Jean if I take you both away?"

They looked at each other again, and repeated in different tones the same "Oh!" Marion uttered that exclamation with a toss of her head, and a tone of indifference. "Aunty has made plenty out of us," she said.

Archie here, for the first time, took the words out of her mouth. "She has aye expected it," he said. "It would vex her more if you didn't take us."

"Are you sure of that? She has been like a mother to you."

"But mothers expect," said Archie, "that their families should go away."

Marion shrugged her little shoulders. "She'll be free then to go to the saut water or wherever she likes," she said, "and not say she is doing this or doing that, not for herself, but for him and me."

"Then you are not sorry to leave her solitary?" said Rowland.

They consulted each other again with their eyes, with a sort of frank surprise at the question. "Oh, she'll have her friends," said Marion; and she added, "It could never be thought that we would stay here with her, when our papa had come home and was wanting us, and a grand house and horses and carriages. That's very different from Sauchiehall Road."

Archie looked as if he saw something more in the question—but he did not say anything. He was slow of expression, and perhaps not even so nimble of thought as his sister. He looked, however, a little wistfully at his father, studying his countenance.

"And what will become of her?" Rowland said.

"Oh, she will just bide on," said Marion; "she has always expected it. She has her friends. There's the church quite near, and she'll go to all the prayer meetings. She aye says she has no time as long as we're here, but that when we're away she will go to them, every one. But I think she'll change her mind," said the girl with a laugh, "and go out to her tea."

Archie had caught his father's eye, and was much confused. "It'll not be any the worse for her?" he said.

Before the question could be answered, Mrs. Brown came in, a little flushed but beaming. "The dinner is just ready," she said. "Bairns, did I not tell you to take up your papaw to the drawing-room till the cloth was laid? And you'll be hungry, Jims, just off your journey." She spoke as if she supposed him to have come straight from India without any chance of a meal upon the way.

The dinner was a curious mixture of what was excellent and what was bad. The hotch-potch, for which Mrs. Brown apologized, was excellent. It is a soup made with lamb and all the fresh young vegetables, which, in the characteristic Scotch *cuisine*, supplies the place in summer of the admirable broth. Rowland had never tasted anything better; but it was followed by what Mrs. Brown called a "made dish," which was as bad as the other was excellent, but of which the good woman was very proud. "You see my hand has no forgotten its cunning," she said, with a smirk across the table; and Rowland then recollected with dismay that in the distant ages, almost beyond his own recollection, Jean, his wife's elder sister, had exercised the craft of a cook.

"Weel," she said, after the meal, herself taking him up stairs to the glories of the drawing-room, "you're satisfied? You would be ill to please if

you were not, with these two bonnie bairns. And just as good as they are bonnie—Archie as steady as a rock, aye in to the minnint, though thae student lads are no that careful. Eh, Jims, what a pleasure it would have been to my poor sister to have seen them grown up like that."

This softened, even while it exasperated, Rowland —for no doubt poor Mary's imagination, like her sister's, could have gone no further than the pert intelligence of Marion and the steadiness of her boy. "I should have liked better if they had been kept to some occupation," he said, "not suffered to lead useless lives."

"Eh!" said the aunt in astonishment, "useless! but what would ye have them to be, and you a rich man? You wouldna have had me bring them up like a puir body's bairns? They are just as well conditioned as can be, bidable, and pleased with what's set before them. I've had no trouble with them: they will never have given me a sore heart but when they're taken from me—Oh, I'm no saying a word! It's your right and it's your duty too. They maun go, and I've aye counted upon it —and God's blessing 'll go with them. They've never given me a sleepless night nor a day's trouble. Oh, man, be thankful! There's no mony that can say as much. The first sore heart they'll give me is when they go away."

The good woman sat down upon one of the many gilded and decorated chairs of which she was so proud, and put her handkerchief over her face as

she might have done the apron which she was no longer happy enough to wear, and lifted up her voice and wept: "My hoose will be left to me desolate," she said, "me that has been, though with none of my ain, a joyful mother of children. But I'll no say a word. It's just what I've known would happen this many and many a year. And it's my pride and pleasure to think that I give them back to you everything that two good bairns should be."

Rowland was silenced once and for all. He had not a word to say to the woman thus deeply conscious of having fulfilled her trust. There was something pathetic in the thought that the two children who were so unsatisfactory, so disappointing and incomplete to him, were to this kind woman the highest achievement of careful training, everything that boy and girl could be, and that their mother would have been of the same opinion had she lived to see this day.

CHAPTER XII

ROWLAND went back to his hotel in the evening in much depression, yet excitement of mind. He had taken his two children out with him in the afternoon, with a remorseful desire to please them in any way he could, since he could not feel towards them as their father ought to feel. It was difficult at first to make out how he could please them best, and at last it was Marion's indications of desire that were the rule of the party. He procured the smartest carriage the hotel could supply, with a pair of horses, and drove them about, Marion in the fullest rapture of satisfaction, increased by her father's presents to her of various articles which she admired in the shop windows as they passed. It amused him, and yet hurt him, to see the air with which she got down from the carriage and swept into the jewellers and the haberdashers. Her eyes swam in a rapture of light and happiness. She raised her little flowing skirt, which was more like Sauchiehall Road than the temples of fashion which she visited, with an air

that suggested velvet. Poor little Marion ! it was impossible to be more happy than she was, turning over the pretty things presented to her, and choosing whatever she pleased, while papa, with his pocket-book full of notes, stood by. She had taken him to Mr. MacColl's "splendid shop" in Buchanan Street, with a sense that the school friends who had overwhelmed her with their grandeur might be thereby somewhat subdued in their pretensions ; and it was ecstasy to her to buy the most expensive things, and to feel the superiority of the position of patron. "It is a very good shop," she said, so that all the young gentlemen and young ladies behind the counter might hear, "and I will advise mamma, when she comes, to patronize Mr. MacColl."

Archie, who dragged behind, much bored and ashamed of himself, opened wide eyes at the introduction of this name, and Rowland, for his part, had a sudden pang of anger to think that this vulgar little girl should venture to speak of his Evelyn so—before he recollected, poor man, that the vulgar little girl was his own child, and that it was most desirable that she should give that character and title to his wife. "Will I say the things are for Miss Rowland of Rosmore?" she whispered to him. "Certainly not," he said with irritation. And yet he had no right to be angry with the poor little thing who knew no better. He encouraged her in her purchases by way of compensation to her for his unfatherly thoughts.

"And now, don't you think you might buy a silk dress or something for the poor aunty?" Marion tossed her little head.

"She got yon ruby silk just six months ago, and she's got more in her drawers than she can ever wear;" and sinking her voice a little—"it's all off *us*. She would never have had a silk——"

"Hush, child!" said Rowland imperatively; but Marion was not to be hushed.

"It's quite true, papa. She has just dresses upon dresses, and last winter she made down one of hers for me—me that it all belonged to! She said I was too young to have new silks for myself. I never put on the horrid old thing! I would have thought shame for your daughter, papa!"

"There are worse things than wearing old dresses that my daughter might be ashamed of," he said hastily. But then he repeated to himself that it was not her fault: it was his fault—his alone, that he had neglected his children, and how could he ever make up to them for that unfortunate beginning? To please Archie they drove to a cricket match going on in a field in a remote part of the town, where Mr. Rowland's carriage made a great sensation, with the coachman in the hotel livery. Rowland himself was a little ashamed of the turn-out. But even Archie, though much simpler than his sister, jumped down from the carriage with a swagger, and strolled across the ground with an ineffable air of splendour and superiority, which made his father—oh, his poor

father!—so conscious of all these weaknesses, laugh. It was a rueful laugh; and to see Marion sit and bridle and plume herself with little touches of re-arrangement to her hat and her tie and her gloves, looking as well as she knew how, as a fine lady and patroness of the humble but lively scene should look, was such a painful amusement as the poor man could never forget. He could not help being amused, but it was rueful fun. And then he said to himself, repressing at once the levity and the pain, that had he never left them, he would have been as proud of them as Jean was, and never would have found out the imperfections.

Archie brought several of his friends in their cricketing clothes up to the carriage to see his sister, and to be introduced to papaw. Poor Archie could not make up his mind to abandon that "papaw." "Father" seemed almost disrespectful to so great a personage as the rich Rowland, the great engineer. He was very anxious, however, to explain, *sotto voce*, that several of the young men in their flannels who gathered round Marion, and to whom she dispensed smiles and small jokes, like a duchess at Lord's, were "students," a description which slightly mollified Rowland. Students were better than shop-boys, which was what Archie himself was painfully like. Never had Mr. Rowland encountered a harder piece of work in his life than to smile and tolerate the small talk of his children and their friends. He could not help comparing

them to the people he had been accustomed to in late years,—people, he said vehemently to himself, perhaps not worth half so much! These lads, if they were students, were probably maintaining themselves, living like Spartans, not to draw upon the limited resources at home. How much nobler and finer than the young officers and civilians he had been in the habit of seeing in that same guise, yet how different! That he, a man of the people himself, should so see the difference; that he should be so pained by it, and by the fact that his son was at home in the one strata of company, and would be quite out of the other! How painful, how miserable, how ridiculous, how wrong altogether it was! He exerted himself to talk to some of them, and said angrily to himself that they were much more conversible than the subalterns, at whom he would have thrown a jibe, whom he would not have taken the trouble to talk to! But what of that? Archie swaggered about the ground, proud and inwardly uplifted because of the carriage, the pair of horses, the pretty sister, and papaw. Had he dared to ask them all to Rosmore, where they might see the family in their glory, his cup of triumph would have been full; but he did not quite venture upon such a strong step as that.

Then they drove home in triumph to the Sauchiehall Road, where the people next door, and next again, looked out of their windows to see the splendid vehicle dash up to Mrs. Brown's, and the baskets of fruit and of flowers that were

lifted out. She herself came out to the door to meet them, with her dress rustling, and her gold chain tinkling, and her ruby ribbons floating behind her. "Weel!" she cried, "ye've gotten back! and have ye had a grand drive? and eh, the bonnie flowers; but what an extravagance, for they would cost just a fortune; and a handfu' of sweetpeas is just so pleasant in a room. And the pine aipples! Jims, my man, you're just a prodigal; but we cannot be severe on you, a man just new come home." She was very anxious that he would come in "to his tea." But poor Rowland had borne enough for one day. He made the excuse of business to do and letters to write. "Ou, ay, ye'll just have madam to write to, and tell her all about your bonnie bairns," Mrs. Brown said, with a cloud upon her brow.

Yes, thank Heaven, he had madam to write to; but whether he would tell her or not about the children was a matter upon which he could not make up his mind. He drove back to his hotel in solitary splendour, still somewhat ashamed of the hotel carriage, the pretension of the showy vehicle, and the shabby horses. Should he tell Evelyn all about the children? It seemed almost a disloyalty to poor Mary who was gone, to confide his disappointment in her children to any one, above all to the wife who had taken her place, though at so long an interval of years that he felt no disloyalty in that. If Evelyn had been with him, her sympathy would have been his

best solace, and she would have found something to say that would have been a comfort to him. He was certain of that—something that would prove to him that things were not so bad as they seemed, that they would mend. But to put it in black and white, to put the disappointment of his soul into words, was what he could not do. He did not even feel sure that he wanted her to know it. If he could only keep his opinions to himself, pretend that they were all he could desire, and leave her to find out! It was quite possible that she would be more tolerant than he; her pride would not be injured as his was by the shortcomings of those who were his own. She would not feel the mortification, the disappointment, and perhaps she would not even see so much to find fault with in them. She had finer insight than he had; she was more charitable She would see all the good there was, and not so much of the vulgarity. What did she know about vulgarity? She would think, perhaps, it was characteristic, original, Scotch. Rowland had listened often grimly enough to such fashionable views of manner and deportment. He had heard a man, whom he considered a brute, explained away in this manner. Evelyn might take that view. So he locked up his chief trouble in his own mind, and wrote to her that delightful letter, telling her that whatever she did would be right, whether to stay in town or to set up at once at Rosmore. He was not sure himself that he did not look upon that suggestion of staying in town

as a relief and postponement for which he would be grateful. Yet what did a little time matter, one way or another? Sooner or later the step would have to be taken; the permanent household formed. Indeed, he felt that it would be natural for the children to expect that their father should take them to London, and let them see something of the world, which was a suggestion at which he shivered more than ever.

Poor Rowland! being only an engineer, though a distinguished one, and a man of the people, though risen to great wealth, and sometimes even objected to in his own person as not a gentleman, it was very hard that he should be thus sensitive to the breeding of his children, and feel their imperfections as keenly as the most accomplished "smart" man could have done. Perhaps had he not married and learned to see through Evelyn's eyes, this catastrophe might not have happened. And he had been so long parted from the children that there was little real love, only the vague instinct of partiality to counteract the shock: and that instinct of partiality often makes everything worse, giving a double clear-sightedness, and exigence of impossible perfection to the unfortunate parent whose fatherhood is mortifying and miserable to him, not a thing of pride but of shame. These were much too strong words to use—but they were not too strong from Rowland's point of view. The only comfort he had was in his boy's eyes, which were like his mother's. And even that

thought was not without a pang, for it thrust upon him the question whether the mother, had she lived, would not have been like Jean. Had it been so, it was evident that Rowland himself would not have been what he was. He would have stayed on in the foundry and become a foreman, and perhaps in course of time would have ascended the social scale to a house in the Sauchiehall Road: and his son would have been a clerk in an office, and he himself would have been very proud to think that Archie had friends who were "students," and was steady, and read papers at the Debating Society. His brain seemed to whirl round as he thought of all that which might have been. It is usually the better things which might have happened to us that we think of under that formula—but there is another side in this, as in all human matters. And when Rowland thought what might have been the natural course of his life had Mary lived, it gave him a giddiness which seemed to suspend all his powers. Would it perhaps have been happier so? He would have been very fond of his children, and proud to think that they were taking a step above himself in the world—and Mary would have grown stout like her sister, and would have had, perhaps, a rustling silken gown like Jean's, and produced with pride a bottle of port-wine and a bottle of sherry-wine when she received a visitor. And he himself would have been proud of his family and contented with his moderate means. He would have taken Archie and May to the saut

water, and pointed out to them the opening in the trees and the house upon the knoll with the white colonnade, and Mary would have said with a laugh, "Hoot, your father's just doited about that white house on the brae." What a difference, what a wonderful difference! And which would have been best?

James Rowland, tenant of Rosmore, with a name known over India, and his money in all manner of lucky investments, and Evelyn Ferrars for his wife, thought of all this with a curious strain of sensation. He was in many respects an imaginative man. He could realize it all as distinctly as if he saw it before him. He knew the kind of man he would himself have been—perhaps a better man than he was now—a straightforward, honourable man, limited in his horizon, but as trustworthy, as honest and true as a man could be. And he would have known all the real good there was in his children then, and they would have been free of the vulgarities and meanness they had acquired by their false position and mistaken training. It was very startling to think how different, how altered everything might have been. Was he thankful that poor Mary had died? That which had been such a blow to him, driving him out of the country, had been the foundation of all his fortune. It had been the most important event, the turning point in his life. He would never have seen Evelyn, or would have contemplated her afar off as a fine lady, a being to be admired or made light of, but neither

understood nor known. How his head went round and round!

It was naturally the same subject that suggested itself to his mind when he woke next morning to a new day, a day not like the last in which everything was unassured, but one in which certainty had taken the place of doubt, and he had no longer vague and exciting possibilities to think of, but only how to nourish and adapt the drawbacks which he knew. These cost him thought enough, all the more that the practical part of the matter had now to be determined, and every decision of life was so close to him that the sense of perspective failed, and it was impossible to realize the relative importance of things: how he should manage to satisfy their Aunt Jean, being for the moment of as great consequence as how he should order the course of their future existence.

He was received in Sauchiehall Road with great eagerness. Archie hurrying to open the door for him, while both Mrs. Brown and Marion appeared at the window as soon as his step was heard, full of nods and becks and wreathed smiles. Mrs. Brown wore another and different "silk," one that was brocaded, or flowered, as she called it, the foundation being brown and the flowers in various brilliant colours; and Marion had put on the trinkets he had bought to please her on the previous day in addition to those she had worn before, so that she too tinkled as she walked. Rowland received their salutations with as much

heartiness as was possible. But he was scarcely prepared for the questions with which Marion assailed him, dumbly backed up by Archie from behind with his mother's eyes pleading for every indulgence. "Oh you're walking, papa!" the girl cried with disappointment, "I thought you would have come in the carriage."

"It would be a great nuisance for me to have always to move about in a carriage," he said. "Besides I can't say that I am proud to be seen behind such horses, a pair of old screws from a hotel."

"Oh, you're not pleased with them! I thought they were beautiful," said Marion, and they go so splendidly—far, far better than a cab or a geeg. We were making up in our minds where we were to go to-day."

"Where you were to go?"

"To show you everything, papa," said Marion. "You must see all the sights now that you are here. Archie and me were thinking——"

"I knew the sights," he said interrupting her, "before you were born—but if you want the carriage, Archie can go and order it and take you where you please—I have many things to consult your aunt about."

"To consult—aunty!" Marion opened her eyes wide, and elevated her brow, but this impertinence did not disconcert Mrs. Brown—

"They just take their fun out of me," she said, with a broad smile; "they think I'm a'of the old fashion,

and ken naething. And deed it's true. They're far beyond me with their new-fangled ways. But ye see your papaw is no altogether of your way of thinking, Mey."

Marion nodded her little head again and again in astonished acquiescence; but by this time it had dawned upon her that to drive everywhere in "the carriage," she and Archie alone, would perhaps be still more satisfactory than with the grave countenance beside her of a not altogether understood papa—who did not enter into their fun, or even understood their jokes. The brother and sister accordingly hurried out together well-pleased, and Marion established herself in Rowland's room at the hotel while Archie ordered the carriage. The girl turned over all her father's papers, and examined closely the photograph of Evelyn which stood on his mantel-piece. "That'll be her," she said, and took it up and carried it to the window to see it better—"but no great thing," she added under her breath, "to have made such a catch as papa! Dear bless me, she's a very ordinary woman—nothing to catch the eye. She'll have plain brown hair, and no colouring to speak of, and not even a brooch or a locket round her neck. What could he see in a woman like that?"

"It's a nice kind of face," said Archie.

"So is aunty's a nice kind of a face—and plenty other people—but to catch a man like papa!"

Mrs. Brown had no greater pleasure in life than to see her children go out together in their best clothes

bent upon enjoyment. She stood at the window and watched them, as she did on every such opportunity. It was her way, even of going to church and performing the weekly worship, which was all she thought of in the light of religious observance —to watch them going, dressed in their best, with their shining morning faces, and Marion's ribbons fluttering in the air, and to laugh with pleasure, and dry her wet eyes, and say "The blessin' of the Lord upon them!" The humble woman did not want a share in their grandeur, not even to see the sensation they made when they walked into church, two such fine young things. She was content with the sight of them walking away. It was only when she turned her eyes, full of this emotion and delight, upon James Rowland's disturbed and clouded face, that she began to understand that all was not perfectly, gloriously well.

"Bless me! oh, Jims! a person would think you were not content."

"If you mean with the children," he said, "I don't see any reason I have for being content."

"Lord bless us!" said Jean, thunderstruck. She added after a moment, "I canna think but it's just your joke. No to be satisfied, and far more than satisfied! If you're no just as prood as a man can be of the twa of them—I would just like to know what you want, Jims Rowland. Princes and princesses? but so they are!"

"It is quite just what you say," he replied, hanging his head. "It's my fault, or it's the fault

of circumstances, that makes a thing very good in one place that is not good at all in another. But never mind that; the thing to be considered is, what is the best way of transplanting them to so different a kind of life?"

"Oh, there is no fears of that," said Mrs. Brown; "if you were transplanting them, as you say, from your grand life to be just in the ordinar' as they've been with me, I wouldna say but that was hard; but it's easy, easy to change to grandeur and delight; there's few but's capable of that."

"If it was all grandeur and delight!" said Rowland; "but there is not very much of the first, and perhaps none at all of the other. No delight for them, I fear. A number of rules they will have to give in to, and talk, dull to them, that they will have to listen to, and no fun, as they call it, at all; I don't know how they will like being buried in a country place."

"They will have horses and carriages, and everything that heart can desire—and servants to wait on them, hand and foot."

"Oh, yes, they will have horses, but, I suppose, they won't be able to ride; and carriages they don't know how to drive; and a road to take exercise upon, which to me is beautiful, but which leads to nothing but a view, and not half-a-dozen people to be seen all the way. Marion will not like that. I may get the boy broken in, but the girl—I don't know what my wife will do with the girl!"

"Ye are no blate," cried Mrs. Brown, "to speak of my Mey as the girrel! or what your wife would do with her. It's that that's ruined you, Jims Rowland—your wife! What had you ado with a wife, a strange woman, when your own dauchter was growing up, and old enough to sit at the head of your table and order your dinner to you! It sets you well to get a wife that will not know what to do with the girrel! What would my sister Mary say to think that was the way you spoke of her bonnie bairn. Man, I never knew ye had such a hard heart!"

"The question has nothing to do with my hard heart, if I have a hard heart," said Rowland. "We'd better leave that sort of thing aside. The question is, how are they to be brought into their new life?"

Mrs. Brown wiped her eyes and held up her head. "The thing is just this," she said, "I see no other way nor any difficulty, for my part: ye'll just take them home."

"Ah!" said the agitated father walking up and down the room, "it is very easy to speak. Take them home, but when, and how? without any breaking in? without any preparation to a life they don't understand and won't like?"

"Bless me! are you taking them to be servants, or to learn a trade!" cried Mrs. Brown.

CHAPTER XIII

IT was very difficult for Rowland to decide what course he ought to pursue practically at the moment after these bewildering experiences. He was a man who had a great contempt for what he would himself have called shilly-shallying, and for the impotence which could be mastered by difficulties, and could not make the most of a trying situation. He would a little time before have scoffed at the possibility of any such thing happening to himself. No such thing had ever happened in the course of his work, which had involved many interests far more important than the interests of two insignificant creatures—girl and boy: which had sometimes been weighted with the responsibility of life and death for many; and yet he had not paused and hesitated as now. Two insignificant creatures, girl or boy, will blot out earth and even heaven from you, standing so near as they do, annihilating all perspective. What short work would he have made with them had they been a gang of navvies, or more difficult, a staff of clerks or

engineers! But Marion and Archie were a very different matter. They had a right not only to all he could do for them, but to himself and everything that was best in him. Nothing could do away with that claim of nature. Not disapproval, dissatisfaction on his part, not even unworthiness on theirs. And they were not unworthy, poor things! Their only fault it was, and it was not their fault, that their father was in one atmosphere and they in another. Not their fault! he it was who had left them in that atmosphere—condemned them to it, and he must bear the penalty.

They enjoyed their day in the carriage, driving about wherever they liked, displaying their grandeur to admiring friends—at least Marion enjoyed it to the bottom of her heart. And she was *bon prince* in her elevation. She waited in all her splendour at the door of a little house, where everybody came to the window to stare at "the carriage" while a sick girl was hastily dressed in her best—and took the invalid out for a drive. There was a vein of kindness in the girl, and a warm desire to bestow favours which was partly the product of vanity and partly of a better inspiration. She was really proud and happy when the colour came faintly into the cheeks of her ailing friend, although she never failed afterwards to attribute her recovery to "yon drive I took you." The kindness was vulgar, and fed conceit, yet it was kindness in its way. Archie was not perhaps so happy. He soon tired of "the carriage," and desired to be left at the

cricket ground, which they again visited, and joined his friends not without a certain glow of superior rank and importance about him from the fact of his being dropped there by the carriage, yet glad to escape from a position that was tiresome.

They all dined that evening with Mr. Rowland at his hotel—Mrs. Brown in such splendour of apparel that her brother-in-law was abashed by her appearance. Marion was fortunately more simply arrayed, and her father tried to believe that it was her own good taste which made the difference. The poor man felt all their little solecisms at table with double force, as remembering that he had once himself felt all the perplexity which paralyzed Archie as to what he was to do with his knife and fork and table-napkin, and the finger-bowl which was put before him at dessert. As for Mrs. Brown, she showed no perplexity at all, but frankly broke every rule, stuck her fork into the potato she preferred, helped herself to the salt with her knife, and then ate her peas with it in the most assured simplicity, unconscious of criticism.

"Will you give me a little of that, sir?" she said to the waiter. "I'm no just sure what it is, but I would like to try. I tell the bairns no to be prejudiced, but just to try everything."

Rowland felt that the imperturbable waiters were laughing in their sleeves at this strange party. But Marion gave him a little comfort. Marion was as sharp as a needle. She had all her wits about her. She divined from the smallest indication what was

the right thing to do; but then she had read a great many novels, in some of which the very circumstances in which she now stood were set forth. Novels are a great help to an intelligent young lady endeavouring to acquire the manners of society to which she has been unaccustomed. Between these several sources of enlightenment she came out with credit from the ordeal, which made Archie feel himself a clown, and which Jean blundered through without being aware. This somehow eased the weight of trouble in Rowland's heart.

"And what are ye gaun to do the morn?" said Mrs. Brown, lying back in an easy chair with her cap strings unloosed, and a genial glow upon her countenance after her abundant meal. "Have ye some ferlies to let your father see? But he just knew them all before ye were born."

"I am afraid I have no time to see ferlies," said Rowland. "I've seen a great many in my time. I am engaged to-morrow: and I must get back to London as soon as I can. I can't leave my wife alone."

"Oh, man, ye might first let the bairns have their turn," said Jean with a cloud on her brow. But alarmed by the darkness of that which gathered on his, she added hastily, "They might take a trip down the water, if you're so busy. Ye canna expect them to settle to anything and you here."

Then Rowland had a momentary struggle with himself. He came out of it victoriously on the side of virtue. "I am going," he said, "to Ros-

more to-morrow. Perhaps you would like to come with me and see the house."

There was a cry of eager acceptance from Marion of this proposal, and Archie gave his father a look of pleasure. Mr. Rowland was emboldened to add —"We must make the most of it, for in a day or two I must go to London."

"That's just what they would like best of all," said Mrs. Brown. "Archie, puir laddie, would just give his little finger for a look of London. I've always said no, for it's a place full of temptations. But to be with his own father makes a great difference."

"And me," said Marion. "Ah, papa," she added, studying his countenance, "I want to see London; but far more I want to see mamma."

"Don't say———!" said Rowland, and then stopped. He felt a sort of pang of indignation to think of this girl calling Evelyn by that name. This girl—his own girl—his child! He stopped short with a hard-drawn breath of vexation. Of course she must say mamma if she would—or mother, a more sacred title. And it would be necessary for Evelyn to submit to it—Evelyn would desire it. Between these two certainties he felt himself caught as in a vice.

"I am sorry," he said, "that I can't take you with me to London—it is out of my power."

"Dear, man," said Mrs. Brown, "you that just have your pockets full of money, how can it be out of your power? It's a journey that costs dear,

and living in a hotel is just ruination; but you're no one to consider that. You mauna say it's out of your power."

"Money is not everything," said Rowland shortly.

"Eh, no—far be it from me to say it is; but in the matter of taking your two children upon a veesit, what else is there to think o'? Na, na, there are plenty things it canna buy. It can neither bring ease o' body nor peace o' mind; but railroad tickets to London—Hoot! it's siller alone that's wanted—and you that has just your pockets full!"

"It is out of the question," said Rowland; and then he stopped suddenly once more, for he had encountered the wistful look in Archie's eyes —the eyes that were his mother's. It cost him an effort to repeat his negative in the face of that silent appeal. "I cannot do it," he said hastily. "Another time—but not now. However, if you would like to come with me and see the house—"

This proposal was accepted *faute de mieux*, and he set off next morning accompanied by the two young people, who by this time had become a little accustomed to him, and had learned to adapt themselves a little to his "ways." Marion at least had learned to note when he was worried and put out, and though she was not yet at all aware what points in her conduct disturbed him, or that it was her conduct that disturbed him, her quick perception had already noticed that some-

thing did from time to time derange his equanimity, and that it was his children who were the cause.

"It will be Archie," she said to herself. Already, so quick is the contagion of a new sentiment, Marion had begun to be dissatisfied about Archie's clothes. His coat was rough and badly made in comparison with his father's coat; his boots were clumsy, his linen dingy. All these things she had found out for herself. Archie was not bad-looking: he was rather handsome than the reverse; but he had not at all the same appearance as his father, who was old and without any graces. This Marion discovered all by herself. She had not attained to any such enlightenment on her own account.

When they got out at Rosmore pier, other revelations began. They found a dogcart awaiting them with a beautiful horse and a groom, the perfection of whose get up was more than words could tell, though they were not learned enough to perceive that. Only a dog-cart!—Marion felt that she was coming down from the glories of "the carriage"; but the obsequiousness of everybody around reconciled her a little to the less dignified vehicle. The drive through the woods overawed the young people. They gave each other a look of unmingled gratification and dismay. When they reached the house itself, the dismay perhaps was uppermost, but they did not as yet venture to say a word. Nothing could be more beautiful than the situation of the house, or the woods which

approached it, when everything was in the full height of summer ; the sun blazing over a country in which at almost every corner there was a burn to toss back a dazzling ray. From the colonnade the view had been opened a little by judicious clearing, and the broad Clyde, like a silver sea, lay glistening at the foot of the knoll, with all its passing boats and sails, and the background of the smoky but not unpicturesque town throwing up its towers and spires on the other side of the estuary. They were impressed for a moment in spite of themselves, and lingered looking at the view while their father went indoors.

"It's awfully bonnie," said Archie.

"So it is," said Marion, holding her breath a little. They stood side by side overawed, not venturing to say any more. Indoors they were still more silent, following their father from room to room. In every one of them were workmen, and every kind of luxurious article was being added to the original furniture. By and by they became bewildered by the number of rooms and their names—dining-rooms and drawing-rooms were comprehensible, but the libraries, morning rooms, boudoirs, studies, made their heads go around.

"And what's this ?" said Marion in bewilderment.

"This is Mrs. Rowland's own sitting-room," said a polite functionary with what the young people characterized as an English accent.

"What does she want," said Marion, almost

angrily, "with another sitting-room, when she's got the dining-room and the drawing-room, the morning-room and the library?"

"Oh, that is just the thing, miss," said the functionary; an enigmatical saying which made the girl stare at him for a moment in perplexity, but added no light.

They wandered up stairs and down stairs, wondering where their own places were to be in the middle of this bewildering space and unaccustomed luxury. There were some small back rooms in the corner of a wing, to which instinctive suspicion naturally pointed as the "holes" that would be allotted to them.

"That's where she'll put us," said Marion, "to get us out of the way."

Archie did not make any reply, but he thought it very likely. To tell the truth, those back rooms were larger and quite as well fitted up as the rooms in Sauchiehall Road.

Rowland almost forgot their existence as he went over the house examining what had been done, pointing out what there was still to do. So much of his ideal was in it, of which nobody knew save himself. He had furnished the house in fancy many a time, fitted it up in such a way as house was never fitted up before. It filled him at once with sweet delight and disappointment, to see the reality growing before him. It was not, and could not be, ever so fine as his dreams, and yet it was Rosmore, and it was his. He went about anxious,

yet elated, looking out from every window to *savourer* over and over again the well-known prospect—the Clyde, visible in a different aspect from every corner; the boats upon its dazzling surface, which seemed to hang in space, which seemed to pause and quiver, as if upon the wing, as they crossed the openings, to give the passengers a sight of the house. He knew what was being said on the deck of the steamboats that rustled across and across. "Oh, ay, it's let—and maybe it will be sold—to Jims Rowland, that was once a lad in a foundry in Glescow, nae mair, and now is the great Railway Man from India, and has come hame very well-off, and gotten the place he had aye set his heart upon. Oh, my lord doesna like to part with it, nae doubt, but siller is not a thing to be turned from the door." He knew that was what was being said. He had heard it himself, or something very near it; it kept singing in his ears like a pleasant tune—"Jims Rowland, that was once a lad in a Glescow foundry, and has gotten the place he had aye set his heart upon." Yes, it was what he had set his heart upon, and it was his at the last. And to make it perfect was all his intent and thought. He forgot again that natural difficulty which his own neglect and forgetfulness had gone so far to make—the two standing under the colonnade, where they had strayed after their examination of the newly furnished rooms, and looking out again with a sullen shade over their eyes upon "the view."

"Well?" he said coming suddenly upon them, full of his own elation and excitement, "and what do you think of the house?"

There was a pause; and then Marion answered him. "Oh, the house is very well, papa. It is a great big house, and there is a fine view."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"I don't know what more I can say. It will be awfully lonely in the winter-time, and when it's raining; but perhaps you will only come here in the summer and have another place for the dark days."

"The dark days," he repeated with a little trouble. "You don't know much about it, I'm afraid," he added with an attempt to be jocular; "the fine folk go to London in the summer, and spend what you call the dark days in the country. That's the right thing to do."

"But it's awfully foolish," said Marion with a very serious face.

Archie did not say anything in articulate words, but he made a sort of murmur of assent.

"Now if it was me," said the girl, "I would live here in the summer and take one of the new houses, the new big houses out by the Park, or on the Kelvin Road; they're grand big houses, bigger than this, just like palaces, to spend the winter in; and where we could go to all the grand parties, and be near the football ground—where there was aye something going on. There will be very little going on here."

"Unless there might, maybe, be a curling pond," suggested Archie, but very dubiously and with a sigh.

Rowland was struck with a certain reasonableness in this suggestion, which chilled his enthusiasm a little in spite of himself. "Come and have some luncheon," he said, "and afterwards we can talk of that." Lunch was set out for them in a small room, one of the many which had bewildered Marion. There was already a tribe of servants in possession, and the small, well-ordered table and silent servants overawed the young people once more. The new butler had the air of a minister (he had, indeed, though Marion did not understand these fine distinctions, the air of a dean at the least), and it was all that the girl could do not to call him sir. She accepted what he handed to her meekly with a reverential submission to his better knowledge. As for Archie, he had committed himself, but fortunately not so as to be comprehended by any one but his sister, by offering the gentleman in black a chair.

"Well," said their father again, "so you think Rosmore will be dull, and there will be nothing going on?"

"That was my opinion," said Marion firmly. Archie was not to be reckoned upon in company as a steady backer up, and she thought it wisest not to give him the opportunity of betraying her. "The rooms are very pretty, and there's a beautiful view; but you cannot be always looking at the

view. And it's very rainy down here. It rains mostly every day. And then there are so many trees. In the winter-time it will be terrible dark and not a shop on this side, or a place to go to."

"You will have to lay in all your stores, my dear before the winter comes."

"No, not that," said Marion; "but the shops are always a diversion; it is not for buying things. And there will be no parties to go to."

"Have you many parties," said Rowland with a laugh, "where you are?"

Marion gave a glance round, feeling it necessary to keep up her dignity before the solemn servants. "Oh, yes," she said, "plenty! We go out a great deal. There was a ball last week at the MacColls. I was all in white; at my age, just new *out*, that's aye the proper thing."

"So you are *out*, are you?" said Rowland somewhat grimly. "The MacColls are——"

"Oh, papa, they are people of great consideration," said Marion stopping him; "it is a real good name, well-known everywhere." Marion was making very rapid progress. She was proud at their first interview of knowing the MacColls, who had the great shop in Buchanan Street. Now she had cut adrift the shop and sheltered her friends under the ægis of a well-known name, with all the skill of a leader of society. "But there's nobody here," she said, spreading out her hands and shaking her head.

"How do you know there is nobody here?

There seem a number of houses as far as I can see."

"Not of people like us, papa," said Marion; "not of houses that mamma could visit at." She had her eye upon the butler, who was visibly impressed, and to whom she was consciously playing. "There are only Glasgow people coming for the salt-water —I mean for the sea-bathing; and the Manse, and the like of that; no gentlemen's houses. Of course it was only *that* I was looking for," she added with the air of a princess. Archie sat opposite and regarded his sister with wide-open eyes. He did not know her in this new development. As a person of rank standing on her dignity, Marion was to him a new revelation. He admired yet wondered at her.

As for her father, he burst into a laugh which was louder and more boisterous than became his usual character. "You might perhaps," he said, "recommend the place to your friends, the MacColls, for the salt water."

"Papa!" said Marion in dismay. The butler was just going out of the room followed by his attendant footman. She watched him till he was quite gone, and the door softly closed behind him. Then she said in a lower tone, "I have always read that the servants know more about you than you know yourselves, and I took care to say very little about the MacColls; for though they are well-off, they are not—in our position, papa."

"Oh, May!" said Archie in consternation.

It was the comic side of this speech which first struck her father. He laughed once more loud and long. "You will soon be quite fit for a society lady," he said. But immediately fell into absolute gravity again, with a face blank as wood; discouraging and repressive, had Marion been sensitive. It was very amusing, but one does not desire to be so amused by one's own child.

"I was thinking chiefly," Marion resumed with dignity, "of mamma. She will expect some society, and there will be none; just the Manse, and a house or two like that, scarcely genteel, not in Our Position. We might do very well, Archie and me, though it would be dull; but she will be expecting to go out to her dinner, and to be asked to parties, and show off all her grand gowns. And there will be nobody. And not even a shop to go to, to spend an hour in an afternoon. And you cannot always be looking at the view. It is mamma that I am thinking about," Marion said.

He did not again bid her not to speak of Evelyn so; for was it not the best thing he could hope for, that his child should think of his wife as of a mother? but his heart revolted all the same, and the girl's commonplace prettiness, her little assured speech, even the undeniable sense that there was in her remarks, sense of the most prosaic kind, yet genuine enough in its way, exasperated him. He said dryly, "I think I can take my wife in my own hand."

"Yes," said Marion; "but maybe it will be a great

disappointment to her, when she knows that it is so bonnie a place and all that, and then comes here, so far away, and finds that there is nothing but the view."

Sense! undeniably it was sense, in its petty, miserable way; and what if it might be true? After all, he had only known Evelyn on one side of her character. She was much superior to himself in a hundred ways. She had the habits of a life very different from his, the habits of good society, of knowing "the best people." Rowland himself, in his rough practical way, had not a very profound admiration for the best people. There were even more bores among them, he thought, than among the most simple, and their views were not more elevated. But then Evelyn knew no other life than theirs, and to bring her down here to an unbroken solitude, or to the society of the sea-bathers, the people who came for "the salt water," might perhaps be a dangerous experiment. A cold shiver ran over him, while his daughter prattled on in her cool precocious wisdom. How could he tell that she would be sufficiently compensated by "the view" as to forget everything else, or that she would be able to bear from morning to night the unbroken enjoyment of his own society, and of Marion and Archie? His mind went away into a close consideration of her previous life as far as he knew it. The society at the station was perhaps not very choice, but it was abundant. The people there knew people whom she knew, were acquainted with her own antecedents,

and the kind of life to which she had been accustomed, a life which he himself did not know much about, much less his daughter and his son. A woman brought up in a great country house, overflowing with company, such as people in humbler positions know only by books, accustomed to go up to town for the season, to make rounds of visits, etc., etc.—would not she perhaps expect all that to begin over again after the period of her humilation was over, when she had become the wife of a rich man? And if instead she found herself seated opposite to him for life, with his two children only to diversify the scene, though it was in a beautiful house with a beautiful view! how would Evelyn bear it? Nothing but a view! The little monkey! the little wretch! Rowland in his heart was still a man of the people, and he would have liked to take Marion by the shoulders and give her a shake. And yet, probably, she was right.

CHAPTER XIV

THERE were a great many hours to be got through still before the evening steamer which would take them across the loch on their way back to Glasgow. And after the luncheon was over, Archie and Marion did not know what to do with themselves. They went out together and walked about the grounds, not without a feeling of elation now and then as they looked back upon the great house with all its velvet lawns, and the commotion of furnishing and arranging which was going on. There were carts unlading at the door which had come all the way from Glasgow, round the head of the loch, a very roundabout way, with delicate furniture which could not bear the transfer from railway to steamboat, and with the great boxes containing Mr. Rowland's curiosities; the Indian carpets, curtains, shawls, carved ebony, inlaid ivory, and other wonderful things. Had the young people been aware what were the contents of these boxes, they would no doubt have felt that some amusement was possible in the unpacking of

them. But, indeed, I doubt whether Marion's interest would have held out long unless there had been pickings—a bracelet, or a brooch, or an Indian chain among the more curious matters to indemnify her for time lost over the carpets or even the shawls, which, as altogether "out of the fashion" (so far as Marion knew) would have had no interest to the girl. But they did not have this source of entertainment, for they were totally unaware what was in the boxes which Marion thought probably contained napery, a kind of wealth not without interest yet scarcely exciting They stood about for a time in front of the door watching the unpacking of the big chests and crates until that amusement palled. And then they went round to look at the stables, in which as yet there were only two horses, one of which had brought them up with the dogcart from the ferry Archie examined this animal, and the rough and useful pony which acted as a sort of four-legged messenger, with an assumption of knowing all about horses, which was very superficial and imperfect, and did not at all deceive the groom who was in charge, and to whom one glance at the young master had been enough. But Marion did not even pretend an interest which she did not feel, and soon went out yawning and stood at the door, half-despising, half-advising her brother. She felt a little ill-used that there was no carriage which she could order out as she had done with delight, the carriage from the hotel. There would

be carriages to come, no doubt, but they would not be for her, and Marion knew that she herself must relapse into a very secondary place. She called to Archie, while he was improving his mind by questions to the groom, with great impatience, "Are you going to stay there all day? with nothing to see," said Marion. And then she broke in upon the conversation, yawning largely, "Is there anything here to see?" The groom informed them of certain points which were considered interesting by visitors, the Chieftain's Jump, and the Hanging Hill, where there was a "graun point o' view." "Oh, I'm not caring about the view," said the girl pettishly, "but we'll go and see the Chief's Jump. It'll always be something to do." It proved, however, not very much to do, and the young lady was disappointed. "It's only a rock," she said with much impatience; "is there nothing, nothing to see in this dull place?" The groom was a native of the parish, and he was naturally offended. "It's a great deal thought of," he said, "the family—that is the real family—the Earl when he's doun, and the young ladies, brings a' the veesitors here. It's a historical objeck as well as real romantic in itsel."

"I am not caring for historical things: and I don't call that romantic," said Marion.

"Maybe," said the groom, "you would like to go down the wood to auld Rankine's cottage, that has the dougs?"

"What dougs?" cried Archie, pricking up his ears.

"Weel, they're just auld Rankine's breed. He's no historical, nor yet is he romantic: but miss here will maybe relish him a' the better. He's a funny auld fellow, and the place is just fu' o' dougs—terriers: it's a grand breed—a wee delicate, being just ower weel bred: but awfu' thought upon by the leddies. The Earl and Lady Jean they get them for a' their grand friends."

"I am just sick of the Earl and Lady Jean," said Marion, stamping her foot.

"That's a peety," said the groom, calmly, "for you'll no live long here without hearing o' them. Will I let ye see the way to auld Rankine's? They're funny bits o' things."

"I would like to see the dougs," said Archie mildly.

Marion yielded, being not without a little hope of amusement hereby. But she took, and pinched, his arm as they went on, saying under her breath, "For any sake don't say that—don't say dougs! It's so common, so Glesco! You are dreadfully Glesco—the man will think you are just like himself."

"What am I to say?" said Archie indignant, shaking his arm free of her hand.

"Say dogues," whispered Marion, drawing out the long O. She was very careful herself to be as English as possible. It had always been her ambition, though the success was perhaps scarcely equal to the desire. She threaded her way through the woods with delicate steps, protesting that it was very damp and a very long way. It was a delightful

way through narrow woodland paths, where the hawthorn, which in Scotland is neither called nor has much to do with May, was still, in the height of June, breathing fragrance over the copse, and where the wild rose-buds were beginning to peep upon the long branches that overhung the path. Now and then they shook a drop of moisture upon the passer by, for, needless to say, it had rained that morning, leaving little pools full of reflections in the hollows. Marion gave little jumps when a drop came upon her face, and went upon the tips of her toes past the damp places : but it was always "something to do."

Old Rankine's cottage was in the depths of the wood that encircled Rosmore. He had been a gamekeeper before "his accident." It was supposed in the peninsula that everybody must know about old Rankine's accident, so that no further account was ever given. It was a red-roofed cottage, looking comfortable and cheerful among the grass, with a big ash tree in a plot of grass before the door, and honeysuckle covering it on the southern side where the sun came. In northern regions people are indifferent about the sun. It is a curious fact, but it is so. "Where the sun does not go the doctor must," says the Italian who has almost too much ; but the Scot turns his back upon it sturdily and does not mind. The sunshine caught only one corner of Rankine's cottage, and no windows looked that way. It was buried deep in the greenness, adding itself a little ruddy reflection to brighten the atmosphere.

In the room on the left side of the door Rankine himself lay upon his bed, with a large head and shoulders appearing out of the tartan rugs that covered the rest of his person. He had a head like an ancient prophet or bard, with a high bald forehead, and a long grey beard, and with supple long arms which seemed to reach to all the corners of the room. Naturally there was a fire burning, though the day was warm. The mistress of the house came trotting forward, and dusted two chairs with her apron for the visitors. "You're kindly welcome," she said. "Come ben, come ben. He's aye weel pleased to see company." The good woman did not require any introduction of the visitors: but this the groom, more formal, made haste to give.

"It's the young lady and the young—lad from the Hoose," he said. The pause before his description of Archie was significant. In that coat which Sandy felt was not so good as his own, how was any one to recognize a gentleman? Sandy could not disguise his sentiments. He could not give a false designation even to his master's son.

"I am Miss Rowland," said Marion, graciously, "of Rosmore."

The big grey head and beard were shaken at her from the bed, even while its owner, waving his long arm, pointed out the chair on which she was to sit down. "No of Rosmore, if you'll excuse me, my bonnie young leddy," he said. "Ye may say Miss Rowland, Rosmore, and that will be right enough: but tenants never can take the name of the laird."

"My papa," said Marion half angrily, "is going to buy the place. He is rich enough to buy it ten times over."

"He may be that," said Rankin with polite doubt. Then he added, "You will maybe be wanting a doug."

"We would like to see them," said Archie.

"Oh, I'll let you see them, though it's no a thing I do in a general way. Them that visit at the House, they are a' keen for a sight of my dougs; and I have one here and one there over all the country; a quantity in England. They're wonderful little beasts, though I say it that maybe shouldna—here's one of the last batch." He put down his hand somewhere behind his back and produced a small, round, struggling puppy of a light fawn colour, with brown ears, newly arrived at the seeing stage of its babyhood, and sprawling with all its four feeble limbs, and the tail, which looked like a fifth, in his large hand. Put down upon the bed, it began to tumble helplessly over the heights and hollows of Rankine's large helpless figure. The sight of it moved Archie, and indeed Marion, in a lesser degree, to greater delight than anything had yet moved them at Rosmore.

"Oh, the bonnie little beast!" cried Archie; "oh, the clever little creature! Look, May! look at its little nose, and the bits of paws, and the long hair." He threw himself on his knees to get the puppy within reach, which paused in its tumbling on the mountainous ridge of one of the old keeper's knees,

to regard the simple young face brought so close to its own with that look of premature sagacity common to puppies. Marion put out her gloved hand to distract the attention bestowed on her brother. "It's just like a little baby," she said.

"Baby! a baby's a little brute: it's ten times nicer than any baby that ever was born. Here, doggie! Man, keep your feet! Eh, look, May! it's tummilt off the bed. The little beastie! I've got it; I've got it. Are ye hurt, my wee man?"

"Poor little doggie!" said Marion, patting with a finger the puppy which Archie had placed on her knee. The two young creatures, bending over the animated toy of the little dog, made a group which was pretty enough. And Rankine and the groom looked on sympathizingly, flattered by their applause. To Rankine the puppy was like a child of his own.

"Oh, ay," he said, "it's no an ill specimen. Here's"—and he dived once more into the hidden reservoir from whence came a sort of infantile murmur which had puzzled the visitors at first—"another. It's a variety. Now ye see the twa kinds: them that are no licht in the colour are dark. I could scarcely gie ye my opinion which is the bonniest. What's ca'ed the Skye breed are just the sauvage dougs that would have eaten up the country by this time if they hadna received a check by being made leddies' pets of. One o' my name was the first to tak' the business in hand, and improve the breed. Yon lang, low-bodied creaturs, with nae

legs to speak of, are the orignal stock, as the wild bushes are the stock of the rose tribe. My anes are an awfu' improvement in pint o' symmetry—and temper too. They have langer legs and no sae short a temper. Ye'll hear a' the world ower of the Rosmore breed. It's just celebrated from one end o' the country to anither. Lady Jean she was aye coming with orders ; but I'm no fond of taking orders especially from foreign countries, like England and the like. I canna bide to send my dougs where they are ill fed or kept careless. There was ae lady that let twa o' them, ane after the ither, get lost. She was a friend o' the minister. I canna understand decent folk keeping on with sic friends. And as for the feeding o' them, leddies are just maist inveterate, and ruins their health, whatever I can say. They'll feed my doggies, just fresh from their guid halesome parridge, with sweet biscuits and bits of sugar, and every silly thing they can think of, and syne they'll write and say the dougs are delicate. Naething of the kind ! the dougs are nane delicate. It's just the traitment ; if you can think o' onything mair foolish than that—beasts used to guid fresh country air, shut up in rooms with carpets and dirt of a' kinds, and when they're dowie and aff their meat, a dose o' strong physic ! And they ca' that a kind home. I ca' it just murder ! and that's a' I've got to say."

Rankine had worked himself to a point of vehemence which brought the moisture in great drops to his forehead, for the day was warm and

so was the fire. But it cannot be said that his visitors were much affected by it. Sandy the groom, indeed, formed a sympathetic audience, but Archie and Marion were too young and foolish to be interested in the old gamekeeper. They played with the puppies, each choosing one. Marion held fast the one of light colour—Archie secured the dark grey. Their comments on their respective prizes ran on through Rankine's speech. "Mine's the bonniest!"—"No, I like mine best. Look at its funny little face."—"Mine has no een at all—just a little spark out under the hair."—"And look the little brick that it is, showing fight," said Archie in great triumph and elation.

The old gamekeeper wiped his brow, and looked on with a smile of grim amusement at the mimic fight going on between those two little balls of animated fur, "I would ca' those two Donal'bane and Donal'dhu—as ye might say in a less cultivated tongue, Whitey and Darkie," he said benevolently. "If ye would like to have the pair of them, I'll not say no to the Hoose, even when it's in a tenant's hands. But ye maun mak up your minds, for I haven't a doggie about the place that's no bespoke afore it's born, and I owe my duty to Lady Jean first."

"I'm tired hearing of Lady Jean," said Marion petulantly, throwing her puppy upon the bed.

"Aye, my missie, are ye that?" said old Rankine: "ye'll be tireder afore you're done, for Lady Jean's muckle thought of in this parish: and a tenant is just a tenant and nae mair—there's no

continuance in them. Your papaw and you will be just here the day and gane the morn. Ye canna expect to be thought upon like our ain folk. —Are ye wantin' the puppy, maister——what's the name, Sandy? I hae never maistered the name," added the gamekeeper with polite disrespect. "Oh ay, now I mind—Rowland"—he pronounced the first syllable broadly like a street row—"I'm no sure," he added thoughtfully, "but I may have ken't your papaw before he went abroad."

Archie paid no attention to this talk. He had a puppy in each hand comparing them, wondering which he might venture to buy. Dared he go to such an expense as to buy? Mrs. Brown, though lavish in many ways, had not been liberal in the matter of pocket money, and to spend money for a dog, a creature that would cost something to feed, and could do nothing to make up for the cost of it, would have seemed to her the most wicked of extravagances. Archie was forced by the habit of his life into a great timorousness about money. He did not feel himself justified in spending even a shilling. He looked at the little dogs and longed and hesitated. He had taken one up in each hand with a wild impulse of expenditure, of buying both—unheard of extravagance!—and then he put one down, feeling the cold shade as of Aunty Jean come over him. Then he bethought himself that his father was a rich man—ay! but then he would probably like to

spend his money himself, not to give it to his son to spend. Then Archie put down the other dog upon the bed. But he did not abstract his eyes from the pleasing prospect; and presently a tempting demon suggested to him that about such a big house dogs would be wanted for the purpose of watching, if for nothing else; and he took one, the little dark grey one, up again. It was the bonniest little doggie he had ever seen—ready to play already, though it was such a small puppy, looking as wise as Solomon, though it was so silly; the greatest diversion possible in this dull country place, where there never would be anything to do. And two of them would be funnier still. Archie took up the rival in his other hand. He held them as if he were weighing them against each other like pounds of flesh, but no such thought was in his mind: he wondered if perhaps Rankine might not want to be paid at once. In case of delay there were a hundred chances that the money might be procured somehow. He might even ask his father—or Mr. Rowland might make him a present. He had bought a great many things for Marion, who, being a lassie, could be gratified in that way more than was possible for a man. A man didn't want silks and things, or even brooches and rings, though Archie would not have disliked a pin. What a man liked was manly things—maybe a bonnie little beast of a doug. What bonnie little beasties they were! and they would be capital watch-dogs when they grew

up. Would it do if he were to ask papa? If May wanted such a thing, she would ask in a moment. She might perhaps do it on her own account if she took a fancy to little Light and little Dark. Poor Archie was so absorbed in this question that he did not know what Rankine said.

He was roused by a sweep of the gamekeeper's long arm, which swung over the bed for a moment, then suddenly came down upon one of the puppies and conveyed it swiftly away. Archie followed his movements with a gape of disappointment as he took up the coveted grey. He put out his hand to avert the second withdrawal. "Eh, man, leave the little beastie," he said.

"Would you like to have it? You have naething to do but to say sae."

"I have no money—with me—to pay for't," said Archie, with the profoundest sense of humiliation. He had come into his fortune, so to speak; but he had never felt so poor before.

The gamekeeper answered with a laugh. "There's plenty of time for ye to put your siller in your pouch, my young gentleman—for I'll no send ane of them out for sax weeks to come—or maybe mair. Ye can come and see them when you like, but I'll no risk my credit for a wheen pounds, me that never sends out a doug but in the best condition and able to fend for themselves. Will I keep the twa for ye? Ye maun speak now, or for ever hold your tongue, for every puppy I have is ordered long before it's born."

Archie looked at his sister, endeavouring to catch her eye, but Marion refused him all help. She betook herself to the task of buttoning her glove, which required all her energies, and then she got up shaking out her skirts: "I'll die," she said, "if I stay longer here—it's so hot, and there's a smell of dougs. You can come when you're ready. I want the fresh air."

"Dear me," said Rankine with scorn; "this'll be a very delicate miss! and ower grand for the likes of us. Lady Jean never minded the smell of the dougs. Sandy, man, what made you bring such a grand lady here? Are ye for them, or are ye no for them?" he added, severely, turning to Archie. "It's no of the least consequence to me—but you'll have to say."

Archie, with his hair standing on end at his own audacity, gave the order hurriedly, and went out after his sister, with a sort of despairing sense that he had now committed himself beyond recall, and that the stories he had read in books about the miseries of men who had large sums to make up and no prospect of finding the wherewithal, were about in his dread experience to come true. The gamekeeper and the groom discussed the abrupt withdrawal after their fashion, and with no particular precaution not to be heard by the subjects of their discourse.

"Yon's a queer pair to be gentry," said Rankine. "I would have said a lad and a lass from Glesco in an excursion; just the kind that comes doun at

the fair-time, and has nae manners nor education. I'm no much accustomed to that kind.—A smell o' dougs! set her up! Mony a leddy has sat there and had her crack, and never a word about the dougs, poor things. The smell of a mill would maybe be more in her way."

"Whisht, man," said the groom, "they're maybe listening. Where could they get their manners or their eddication? They're just Jims Rowland's bairns that my father knew when he was in the foundry; and they've lived a' their lives with Jean Brown, that was ance the auld man's joe, and micht have been my mother if a' things had gane straight—think o' that! I micht have been their cousin, and I'm just the groom in the stables. 'Od! I could have brought doun missie's pride if I had been a drap's blood to her. They're no a preen better nor you and me."

"In the sicht o' heaven," said Rankine, "there's no one person better than anither: I dinna just rank myself with the commonality. But I'll allow that the auld family has the pull of it even with me. There's something about Lady Jean now—ye canna say what it is, and yet it maks a difference. I'm a man that has seen a' kinds. The real gentry, and what ye may call the Glesco gentry, and them that's just shams through and through. The Glesco gentry has grand qualities sometimes. They just never care what they spend. If ye put a fancy price upon a little doug they just say, 'Oh, ay, nae doubt you have great

trouble in rearing them, and gies ye your price without a word. The tither kind's no that liberal —they canna bide to be imposed upon. They just stiffen up, and they say, 'That's mair than I thought of giving, and good-day to ye.' But I canna bide them that would and then they wouldna, that just hankers and grudges and have nae money in their pouches. Without money, nae man has any right to take up my time coming here."

Archie heard this diatribe as he stood outside, waiting under the protection of the great ash tree till a passing shower should have blown over, with a sense of the truth of it which went over him in a great wave of heat and discomfiture down to his very boots. That was just what he was, a sham with nothing in his pocket, combining all the defects of the Glesco great people with an absolute want of that real foundation on which they stood. He had no education, no manners, nothing upon which any claim of superiority could be put forth. Superiority, he did not mean that. Poor Archie felt himself the equal of nobody, not even of Sandy the groom, who, at least, had an occupation of his own and knew how to do it. And no money in his pocket! that was perhaps the worst of all. He had always heard a great deal about money all his life. Mrs. Brown had an unlimited reverence for it, and for those who possessed it. She had no particular knowledge of the gentry. But to be able to pay your way, to be able to lay by a little, to have something in the bank, that was the

height of her ambition. And though she highly disapproved of large expenditure, she admired it as the most dazzling of greatness. "He just never minds what he spends," she had said of Rowland a hundred times, almost with awe. Archie had been accustomed to admire this quality in his father from his earliest consciousness. And to stand on the soil which to him was his father's (though the people of the place were so strong upon the fact that he was only a tenant), almost within sight of the great house which was being fitted up regardless of expense, and to have nothing in his pocket, filled the lad with the bitterest shame and humiliation. "If I had only five pounds—or knew where to get it," he said to himself, with a gesture of disgust and despair. "Five pounds," said Marion, who heard him though he did not want to be heard, and repeated it in her usual clear, very distinct voice, not lowered in the least, "What do ye want with five pounds? and why don't you get it from papa?" Archie thought he heard a laugh from the cottage which proved that the men inside had heard. It wrought him almost to fury. He dashed out into the rain and left her standing there astonished. Marion did not care for what the groom and the gamekeeper said. She was quite confident that she had only to "ask papa," and that whatever she wished would fall into her lap. She had not, like Archie, any difficulty in asking papa. After a few moments of hesitation she too stepped out of the shelter of

the ash, and followed her brother through the wood. The shower was over, the sun had come out again, every branch and leaf was glistening. The birds had taken up their songs at the very note where they left off, with renewed vigour. Marion too broke out into a little song as she went on. The boughs as she brushed past scattered shining drops like diamonds over her, which she eluded with a little run and cry. Even the woodland walk was thus more amusing than she thought.

CHAPTER XV

MR. ROWLAND, when his children left him, was left with a very uncomfortable prick of thought, a sort of thorn lacerating the skin, so to speak, of his mind. The suggestion which had been thrown at him as the Spanish bullfighters throw their ornamented darts, stuck as they do, and kept up an irritating smart, though it was not, he said, to himself of the least importance. No society! He came out to the colonnade in the intervals of his anxious work of supervision, and looked round him wistfully. He walked indeed all round the house, looking out in every direction. Towards the west there were visible, by glimpses among the trees, some houses of the village of Kilrossie, a high roof or two, and the white spire of the newly built church; to the east, on the other side of the loch, another village-town extended along the edge of the gleaming water, shining in the sunshine. Plenty of human habitations, fellow-creatures on every side: but society! Wealth has a very curious effect upon the mind in this respect. The people who came to the handsome houses at

Kilrossie for the bathing season were many of them much superior to James Rowland in birth and education, and quite equal to him in intelligence, except in his own particular sphere; yet this man who had been only a man in a foundry when those good people were enjoying the advantages of the saut water, and all the luxuries of comparative wealth, would now have felt himself humiliated had he been obliged to accept the society of the good people at Kilrossie as all he might hope to attain. Their neighbourhood was rather a trouble than an enlivenment to his mental vision. And the county people, who had their "places" scattered about at intervals, were in many cases neither so well off, nor so intelligent as these: and they would look down upon the railway man, while the others would regard him with respect. There was no possibility of doubt as to which of the two he would be most comfortable with. And yet he slurred them over cursorily as if they were not there, and sighed into the sweet vacant air which contained no loftier indication of society. How proud he would have been to have known the Kilrossie people fifteen years ago—how it would have elated him to be asked under their roof! and now their presence irritated him as a set of impostors who perhaps would thrust themselves upon him in the guise of society: that was not the society for which he cared.

The prick of the banderilla discharged by Marion's trifling little hand was in him all day:

and in the afternoon when he had done everything he could, and given all his orders about the arrangement of the furniture, he too went out to take a walk and to spy out the nakedness of the land. He did not go into the woods as his children had done, nor would the dogs have had any charm for him. He went down to the village, where there certainly was no society except in the one house which held modest sway over the cluster of white-washed and red-tiled cottages—the Manse, where the minister represented, if not the wealthier yet the educated portion of the community, and might at least furnish information, if nothing else, as to the prospects and possibilities of the place. In spite of himself Rowland's discouragement reflected itself in his countenance, making him, as so often happens, look angry and discontented. There was something even in the way in which his heel spurned the gravel, making it fly behind him, which betrayed the unsatisfied state of his mind. He had scarcely emerged from his own gate when he met the minister in person, who turned with him and walked along the country road by his side with great complaisance, partly because he was glad to meet any one on that not much frequented road, and partly because it was a good thing to make a friend of the inhabitant of "The House." The shower which had caught Marion and Archie at Rankine's cottage, made the two gentlemen pause for a few moments but no more under the shade of an overhanging tree. A shower

is too common a thing in that country to disturb any one. It discharged its harmless volley, and then cleared away with rapidity as if the sportive angel who had that brief job in hand was glad on the whole to get it over; which is very often the way with the sky officials in that particular in the west of Scotland. The cloud blew away in a second, dispersing what was left of it in floating rags of white, which fled towards the hills, leaving the sky radiant over Peterston on the other side of the loch, and the loch itself as blue, reflecting the sky, as was that capricious firmament itself—for the moment. The road ran inland, with fields of wheat between it and the margin of the shining water, beyond which rose the low banks of the loch, and further off a background of mountains. If it was not quite equal to the great "view" of Rosmore House, this prospect was at least very fine, soft and clear, in all the harmony of a blueness and whiteness such as a rainy climate confers; and Mr. Rowland too, like his daughter, was comforted by the singing of the birds, which all burst forth again with unusual energy after the subduing influence of the shower. He said, "It is certainly a beautiful place," as he paused for a moment to look over the green field at the little steamers which seemed to hang suspended in the beatific air, one on the surface of the water, one reflected below.

"Yes, it is a lovely place," said the minister with a sigh.

He was a middle-aged man dressed in careful clerical fashion like an Anglican priest—a costume new and rather distressing to Rowland, no such thing having been thought of in his early days before he left Scotland. At that period a white tie (or neckcloth, to use the proper phraseology) rather limp, and a black coat often shabby, were all that were thought of as necessary. But Mr. Dean, which was the name of the minister of Rosmore, liked to be called a clergyman rather than a minister, and would not at all have objected to hold the ecclesiastical rank which is denoted by his name. He was of the new school. He had a harmonium in his church, and a choir which chanted the psalms. He was very advanced, and his wife still more so. He shook his head a little as he made this reply. Yes, it was a lovely place —but—this latter word was inferred and not said.

"I want to ask you," said Rowland, by no means reassured by this, "about the society."

Mr. Dean now shrugged his shoulders a little. "You have perhaps heard of the chapter about snakes in Ireland," he said.

"I have always understood there weren't any." It is a very unjustifiable thing to cut in this way a quotation out of another person's mouth. Mr. Dean was a little disconcerted, as was natural. "Well," he said, "that's just the thing, there is none. I answer the same to your question: there is no society. I hope that Chamberlayne did not bring you here on false pretences."

"I cannot remember that I asked him anything about it, nor would it have made any difference if I had. Society or not, it's always this place I've set my heart upon. But what do you do and the other people in the place?"

"Well," said Mr. Dean, with a glance at his companion's face, "the House, as we all call it, has been our great resource. Lady Jean—you must hear her quoted everywhere, and, I dare say, are sick of her name."

"No; I have not heard her quoted." He remembered that he had not cared anything about it, who was quoted, his whole heart being fixed upon the house.

"She's very good company," said the minister. "She was always our resource. And sometimes the Earl was here. I don't want to speak evil of dignities, but his lordship was perhaps less of an acquisition. And they had visitors from time to time. That's the great thing," Mr. Dean added with perhaps just a touch of condescension to the simplicity of the millionaire, "in the country. You just fill the house, and one amuses the other. My wife and I have seen a great many interesting people in that way, which was a little compensation to us for being buried here. You will come in and take a cup of tea. This is the nearest way."

The Manse garden was on the slope of the hillside, but the Manse itself was tucked in below, in what was supposed to be a sheltered position, out of the way of all sunshine, or other impertinent

invasions. It surprised Mr. Rowland to see several pony carriages about, and to hear a noise of talk coming out into the garden all perfumed with sweetpeas and roses. He looked at the minister with an inquiring air.

"Oh, I don't call this society," said Mr. Dean, "though perhaps you will be of a different opinion," he added. He was a little supercilious in his tone to the railway man, who was a rich person and no more; not that the minister had any inclination to break any tie that might be formed with "the House." He was not himself fond of tea parties, and his expression had made it plain that dinners were chiefly to be found, if anywhere, at Rosmore.

"I have inveigled Mr. Rowland in for a cup of tea. I did not know you had guests."

"Dear me, Henry!" said Mrs. Dean; "of course you knew. It's my day: everybody in the parish knows, if you don't. But I am very glad to see Mr. Rowland; he has just come at the very nick of time. I was saying to Mrs. Wedderburn, so much depends on who is at the House."

"It is just the centre of everything," said a fat lady who was thus referred to. She gave Mr. Rowland a little bow, half rising from her chair. "We all defer to the House," she added with an ingratiating smile to which Rowland answered as best he could with a bow which was as deferential as hers was condescending. There were a dozen of people or more in the room, which was not very large, and hot with the fumes of tea. There were

two or three matronly persons like Mrs. Wedderburn, and a few who were younger, and two men who were making themselves useful and handing the tea and the cake. There were also some queerly dressed, middle-aged ladies, of the class to which Scotch society owes so much, the rural single woman, individual and strong-minded: and there were some with a great air of fashion and the consciousness of fine clothes. These last Rowland set down, and justly, as sea-bathers from Kilrossie. One of the others was the minister's wife from the next parish, also unmistakable. His name caused a little rustle of interest among them, as he made his bow all round.

"I'm sure you're very welcome among us," said another lady rising up from the window where she sat. "Since we cannot have our dear Lady Jean, we're well content to have a tenant that is creditable and a well-known name. You are just new from India, and our climate will be a great change to ye, at least for the first."

"Oh, I am well accustomed to the climate," said Rowland. "I don't think that will trouble me much."

"You're really then a west-country man to begin with? so we've heard; but Mrs. Rowland, I'm afraid, will not be so used to it. Nor perhaps your young folk. You'll think me bold," added his interrogator, "but we hear there are young folk?"

"My wife is not Scotch," said Rowland; "but the difference between Rosmore and an English

county is not so very great." He longed to say who she was—one of the oldest families—but the same pride which suggested this statement held him back.

"Oh," said the ladies, two or three together; and then Mrs. Dean, bringing him his cup of tea, took up the parole.

"You'll soon learn the weakness of a country neighbourhood, Mr. Rowland. We never rest till we're at the bottom of everything. We had heard it was a lady from India that was to be the mistress of 'the Hoose.'"

And now his opportunity arrived. "I will give you all the information in my power," he said smiling. "My wife was a Miss Ferrars of Langley Ferrars, a very old family—Leicestershire people. She is a lady from India just as I am a man from India. We arrived about a fortnight ago. Is there anything else I can satisfy the ladies about?"

He knew of old that there was no such way of discomfiting the curious as to proclaim your own story, whatever it might be. And he had recovered his spirit, which Marion and Archie had subdued. Society at the station had endeavoured to keep him in his place, but in vain. Even the attachés and aides-de-camp had not been able to manage that. He was a little amused at the thought of this little rural tea-party questioning him, sitting upon his claims to be considered one of them—One of them! His suppressed sense of the absurdity of this gave a gleam of mischief to his

eyes, and quite restored him to his own self-opinion, which had been so rudely interfered with of late. He stood with his back to the fireplace, which, even when there is no fire, is a commanding attitude for a man, and regarded them all with a smile.

"We are all looking forward to calling," said fat Mrs. Wedderburn, who did not like the trouble of much talking, yet evidently felt that it lay with her to inaugurate every subject.

"That we are," said his other questioner, who was called Miss Eliza by the other ladies. "I'm just a very pushing person, and ye'll excuse me. Is it true, Mr. Rowland, what the folk say, that from a boy ye had set your heart on Rosmore House?"

"Quite true," he said promptly, "when I seemed to have as much chance of it as of the moon. They say there's nothing like boding of a golden gown—for you see there I am—"

"It's a wonderful encouragement to the young," said Miss Eliza. "The minister should put it into one of the papers he's aye writing. Did ye not know that our minister was a leeterary character? Oh, that he is! and a real prop to the constitution; for though he may not be always so in the pulpit, he's real sound in politics—that's what I always say."

"Miss Eliza," said the other clergyman, "you must not raise a *fama* about a reverend brother. We're all sound till we're proved otherwise, and Presbytery proceedings are against the spirit of the time."

"Oh," said Miss Eliza, "Mr. Dean knows well what I think. There's no man I like so well to hear, but his views are whiles very papistical. He would just like to be the bishop and more. He's no sound for Presbytery. He would like vestments and that kind of thing, and incense, perhaps, for anything I can tell. I would not wonder but he would put on a white surplice, if that is what they call it, if he could get one over his decent black gown."

"I was an Episcopalian before I married Mr. Wedderburn," said the fat lady. "I do not regret it, for Mr. Dean knows we are all uncommonly well pleased with him. And a surplice would become him very well."

"It's a very becoming thing," said another of the ladies. "We're very glad to come to hear Mr. Dean, but we're all Episcopalians when we're at home."

"It's the fashion," said Mrs. Wedderburn, folding her fat hands.

"I've no desire to enter into that question. I'm saying nothing but that the minister is no very sound on certain points. I've said it to his face, and he just laughs, as you see. But bless me! this conversation has wandered far from where it began, for I was asking Mr. Rowland, in the interests of all the nieces and nephews, whether he had not, as we've been informed, some young folk."

Rowland had dropped out of the talk a little, and had forgotten that he was being cross-examined.

He woke up suddenly at this question with a start. The lingering smile disappeared from his mouth. He put up shutters at all his windows, so to speak. The light went out in his eyes. "Yes," he said in a voice which he felt to be as dull as his countenance was blank, "I have a son and a daughter."

"That was just what I heard," said Miss Eliza with triumph. "We have usually some young folk staying with us up at the Burn. My sister and me, we are overrun with nieces and nephews. It's just a plague. There is scarcely a boat but brings one at the least. I hope your two will come and see them. There is aye something going on; a game at that tennis, or whatever they call it, or a party on the water, or a climb up the hills. If they will just not stand upon ceremony, but come any day——"

"When they are here," said Rowland stolidly; "as yet they are not here. The house will not be ready for a week or more."

"Oh, I beg your pardon. We thought—there were so many waggons coming and going, and the dog-cart out at the pier."

"I hope you don't think," he said, "that I would take home my wife either in a waggon or a dog-cart?"

The ladies looked at each other, and there came a faint "Oh!" that universal British interjection which answers to every emergency—from some unidentified person. But a sort of awe stole over the party. Who was this lady that could not be

taken home in a dog-cart? Lady Jean had been driven from the pier in a dog-cart many and many a day. Did the woman who had married this foundry lad from Glesco, this railway man, that had made his fortune in India, did she think herself better than Lady Jean?

Mr. Rowland walked away through his own woods, much amused by this incident generally. They were not his own woods: they were the Earl's woods, which was a reflection very unpleasant to him. If money could smooth over the difficulty, they should be his own woods still before he was done with them; and in the meantime he had a long lease, and a strong determination to call them his own. He looked at every tree, and put a mental mark upon it to prove to himself that he was right. There was a great silver fir, an unusually fine tree, near the gates, at which he paused, saying to himself, "This is not mine," with an assumption that all the rest were, which was strange in such a sensible man; but his mind had a little twist in it so far as Rosmore was concerned. He smiled at the little society of the place with a sense of superiority, at which they would have been extremely indignant. The Miss Elizas of the peninsula were nothing to him, and their gracious intention of calling upon his wife gave him such a feeling of the ridiculous, that he laughed aloud as he went on. Call upon Evelyn! Mr. Rowland had perhaps as exaggerated an idea of Evelyn's claims as the village people had an humble one.

They had heard that she was a governess whom he had picked up in India; and he was of opinion that she was a very high-born lady, as good as the Queen. He chuckled to himself as he realized how she would look amid the ladies who came to Kilrossie for the sea-bathing, and the ladies of the parish: Miss Eliza with her big rusty hat and shawl, and the two ministers' wives. Evelyn with the look of a princess, and her beautiful dresses, that were like nothing else in the world, which her mere putting them on gave the air of royal robes to! This was his way of looking at the matter, which probably would not have been at all the way of the county ladies, who had a general idea what was the fashion, though they did not take the trouble to adopt it. But to Mr. Rowland whatever Evelyn wore was the fashion, and it was she, he felt, who ought to be everybody's model, to dress after, as far as it was in vain flesh and blood to follow such an ideal. Lady Jean herself would be but a rural dowdy in presence of Evelyn. He thought of the impression she would make. The startled "oh!" of wonder which would burst from all their lips when she was first seen. It would be something altogether new to them to see such a lady! It restored him to his natural spirits and self-confidence to think of this; indeed, his pride in his wife was the very apex of Rowland's self-esteem and proud sense of having acquired everything that man could hope to acquire, and all by his own exertions and good judgment. He reflected to

himself with satisfaction that he had owed nothing to anybody; that it was all his own doing, not only his success in life, *i.e.*, the fortune he had made, but all those still more dazzling successes which he could not have got had not the fortune been made. Nobody, for instance, had ever suggested Rosmore to him; no benevolent teacher, or other guide of youth, had pointed out to him the house with the white colonnade as an inspiring object and stimulus to ambition. Himself alone had been his counsellor. Nor had anybody indicated to him at the station the pale and graceful woman who was Mrs. Stanhope's dependant and poor friend. He had for himself found out and chosen both the wife and the house. This triumphant thought returning to his mind wiped out the impression of the morning, and even the recollection that he had gone out to hunt for society, and had—found it! He remembered this a little later with a sense that it was the best joke in the world. He had found it! Mrs. Dean had a "day," as if she lived in a novel or Mayfair; and the neighbouring gentry and the sea-bathers, when they came in force, elated her soul as if they had been all out of the peerage. He wondered, with a laugh to himself, what Evelyn would say to Miss Eliza and the fat Mrs. Wedderburn, and went back to Rosmore in high glee, really oblivious for a time of the two "difficulties," the irreconcilable portion of his new life, whom he had left there.

CHAPTER XVI

To describe the blank which fell upon the successful man as he went briskly up through the woods, which in his heart he called his own, reflecting upon his success and how he had won it all unaided, his happy selection of a house, his still happier luck in a wife, and saw the pair of limp young figures without interest in anything, vaguely standing about in front of the colonnade, would be too much for words. They stood a little apart, Archie with his hands in his pockets, Marion drawing lines in the ground with the end of her parasol. They were not even looking at "the view." The air of caring for nothing, finding no interest in anything, was so strong in them both that they might have been taken as impersonations of *ennui*, that most hopeless of all the immoralities. They did not know what to do with themselves—they would never know what to do with themselves, Rowland thought in despair. They would stand about his life as they were doing about the vacant space in front of the house, empty, in-

different, uninterested. Going wrong, he said to himself (heaven forgive him!) was almost better than that—anything is better than nullity, the state of doing and being nothing. The outline of them against the light struck him as he came up to them like a dull blow.

"Well," he said, "what have you been doing since I saw you last?"

"Nothing," said Marion, with a slight look up at him, and a yawn, "for there is nothing to do."

"No—thing," said Archie with hesitation and a less assured, more anxious look. He wanted to speak to his father about those puppies, if he could only venture: but he did not dare.

"You might have explored the woods," said Rowland, "or gone down to the loch, or taken a boat, or rambled up the hill—there's a hundred things to do."

"The woods are very damp: I would have spoiled my shoes: and the hills very craggy: it would have torn my frock: and Archie, he is too lazy to row a boat, and too grumpy to speak. Will it soon be time to go back to Glasgow? You might have taken me with you, papa."

"It is a pity I did not: for there was company at the Manse, and I have an invitation for you."

"Oh, papa!"

Archie too looked up with a certain lightning of his preoccupied face.

"Yes—if you are not too fine for it. It is to go to some place that is called the Burn, to a lady

whose name is Miss Eliza, who has a number of nieces and nephews, and something always going on, tennis, or boating, or dancing."

"Oh, papa!" Marion's eyes shone; but presently a little cloud came over her. "I have not had much chance of learning tennis. The MacColls can play, they've got a nice ground of their own—they have just everything! But there's no club you can get into out of the Sauchiehall Road, and you want shoes and things. I never was in the way of learning." A little furtive moisture glistened in Marion's eyes.

"I could let you see the way," said Archie.

"Oh, yes, laddies learn everything," said his sister with an offended air; and then she perceived that she had been guilty of an unauthorized word. "I mean young gentlemen," she cried.

"For heaven's sake, whatever you mean, don't say that," said Rowland hastily. "However it is not a desert, as you thought: there is balm in Gilead. When you come back and settle down, you must make friends with Miss Eliza."

"Is she a lady, papa? I would not, not for anything, make friends out of our own sphere."

Rowland laughed loud and long. He said, "I am glad you have such an exalted idea of your sphere; but how about the MacColls?"

"I am not meaning," said Marion, with dignity, "to keep up with the MacColls. They're just acquaintances, not to call friends. They never even ask me to their grandest parties. If they

were friends, they would have let me learn tennis and all that. I have always meant to let them know that when my papa came home, they were not good enough for me."

"Well—perhaps it's legitimate—if they thought you not good enough for their grand parties, and no question of friendship in the matter. But you, Archie, you've got some friends?"

"Yes," said the lad with hesitation. He had no friend whom he would not have sacrificed on the altar of the puppies. "There are some of the students—but I perhaps will have little chance of seeing them after——"

"If you please," said Sandy, the groom, who had been loitering near, "will I put in the horse? for yonder's the steamer leaving the loch head, and she'll sune be here."

"Never mind the horse: we'll walk," said Rowland, at which Marion gave him a look of wonder and reproach. Walk! a dog-cart was not much, but it was always a more dignified thing than to think a young lady like herself capable of walking like a common person to the pier.

"And, sir," said Sandy, "about the little dougs —Rankine would be glad to know."

"The little dougs?"

"The young gentleman will have tell't ye. It's Rankine's little dougs that are kent for a grand breed—and there's aye somebody wanting them. He would like to ken one way or anither afore the young gentleman goes away."

"It's some little terriers," said Archie, coming forward a step, "we were looking at them. They're very bonnie little beasts. I thought that maybe—there would be watch-dogs wanted about the house—or—just for the fun of them—they're—fine little things. I—I—thought it might be—a good thing."

Rowland looked severely at his son as he stammered and hesitated. He replied coldly, "If you want the dogs, I suppose that is enough." He waved his hand to Sandy, dismissing him. "Now, Marion, are you ready for your walk?"

Marion pouted and protested that she was sure she could not walk so far, but Rowland was inflexible. "It will be something to do," he said grimly. And with a troubled countenance and trembling limbs Archie followed.

A more beautiful walk could scarcely have been conceived. Here and there, as they descended the hill, they came out upon an open space where the lovely loch, with the great range of hills at the head lying full in the western sun, stretched out before them. Its surface glistened with gleams of reflection, repeating everything from the white scattered houses on its banks to the whiter clouds that floated on the surface of the sky. A boat or two, between the dazzling atmosphere above and the still more dazzling reflection below, lay like a thing beatified. Woods and hills and shining water—there was nothing wanting to the perfection of the scene. "Every prospect pleases, and only

man is vile:" and troubled—troubled, full of care —wanting for something wherever he is.

The successful man marched along with his head high, his pretty little daughter running with her short steps by his side, the house of his choice behind him, the wife of his choice awaiting him, and so well off, able to do whatever he pleased, the admiring, curious people said. Whatever he pleased! yes, to buy furniture of the rarest description, horses and carriages, even Rosmore itself, if he could by any means procure that it should be brought to market; but not with all his wealth able to expand the little vulgar nature of the girl, or open the disturbed heart of the boy beside him. Poor rich man! to whom his wealth could give no pleasure while this constant irritation gnawed at his heart.

He took them back to Sauchiehall Road, not exhilarated by their day's outing; and while Marion recovered her fatigue and began really to enjoy Rosmore in describing its grandeur to her aunt, he took Archie aside for a few brief words. "What was that about the dogs?" he said. "Did you pay for them, or have they to be paid for, or what did the groom mean? I won't have any familiarity with the grooms. Why should I be consulted as if you couldn't settle such a matter for yourself?"

"I never wanted you to be consulted," said the boy, retiring within himself.

"What did it mean then? Remember I con-

sider you old enough to take the responsibility of your own actions. If you want anything, get it; if I don't approve, I'll let you know my opinion. If I find you spending too much, I'll put a stop to it. But I am not to be consulted about every trifle as if you were a child."

Archie was so struck with the irony of this address as applied to himself, that his wounded feelings and strained temper burst out into a harsh laugh. "As for spending," he said, "much or little, you may set your mind at rest, for I've nothing to spend."

Rowland took out his pocket-book with a look of doubt glancing from Archie to Mrs. Brown. "You must have your allowance of course," he said. "You've had it, I suppose, for years past?"

"A shilling a week or sometimes half-a-crown," said Archie, prolonging the laugh which was the only witness of emotion his boyish pride and shyness permitted him to indulge in. "But I'm not asking you for money," he said harshly. The puppies flitted in vision before his eyes, and counselled a softer tone, but he could not, in spite of the puppies, put forward a finger to touch the crisp piece of paper which his father held out to him.

"I'll see about that," said Rowland. "Here, in the meantime."

"I am not wanting your money."

"You young ass! take what I give you. I'll see that you have at your command in future a

proper sum.—Here!" Rowland, who was much out of temper too, flung the note at the boy, who let it drop upon the floor. "And try to behave like a gentleman," he said, exasperated, "and not like a sullen dog, as you're doing now."

He did not mean to be so severe. He was tired and sick of it all, as he said to himself as he hurried away. The boy was not true, he was not genuine, not frank nor open. The father was very angry, disappointed: yet in the dark, as he walked back to the hotel, there gleamed somehow upon him, he did not know how, a reflection, a gleam from poor Mary's blue eyes, that had so long been hidden in the grave.

Meanwhile, the party in Mrs. Brown's parlour had been disturbed by a sense of something sulphurous in the air, and by the flutter of the piece of paper which had been thrown at Archie like a blow. All demand for explanation or possibility of interference had been stopped by the rapid leave-taking and departure of Rowland. "Are you not going to stay to your supper? and me prepared the table for you, and everything ready!" Mrs. Brown had said in great disappointment and dismay; but Rowland had not yielded. He had letters to write, he said; that unanswerable reason for everything. When the sound of his quick steps had died out upon the pavement, Mrs. Brown came back with a blank countenance into the parlour, where Archie still sat with the bit of white crisp paper at his feet.

"There's been some quarrel atween you," she said. "Tell me no lees: you've been setting up your face to your father, that's just a gentleman and far above ye, as ye whiles do to me."

"I tell no lies," said the boy.

"That means ye just acknowledge to it, ye thrawn, vexatious callant. What's that bit of paper lying at your feet?"

"It's of no consequence," said Archie.

"But it is of consequence when I say so. Give it to me!"

"I will not touch it," said the boy.

"Then I'll touch it!" She stooped suddenly with a nimbleness for which Archie was unprepared and snatched the paper.

Then she gave a loud scream. "Preserve us a'! It's nae less than a twenty-pound note. Lord, laddie, what did you say to him that he's given you a twenty-pound note?"

"Give me the note!" said Archie hoarsely, holding out his hand.

"Atweel and I'll do nothing of the kind. What was it for? Twenty pound! to the like of you that never had twenty pence! Archie Rowland, what is the meaning of this? It's a thing I will not put up with to have notes (nots Mrs. Brown called them) lying about my carpet and naebody condescending to lift them up."

"Let him be, aunty," said Marion; "he's in one of his ill keys; he was real disagreeable to-day and would do nothing. I have had just a very

dismal day because he would never rouse himself up."

"He may rouse himself or not as he likes," said Jean; "but I've gotten possession of the not, and I'll just keep it till I find out what it's for."

"It's my note," said Archie.

"And ye leave it lying at your feet! Twenty pounds that would put pith into many a man's arm, and courage in his heart. Besides, what would ye do with all that siller? I'll give ye a shilling or twa, and I'll just put it by. Your father must be clean gyte to put the like o' that in the power of a callant like you. Come ben to your supper. I'll wager ye havena had a decent bite nor sup the haill day."

"I'm wanting no supper. I'm wanting my note," Archie said.

"Ye can have the one but no the other. The table's a' set and ready. Come in, ye fool, and take your supper. We'll no wait for you, neither Mey nor me."

Archie sat by himself with his head in his hands for some moments after they had gone away. Mrs. Brown had carried the lamp with her, but it was not dark. The days are long in June, and the soft visionary light, which was neither night nor day, came through the bars of the Venetian blinds, making the little shabby room faintly visible. He was tired, he was even hungry, but he would not stoop to the degradation of owning it, now that he had said he would have no supper.

This added to the general sum of wretchedness in Archie's mind. It had all ended so miserably, the day which began so well. He was aware that he had been a fool. He had been tempted with the puppies—which even now, when he thought of them, tempted him still, filling him with a sort of forlorn pleasure in the recollection, and making him feel how silly it was to have let his "not" be taken from him—though he knew he had no money to pay for them. And then he had not had the courage to tell his father that he wanted them. Surely he who had bought May so many things would have given this little gratification to Archie, had he gone rightly about it. But he had been a fool. What was he always but a fool? He had got himself into several scrapes because he had not had the courage to ask anything from Aunty Jean. And now when he had gotten the opportunity—the note that was his own, that nobody else had any right to, to think that he had let that be taken out of his hand! He would never get a penny of it, Archie knew; yes, a shilling perhaps, or maybe half-a-crown, like a little bairn. And what good were they to him, when he had twenty pounds—twenty whole pounds of his own—to get the little dogs with, and many another luxury besides, and pay up his subscriptions to his clubs, which were always in arrears, and maybe treat some of the lads to a dinner without having to account for every penny? But he had let it be taken from him, and farewell to the doggies and

everything else that was pleasant. Oh, what a fool he was, what a fool! He went up to his room, and tumbled as he was upon his bed, in his best clothes, though he was hungry, and smelt the supper, and wanted it, with all his vigorous young appetite. Happily for Archie, in this painful complication of circumstances, it was not very long before he fell asleep.

Next morning Mrs. Brown received Rowland in the parlour above. "I am wanting to speak to you, Jims," she said; "you're no used to the charge of young folk, and I maun speak out my mind. Ye mayna take it well of me, but at any rate I will have delivered my soul."

"Well," said Rowland, "I hope that will be for your comfort, however little it may be for mine."

"It will be for baith our goods, if ye will take my advice. Jims, what was that you threw at Archie last night before you went away?"

"Did I throw it at him? That was a curious thing to do; but I don't suppose it was intentional on my part."

"What was it, Jims? Answer me that."

"And may I ask what it matters to you, whatever it was?"

"It matters a great deal to me. I have been like a mother to him, and I'll no have the laddie to be led away. I know very well what it was. It was an English note, and I've got it here. Eh, Jims Rowland, knowing the world as ye must

know it, how daur ye put the means of evil in that boy's innocent hands!"

"This is very strange," said Rowland, "to be brought to book because I give my son a little money."

"Do ye ca' twenty pounds a little money! My patience! a sma' fortune," said Mrs. Brown.

"My dear Jean, this is one of the things, unfortunately, that we have made a great mistake about. My boy should have been accustomed to a little freedom, a little money of his own. It is all very unfortunate. He will be plunged into spending money when he is quite unacquainted with the use of it. It is the very worst thing."

"And that's a' my faut ye'll be thinking," said Jean, grimly.

"I don't say it is your fault. It is my fault as much as yours. I thought of securing them kindness and motherly care. I should have remembered there was something more necessary. You have been very kind to them, Jean."

"Kind!" the good woman flushed with a high angry colour; "Kind! that's a bonny word to use to me. A stranger's kind that says a pleasant word. The first person in the street that's taken with their winnin' ways is kind, if you please. But me! that has given them a' the love of my heart, that has been a mother to them and mair——!"

"I beg your pardon," said Rowland, "I am very much obliged to you: I know you have been all that."

"A mother, and mair," said Mrs. Jean. "No mony mothers would have done for them what I've done, watching every step they took, that ye might find them good bairns, no spendthrifts, nor wasters of your substance, but knowing the value of money, and using their discretion. I've given him the siller for his clubs and things, for I'm told that's the fashion nowadays, and he's aye had a shilling in his pouch for an occasion. If he had been my own I would never have held him with half as tight a hand, for he would have been making his week's wages if he had been a son of mine, and wouldna have been depending upon either you or me."

"That's just the pity of it," said Rowland. "He has fallen between two stools, neither a working lad nor a gentleman's son. That proves, Jean, we have both been in the wrong, and I more than you, for I should have known better. We have made a terrible mistake."

"I've made nae mistake," said Mrs. Brown. The tears were near which would soon choke her voice, and she spoke quickly to get out as much as she could before the storm came. "You may be in the wrang, Maister Rowland, but I'm no in the wrang. I've just acted on principle from beginning to end, to save him from the temptation of riches. They're a great temptation. If he had been learned to dash his way about like young MacColl, or the most of the lads that have had a father before them, what would ye have said to

me? You will see that laddie dashing about a' Glesco in his phaeton, or whatever ye ca't; and his grandmother was just a howdie in the High Street, nae mair. Would ye have likit that, Jims Rowland? folk saying 'set a beggar on horseback,' and a' the rest, to a son of yours, and calling to mind the stock he came of, that was just working folk, though aye respectable. I'm no the one to bring up a lad to that. If ye had wanted him made a prodigal o', ye should have pit him in other hands. I've just keeped him in his right place. And ye tell me it's a mistake, and my fault and terrible wrong. Lord forgive ye, Jims Rowland! How dare ye say it's a mistake to me, that has been a mother to them—and mair!"

Rowland, like other men, was made very uncomfortable by the sight of the woman crying, but he held his ground. "I am very sorry to seem ungrateful, Jean. I am not ungrateful. You've given them a happy childhood, which is everything. But we must try a different system now. I can't have a young man stumbling and stammering before me, as if he had something on his conscience. I am not going to watch every step he takes. He must learn to take steps on his own account, and understand that he's a responsible creature. If you have taken his money from him——"

Mrs. Brown jumped up as if she had received a blow. She rushed to the door of the room, which she flung open, calling upon "Archie! Archie!" in

a voice broken by angry sobs. The lad came stumbling down stairs not knowing what was wrong, and appeared with his still somewhat sullen face, asking "What's the matter?" in a tone which was half-alarmed and half-defiant. She seized him by the arm and dragged him into the room, then flying to a little desk, opened it, flinging back the lid, and seizing the unfortunate bit of paper, flung it again in Archie's face. "Hae!" she said, "there it's till ye. Me taken his money? Me that have just done everything for them, and never thought of mysel'. Me! taken his money!" Mrs. Brown's voice rose to a shriek, and then she fell into a chair and burst into a more renewed and violent passion of tears.

"What have ye been saying to her to make her like that?" said Archie, turning to his father. "I was not wanting your money, and if she put it away it was no harm. Her take your money! She cares nothing for money but to get things for May and me. Aunty," he said, going up to her, putting his hand on her shoulder, "I'll just put a notice in the *Herald* to-morrow. If he is my father, I'll not be dependent upon him. What right has he to fling his dirty money in a man's face, and come into this house like a wild beast and make you cry. He made his money himself, and he can spend it himself. I'll make what I want for mysel'."

But, oh, the puppies, barking with their ridiculous noses in his hand, sprawling over old

Rankine's bed! They suddenly came before Archie's mental vision, and made his voice waver. No such luxuries as Rankine's puppies could be in the lot of a poor young clerk in an office, making perhaps a pound a week—and he the great railway man's son that was rolling in wealth!—a sense of the great injustice of it made Archie's voice harsh. Who should all that money be for but for him? And the rich father, the hoped for incarnation of wealth, was there scolding about a miserable note, accusing Aunty Jean of having taken the money! The lad went and stood at the back of her chair, putting himself on her side, defying the other who thought so much of his filthy siller! Let him keep his siller! he had made it himself and he could spend it on himself. Archie for his part would do the same. But as he uttered these noble sentiments, an almost overwhelming sense of the wickedness of it, of the cruelty of the unjust father, and of the unimaginable wrong to himself flooded Archie's mind. He could have cried too with anger and the intolerable sense of wrong.

Rowland stood for a minute or two contemplating the scene, and then he burst into a laugh. The climax was too ridiculous, he said to himself, for any serious feeling. And yet it was not a pleasant climax to come to, after so many years.

CHAPTER XVII

THE husband and wife met with perhaps a greater sense of satisfaction and pleasure than either had anticipated feeling when they parted. Marriage is a curious thing notwithstanding all the ill that is said of it. They had not been long married; they had not been exactly what people call in love with each other; nor was James Rowland at all a sentimental person. Yet there is something in that old-fashioned expression which speaks of making two persons one flesh, which has a most powerful influence. They meet as people only can meet whose interests are one, who are fain to confide everything that affects them to the bosom of the other, who is their self. The thing is indescribable; it is simple as a b c to those who have experienced it. It would probably be impossible without the other circumstances of the union, yet it is superior to all the rest—the most essential, the most noble. Both these persons had been disturbed and troubled by various matters peculiar to themselves; Rowland by the problem of his children, Evelyn by

other problems not unlike, yet so different from his. When they met, there seemed an instant lull in these disturbances. The twofold being was now complete, and was able to deal with all problems.

Rowland had travelled by night, as busy men so often get the habit of doing, and Evelyn superintended the excellent breakfast he always made, and looked on at the satisfaction of that admirable appetite with much complacency, before she asked any questions. She was not a woman who was fond of asking questions. She awaited confidences, and did not press them ; which is a very good way for those who can do it, but not perhaps very easy to an anxious mind. The difference of her position from that of a mother was, that she was interested without being anxious, and this made her also more charitable in judging, and probably would make her less hard upon the shortcomings of the children. She was very much interested, but she was calm, and it was not to her a question of life and death. It was not till he had eaten the very last spoonful of marmalade and piece of roll, of which he was capable, that she said "Well?" looking with a smile into his eyes.

"Well—," he said with satisfaction, pushing back his seat from the table, "you're ready to hear all about my troubles, Evelyn?"

"I hope they are not very bad troubles."

"That will be very much as you take them, my dear. They might be bad enough, but I've great

confidence in my wife. In the first place, the house is, I think, perfection; but you may not agree with me—you know I have not your refinement. It stands on a green knoll overlooking the Clyde, with a background of the most beautiful hills in the world, and for the foreground the grand Firth—and all the wealth and life that pass over it—— But," he said pausing, and with a half shamefaced laugh, "I've told you all that before."

"Yes, you have told me before; but that does not take away my interest. Tell me more."

He took her hand with a grateful pressure, and so began to tell her about the arrangement of the house, and other matters on which she was not informed before, to all of which she listened with much grace and satisfaction, nodding her head as one thing was reported to her after another. I do not say that Mrs. Rowland did not exercise a natural privilege, and suspend her judgment on one or two points. It was only natural that she should know better what the internal arrangements of a great house should be than he did. But she received it all as if in every way he had done well; which was the case so far as she yet knew. "There is one thing, however, I must tell you of, Evelyn," he said, "and your feeling about that will of course make all the difference. You may not feel inclined to put up with it. And in that case it matters very little about anything else. It is you that must be the judge."

"What is this great thing?" she said with a smile.

"It is a great thing, my dear. I dare say even I might not like it, though, having your society, I'm very indifferent. It is that I'm afraid there is very little society at Rosmore."

She burst out into a pleasant laugh. "Society —is that all? Dear James, I thought you were going to say there was no good water, or that the drainage was bad, or something of that sort."

"We'd soon have managed that," he said, laughing too with relief, "sunk a well or turned the whole place upside down; that would have presented no difficulty. I cannot tell you what a relief it is to me that you take it so easily, Evelyn. It was—it was—Marion who put it into my head. She said, 'There will be nobody that mamma will like to associate with here.' That was all her own doing—not suggested in any way by me: for I did not know whether you would like it, if a little girl you never saw before called you, right out——"

"Like it!" said Evelyn—Perhaps, to tell the truth, she had winced a little. "Of course I should like it. It shows an inclination to adopt me, which is the very best thing I could have hoped for. Tell me about her, James. The house is very interesting, but the children are more interesting than the house."

"You take a load off my mind when you say so. I would give a thousand pounds that the first was

over—that you had met them and made acquaintance with them. She's eighteen, and he's twenty. The boy is rather a cub—and the girl——"

"My dear James! it's very likely they are not made up exactly to your taste: how could they be? They are very young, and it will be quite exciting to put them a little into shape—into our shape. Society, indeed!—Society, whatever it was, would not be nearly so interesting as that. Tell me everything about them, James."

Encouraged by this, Mr. Rowland began to tell her his experiences with the children; but by some means it came about that, he could not tell how, their faults got slurred over, and their good qualities magnified in his hand. How did it happen? He could not tell. He had Marion's impertinent little *minois* before him every word he said, yet he managed to give an inoffensive saucy look to Marion—a saucy look which fathers do not dislike, though mothers may object to it. And then the boy—

"Archie disarms me," he said, "because I can't help seeing in him his mother's eyes. I'm afraid he's a dour fellow and sullen, and you can't be expected to be mollified as I am. It takes away my anger when I look at him. And yet I had cause to be angry."

"Tell me," she said.

And then Mr. Rowland told the story, beginning at the apparition of the groom with his question about the dougs, and ending with Archie's defence

of his aunt, who had taken his money from him, against the father who had given it. As he told this, it seemed to himself less bad as an indictment against Archie than he had supposed. What was it, after all, that the boy had done? The enormity disappeared as it was put into words. And Evelyn sat smiling, from time to time shaking her head.

"It appears to me," she said, "that if Archie was wrong, as no doubt he was, Archie's father was also a little to blame."

"Do you think so?" he said eagerly. He was glad to think that perhaps this might be so.

"You would not like him to be disloyal, not for twenty bank-notes? He might have swallowed the injury to himself of having that money flung in his face—"

"Injury!"—Mr. Rowland's countenance fell.

She put her hand upon his, smiling—"Yes, Sir Stern Father. That's not your *rôle*, James: you were born to be a most indulgent father, giving in to them in everything. And you must henceforward take up your right *rôle*, and let me be the repressive influence."

He took her hands between both his. It was not a very strong support, so far as physical force went, and yet for the first time James Rowland felt their soft fingers close upon his in a way that expressed not their usual soft gentleness, but strength. He felt himself suddenly holding on to that hand as if it were his sheet anchor, which indeed it was.

"To tell the truth," he said, "I think perhaps I looked at them through what I supposed were your eyes, Evelyn, seeing how unlike they were to you, how little worthy to live with you, to have the rank of your children. It was that, at all events, made me hard upon poor little May. It's not her fault if she is more like Jean Brown than she is like a lady, or anything that had even been near you."

"Whom should she be like but the person who has brought her up? I am delighted to hear that they are so loyal. I would not have that changed for anything in the world."

"I am not so sure about their loyalty," said Rowland, recalling to mind Marion's strict impartiality in respect to her aunt and detachment from her. But he felt sure that Evelyn would be able to explain that away also; and put his foot upon it. No need to make the child out worse than she was; and a rush of paternal kindness came over him now that the two were out of his sight. It was not their fault. He said, "I don't doubt you'll do wonders with Marion, my dear. The little thing is very quick. Even in the day or two I was with them, a change came over her. She kept her eye upon me, and without a word just adopted manners. No, I don't think I am partial. Indeed I found that I was quite the reverse."

I am afraid that a cold shudder, unsuspected by her husband, passed over Evelyn, in which, if

there was horror, there was also a distinctly comic element. What sort of a wonderful creature must the girl be who "adopted manners" from good James, the most excellent man, but not a model of refinement. She could not but laugh, yet shivered a little as well.

"I am more afraid of Marion than of Archie," she said, "for he will chiefly be your concern. I shall have only the consoling part, the petting to do with him. I hope your little May is a magnanimous little person, who will not mind being pulled to pieces for her good; for I suppose I shall have to do that—if you are right."

She added these last words with a little quick awakening to possible danger. He had not been at all complimentary to his little girl. Yet was it possible that there was a faint little cloud, a suspicion of a cloud on his face, to be taken at his word, and to have even his wife express, nay repeat what was his own opinion? She was very quick to see these almost imperceptible changes of countenance, and with a little start and catching of her breath, awoke to a sense of risk, which she had never realized before.

"I have a story of my own to tell you," she said hastily, "in which I shall have to crave a great deal of forbearance on your part, James, and pardon for what I have taken upon myself to do, or rather to consent to. I thought of asking your permission first, but then I felt that anything of this kind might seem a want of confidence in you."

His face had changed in a moment to the widest of smiles, and brightest of aspects. "Fancy!" he said, "anything for which you should have to ask my permission, any wish of yours that it would not be my highest pleasure to do."

"Thank you, dear," she said. "I felt sure you would back me up: and now I have got this pretty speech to boot, to make me happy. James, do you remember a story I told you when you first spoke to me, when you asked me first, in Helen Stanhope's house?"

"About?"——He paused and added, "Yes: you have seen him again?"

"I have seen a man paralyzed, in a Bath chair, moved, dressed, fed, ordered about by a servant. The ghost, or far worse than the ghost, the wreck of a man."

"And that was he?" A certain gleam—was it of satisfaction?—was for a moment in James Rowland's eyes. But it was only for a moment, and the next they were subdued by the most genuine sympathy. "My poor dear!" he said.

"It was a great shock to see him, you may suppose: but that is a small matter. He has two children, like ourselves."

The light sprang up in his eyes, and he thanked her with a sudden kiss upon her hand.

"A boy and a girl, about the same ages. The girl I have seen—a strange specimen to me of a new generation I have no knowledge of; the boy, I fear, a very careless boy. Of all things in the

world it has occurred to Mr. Saumarez, of all people in the world, to desire to confide these children to me."

"It shows that he has more sense than I could have thought."

"Their mother, of course, is dead, and he thinks he will die soon. I hear from others that how he lives at all is a wonder, though they think him likely to go on living; but he wishes me to take the guardianship of his children——"

"And you have accepted?"

"No, I have not accepted. That was too much to do, without your approval at least: even with it I doubt if I could take such a responsibility. It is not so bad as that. But I have pledged myself to ask them to Rosmore, for a long visit, to make their acquaintance thoroughly. They are young people who are, according to their slang, up to everything. I have been in great doubt since, whether it would be a good thing for—our two."

James Rowland's eyes flashed again. After all there are some things which the experiences of a lifetime cannot do away with. As a point of fact he knew well enough that the higher classes as he had seen them, chiefly in India, were fundamentally not a bit superior to the lower classes as he knew them by more intimate experience; and yet, risen from the ranks as he was, it gave him the strangest sensation of pleasure to hear that two young aristocrats, children of Society, "up to everything," were about to become his guests.

Even the flavour of something a little wrong which was conveyed in these words, rather heightened than diminished the pleasure. A good thing for —our two. Surely it would be a good thing: it would teach them manners far more effectually than if they were to observe their father's ways to the end of the chapter. It would smarten up Archie, and let him see what a young man should look like in his new sphere.

"My dear," he said, "if that is all you are in doubt about, I think you may set your mind at rest. Two young people who are up to everything will probably find it very dull at Rosmore; but so far as we are concerned, and the two—it can be nothing but an advantage. Ask as many people as you like: there is plenty of room in the house, and there will be plenty of carriages and horses, and plenty of things to see, though there is nothing to do, as Archie says."

"That is a very advanced thing for Archie to say: it is the fashionable complaint."

"Is it?" said Rowland, brightening more and more. He began to think that perhaps he had been too severe upon the young people, that his anxiety had made him see blemishes which perhaps did not exist. It was quite possible that well-made clothes, and a little money in his pocket, would make entirely a different figure of Archie; and little May—well, perhaps little May wanted still less. She was as sharp as a needle. She would pick up everything without letting it be seen that

she did not know it to begin with. The thought flashed through his mind that in a week she would have made herself an exact copy of Evelyn, and what could a girl do better than that? Marion was not like her own mother at all; she had not those eyes which gave Archie, though he did not know it, so much power. But she was very clever: she could make herself whatever she wanted to be.

The Rowlands had a great deal before them in the few days which they were to spend in London, before going, as Mr. Rowland proudly said, home. There were a great many things still to buy, which could be got only in town, though the Glasgow people had been indignantly sure that nothing was to be had in London (to call London *town*, was an arrogance which was not to be endured) which could not be much better procured in Glasgow. Rowland, however, was precisely the man to be of a contrary opinion, and he had a list as long as his arm of things that were still wanted. Plate, for one inconsiderable item, and carriages on which Evelyn's judgment was necessary, and for which orders had to be given at once. He approved of her purchases, but thought them far too few and unimportant. "I believe you are afraid of spending money," he said with a long rich laugh. This rich laugh of contempt at all small economies and insignificant expenditure is offensive in many people, but it was not offensive in James Rowland —perhaps, indeed, to the wives of the millionaires, who are thus allowed *carte blanche*, and egged on

in the way of pleasant extravagance, it is never offensive. Evelyn entered into the joke of being niggardly, of spending too little. "As if there was not enough to come and go upon," he said, with perfect satisfaction. When any one was by, especially any one who was not rich, who could not afford these liberalities, she might blush a little and restrain with a look, or a touch upon his arm, the large utterances of her good man; but when they were alone, she did not find it offensive. She went with him from one shop to another, quite pleased with herself and him. He was really a satisfactory person to go shopping with. He found nothing too costly so long as it was good, and threw over cheap things with a fine contempt that was refreshing to behold, especially to one who for a long time had been obliged to take cheapness much into consideration. One day he took her into Christie's, and bade her look if there was anything good enough for her boudoir at home, and stood by smiling with pride in his wife's taste and superior knowledge, while she was inspecting those treasures which he declared he did not understand. But he did understand *bric-a-brac*, it turned out, much better than Evelyn did, though perhaps his taste in pictures was not so pure.

Thus the days passed by; and though those pleasures depended very much on the depth of Mr. Rowland's purse, they could scarcely be called vulgar pleasures, although Evelyn sometimes at the end of the day blushed to think how she had

enjoyed herself. Was it the fact of spending money, an operation which in itself seemed to give pleasure to her husband, or was it the acquisition of so many valuable and beautiful things which was delightful? It was complicated, as everything human is, with the contrast of previous life, with the pleasure of pleasing him by being pleased herself, even perhaps a little by the obsequious respect by which their progress was attended. This was a poor view, and we are poor creatures, the best of us—for there was something even in that. As for the purchases themselves, Evelyn knew that a cracked pot, a scrap of an old picture, a bit of clumsy carving, was capable of giving quite as much pleasure as all the treasures of art which accumulated in their rooms at the hotel. Happily there is compensation in all things, and the highest of all delights, in *bric-a-brac* at least, is not to him who buys whatever strikes his fancy, regardless of expense, but to him who "picks up" an unexpected gem, for a few pence or shillings, in some ignoble corner where no such treasure could be suspected to be.

And they dined out in the evenings, at the Leightons, of course, and at other places where the great railway man found himself a sort of lion, to his great astonishment, where he expected modestly to be received, chiefly on his wife's account, in spheres which were not his. In this point of view Mr. Rowland was delighted, and Evelyn was as proud of her husband as he could be of her, which

was saying a great deal. Like many other people in this world, Rowland was not in the least vain of the real work he had done. He was aware that he had been very lucky in many things, in the means he had employed, in the curious natural facilities which always came in his way; but his own skill and patience and thought did not seem to come into his mind as deserving of special distinction. "Oh, of course, since it was my business I tried to do it the best I could," he said, as if that were the most natural thing in the world. It was his assistants who were the wonderful fellows; he was so fortunate in always getting hold of the best men; no man but had been true to him as Brutus says. Evelyn sat by and listened with such light in her eyes that her friend, Lady Leighton, looked at her in wonder. "Why, you are in love with him!" said that woman of the world.

There was one meeting, however, in which Evelyn's feelings were exercised in a more complicated and difficult way. She had kept safe from all encounter with Saumarez, whose invalid chair she had seen repeatedly in the distance with a sense of an escape, until the very last day, which Rowland had insisted upon devoting to amusement alone. "Why shouldn't we begin with this 'Row' which I hear everybody speaking of?"

"Oh, it is too early for the Row."

"Never mind; it seems to be pretty, and to have pretty people about it. I want to sit down on a chair and look at them."

"As if you were a man to sit long quiet on a chair!"

"Come along, Evelyn. I believe you're jealous of the pretty girls," he said with his big laugh. How well she had known how it would be! Saumarez had no objection at any time to be seen of the crowd. He had grown to feel his helplessness a distinction, as he would have felt anything else that belonged to him. But his time for his promenade was before the fashionable hour, and the Rowlands had not gone half the way along before the well-known chair became visible slowly approaching. Evelyn gripped her husband's arm.

"James, I see an invalid chair there in front of us, with three ladies standing round it. I rather think it must be Mr. Saumarez. He is sure to see us; he will ask to be introduced to you."

"Well, my dear: if you would rather not, let's turn back; otherwise, it makes no difference to me. Yes, I might almost say I have a kind of curiosity—but not if it trouble you."

"How should it trouble me?" said Evelyn. But yet it did, though there was no reason for it. What was her reason? A half vexation that her husband should see him so humiliated, so helpless and pitiful a spectacle; a half terror to see her husband reflected through his eyes. But there was no help for it now.

"Make me acquainted with Mr. Rowland, my dear lady," Saumarez said. "I have wanted to

make his acquaintance ever since I heard—how lucky a man he was."

"You may say that," said Rowland heartily, "the luckiest man, I think, in the whole world."

"You say so," said the invalid, "to the man who can perhaps best understand you in the whole world, being the unluckiest man in it, I should think; a failure in everything beside you, who are a success in everything. You must let me congratulate you, as one of your wife's earliest friends. I am just sufficiently older than she is to have held her in my arms as an infant."

"For heaven's sake, none of that!" Evelyn exclaimed under her breath, with a flash of overpowering offence. He eyed her with a smile in those two brilliant eyes.

"To have petted her as a little girl, to have—admired her as a woman: nobody can know so well as I what a prize you have got, Mr. Rowland."

James was a little surprised, and slightly, faintly disturbed. "I hope I know that," he said, "and my great good fortune."

"And I hope," said Evelyn, "that I am not considered likely to enjoy all this, listening to those mutual compliments. I, for my part, am fully alive to my own good fortune. James, I think we must go on. We have to be at Madeline's."

"Madeline," said Saumarez with a laugh, "is always Mrs. Rowland's excuse. She is constantly going to Madeline's if one tries to detain her for a moment. But you must wait till I tell you how

kind she has been to my children. It cannot but do a young girl good to be in Mrs. Rowland's society ; and I am doubly grateful for my motherless Rose. I hear you've got Lord Clydesdale's place at Rosmore."

Mr. Rowland did not like to hear it called Lord Clydesdale's place. "Until the moment when we can get him to sell it to us," he said.

"Ah, will he sell ? That's a different matter. A rich tenant paying a good rent, that's one thing—but Clydesdale won't sell. I hope you are not calculating upon that."

"We shall see," said Rowland, not well pleased.

"Yes, we shall see. And must you really go—to Madeline ? Lay me at her ladyship's feet. I will go and give her ladyship my opinion of—things in general, one day very soon."

"My dear," said Mr. Rowland to his wife, "I don't think much of that—old friend of yours. Cripple or no cripple, he's got a devil in his eye."

"You cannot think less of him than I do, James," said Evelyn, holding fast by her husband's arm. She knew very well what he had meant when he had said he would give Madeline his opinion on—things in general ; and she knew what barbed arrow he had intended to place in her heart when he spoke of holding her in his arms as an infant. To think that she should have been in that man's arms a happy girl, considering herself happy in his love !

She shuddered as the thought passed through her mind.

"Are you cold, Evelyn?" Rowland said with surprise.

"Only with the moral cold that is in that man's horrible atmosphere," she said.

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