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DEMOS

VOL. III.



# DEMOS

*A STORY OF ENGLISH SOCIALISM*

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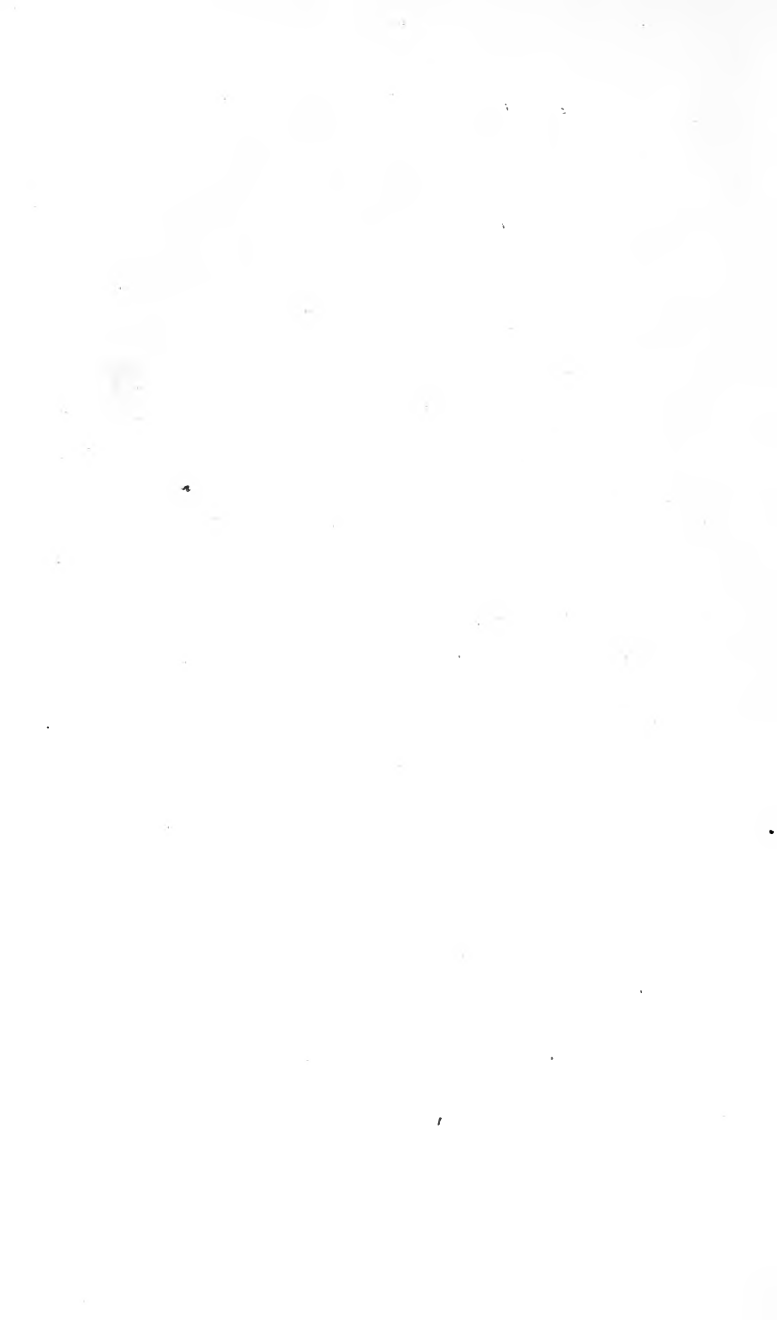
‘Jene machen Partei; Welch’ unerlaubtes Beginnen!  
Aber unsre Partei, freilich, versteht sich von selbst’  
GOETHE

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IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III.

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# DEMOS.



## CHAPTER I.

ADELA and her husband did not return from Belwick till eight o'clock in the evening. In the first place, Mr. Yottle had to be sent for from a friend's house in the country, where he was spending Sunday; then there was long waiting for a train back to Agworth. The Rodmans, much puzzled to account for the disorder, postponed dinner. Adela, however, dined alone, and but slightly, though she had not eaten since breakfast. Then fatigue overcame her. She slept an unbroken sleep till sunrise.

On going down next morning she found 'Arry alone in the dining-room; he was standing at the window with hands in pocket, and, after a glance round, averted his face again, a low growl his only answer to her morning salutation. Mr. Rodman was the next to ap-

pear. He shook hands as usual. In his 'I hope you are well?' there was an accent of respectful sympathy. Personally, he seemed in his ordinary spirits. He proceeded to talk of trifles, but in such a tone as he might have used had there been grave sickness in the house. And presently, with yet lower voice and a smile of good-humoured resignation, he said—

'Our journey, I fear, must be postponed.'

Adela smiled, not quite in the same way, and briefly assented.

'Alice is not very well,' Rodman then remarked. 'I advised her to have breakfast upstairs. I trust you excuse her?'

Mutimer made his appearance. He just nodded round, and asked as he seated himself at table—

'Who's been letting Freeman loose? He's running about the garden.'

The dog furnished a topic for a few minutes conversation, then there was all but unbroken silence to the end of the meal. Richard's face expressed nothing in particular, unless it were a bad night. Rodman kept up his smile, and, eating little himself, devoted himself to polite waiting upon Adela. When he rose from the table, Richard said to his brother—

'You'll go down as usual. I shall be at the office in half-an-hour.'

Adela presently went to the drawing-room. She was surprised to find Alice sitting there. Mrs. Rodman had clearly not enjoyed the unbroken rest which gave Adela her appearance of freshness and calm ; her eyes were swollen and red, her lips hung like those of a fretful child that has tired itself with sobbing, her hair was carelessly rolled up, her attire slatternly. She sat in sullen disorder. Seeing Adela, she dropped her eyes, and her lips drew themselves together. Adela hesitated to approach her, but was moved to do so by sheer pity.

‘I’m afraid you’ve had a bad night,’ she said kindly.

‘Yes, I suppose I have,’ was the ungracious reply.

Adela stood before her for a moment, but could find nothing else to say. She was turning when Alice looked up, her red eyes almost glaring, her breast shaken with uncontrollable passion.

‘I think you might have had some consideration,’ she exclaimed. ‘If you didn’t care to speak a word for yourself you might have thought about others. What are we to do, I should like to know?’

Adela was struck with consternation. She had been prepared for petulant bemoaning, but a vehement outburst of this kind was the last

thing she could have foreseen, above all to have it directed against herself.

‘What do you mean, Alice?’ she said with pained surprise.

‘Why, it’s all your doing, I suppose,’ the other pursued, in the same voice. ‘What right had you to let him go off in that way without saying a word to us? If the truth was known, I expect you were at the bottom of it; he wouldn’t have been such a fool, whatever he says. What right had you, I’d like to know?’

Adela calmed herself as she listened. Her surprise at the attack was modified and turned into another channel by Alice’s words.

‘Has Richard told you what passed between us?’ she inquired. It cost her nothing to speak with unmoved utterance; the difficulty was not to seem too indifferent.

‘He’s told us as much as he thought fit. His duty! I like that! As if you couldn’t have stopped him if you’d chosen! You might have thought of other people.’

‘Did he tell you that I tried to stop him?’ Adela asked, with the same quietness of interrogation.

‘Why, did you?’ cried Alice, looking up scornfully.

‘No.’

‘Of course not! Talk about duty! I should think that was plain enough duty. I only wish

he'd come to me with his talk about duty. It's a duty to rob people, I suppose? Oh, I understand *him* well enough. It's an easy way of getting out of his difficulties; as well lose his money this way as any other. He always thinks of himself first, trust him! He'll go down to New Wanley and make a speech, no doubt, and show off—with his duty and all the rest of it! What's going to become of me? You'd no right to let him go before telling us.'

'You would have advised him to say nothing about the will?'

'Advised him!' she laughed angrily. 'I'd have seen if I couldn't do something more than advise.'

'I fear you wouldn't have succeeded in making your brother act dishonourably,' Adela replied.

It was the first sarcasm that had ever passed her lips, and as soon as it was spoken she turned to leave the room, fearful lest she might say things which would afterwards degrade her in her own eyes. Her body quivered. As she reached the door Rodman opened it and entered. He bowed to let her pass, searching her face the while.

When she was gone he approached to Alice, whom he had at once observed.

'What have you been up to?' he asked sternly.

Her head was bent before him, and she gave no answer.

‘Can’t you speak? What’s made her look like that? Have you been quarrelling with her?’

‘Quarrelling?’

‘You know what I mean well enough. Just tell me what you said. I thought I told you to stay upstairs? What’s been going on?’

‘I told her she ought to have let us know,’ replied Alice, timorous, but affecting the look and voice of a spoilt child.

‘Then you’ve made a fool of yourself!’ he exclaimed with subdued violence. ‘You’ve got to learn that when I tell you to do a thing you do it—or I’ll know the reason why! You’d no business to come out of your room. Now you’ll just find her and apologise. You understand? You’ll go and beg her pardon at once.’

Alice raised her eyes in wretched bewilderment.

‘Beg her pardon?’ she faltered. ‘Oh, how can I? Why, what harm have I done, Willis? I’m sure I shan’t beg her pardon.’

‘You won’t? If you talk to me in that way you shall go down on your knees before her. You won’t?’

His voice had such concentrated savagery in its suppression that Alice shrank back in terror.

‘Willis! How can you speak so! What have I done?’

‘You’ve made a confounded fool of yourself and most likely spoilt the last chance you had, if you want to know. In future, when I say a thing understand that I mean it; I don’t give orders for nothing. Go and find her and beg her pardon. I’ll wait here till you’ve done it.’

‘But I *can’t*! Willis, you won’t force me to do that? I’d rather die than humble myself to her!’

‘Do you hear me?’

She stood up, almost driven to bay. Her eyes were wet, her poor, crumpled prettiness made a deplorable spectacle.

‘I can’t, I can’t! Why are you so unkind to me? I have only said what any one would. I hate her! My lips won’t speak the words. You’ve no right to ask me to do such a thing.’

Her wrist was caught in a clutch that seemed to crush the muscles, and she was flung back on to the chair. Terror would not let the scream pass her lips; she lay with open mouth and staring eyes.

Rodman looked at her for an instant, then seemed to master his fury and laughed.

‘That doesn’t improve your beauty. Now, no crying out before you’re hurt. There’s no harm done. Only you’ve to learn that I mean what I say, that’s all. Now I haven’t hurt you, so don’t pretend.’

‘Oh, you *have* hurt me!’ she sobbed wretchedly, with her fingers round her injured wrist. ‘I never thought you could be so cruel. Oh, my hand! What harm have I done? And you used to say you’d never be unkind to me, never! Oh, how miserable I am! Is this how you’re going to treat me? As if I could help it! Willis, you won’t begin to be cruel? Oh, my hand!’

‘Let me look at it. Pooh, what’s amiss?’ He spoke all at once in his usual good-natured voice. ‘Now go and find Adela, whilst I wait here.’

‘You’re going to force me to do that?’

‘You’re going to do it. Now don’t make me angry again.’

She rose, frightened again by his look. She took a step or two, then turned back to him.

‘If I do this, will you be kind to me, the same as before?’

‘Of course I will. You don’t take me for a brute?’

She held her bruised wrist to him.

‘Will you—will you kiss it well again?’

The way in which she said it was as nearly pathetic as anything from poor Alice could be. Her misery was so profound, and this childish forgiveness of an outrage was so true a demonstration of womanly tenderness which her character would not allow to be noble. Her



husband laughed rather uneasily, and did her bidding with an ill grace. But yet she could not go.

‘You’ll promise never to speak——’

‘Yes, yes, of course I promise. Come back to me. Mind, I shall know how you did it.’

‘But why? What is she to us?’

‘I’ll tell you afterwards.’

There was a dawning of jealousy in her eyes.

‘I don’t think you ought to make your wife lower herself——’

His brow darkened.

‘Will you do as I tell you?’

She moved towards the door, stopped to dry her wet cheeks, half looked round. What she saw sped her on her way.

Adela was just descending the stairs, dressed to go out. Alice let her go past without speaking, but followed her through the hall and into the garden. Adela turned, saying gently—

‘Do you wish to speak to me?’

‘I’m sorry I said those things. I didn’t mean it. I don’t think it was your fault.’

The other smiled; then, in that voice which Stella had spoken of as full of forgiveness—

‘No, it is not my fault, Alice. It couldn’t be otherwise. Don’t think of it another moment.’

Alice would gladly have retreated, but durst

not omit what seemed to her the essential because the bitterest words.

‘I beg your pardon.’

‘No, no!’ exclaimed Adela quickly. ‘Go and lie down a little: you look so tired. Try not to be unhappy; your husband will not let harm come to you.’

Alice returned to the house, hating her sister-in-law with a perfect hatred.

The hated one took her way into Wanley. She had no pleasant mission—that of letting her mother and Letty know what had happened. The latter she found in the garden behind the house dancing her baby-boy up and down in the sunlight. Letty did not look very matronly, it must be confessed; but what she lacked in mature dignity was made up in blue-eyed and warm-cheeked happiness. At the sight of Adela she gave a cry of joy.

‘Why, mother’s just getting ready to go and say good-bye to you. As soon as she comes down and takes this little rogue I shall just slip my own things on. We didn’t think you’d come here.’

‘We’re not going to-day,’ Adela replied, playing with the baby’s face.

‘Not going?’

‘Business prevents Richard.’

‘How you frightened us by leaving church yesterday! I was on my way to ask about

you, but Mr. Wyvern met me and said there was nothing the matter. And you went to Agworth, didn't you?

'To Belwick. We had to see Mr. Yottle the solicitor.'

Mrs. Waltham issued from the house, and explanations were again demanded.

'Could you give baby to the nurse for a few minutes?' Adela asked Letty. 'I should like to speak to you and mother quietly.'

The arrangement was effected and all three went into the sitting-room. There Adela explained in simple words all that had come to pass; emotionless herself, but the cause of utter dismay in her hearers. When she ceased there was blank silence.

Mrs. Waltham was the first to find her voice.

'But surely Mr. Eldon won't take everything from you? I don't think he has the power to—it wouldn't be just; there must be surely some kind of provision in the law for such a thing. What did Mr. Yottle say?'

'Only that Mr. Eldon could recover the whole estate.'

'The estate!' exclaimed Mrs. Waltham eagerly. 'But not the money?'

Adela smiled.

'The estate includes the money, mother. It means everything.'

‘Oh, Adela!’ sighed Letty, who sat with her hands on her lap, bewildered.

‘But surely not Mrs. Rodman’s settlement?’ cried the elder lady, who was rapidly surveying the whole situation.

‘Everything,’ affirmed Adela.

‘But what an extraordinary, what an unheard-of thing! Such injustice I never knew! Oh, but Mr. Eldon is a gentleman—he can never exact his legal rights to the full extent. He has too much delicacy of feeling for that.’

Adela glanced at her mother with a curious openness of look—the expression which by apparent negation of feeling reveals feeling of special significance. Mrs. Waltham caught the glance and checked her flow of speech.

‘Oh, he could never do that!’ she murmured the next moment, in a lower key, clasping her hands together upon her knees. ‘I am sure he wouldn’t.’

‘You must remember, mother,’ remarked Adela with reserve, ‘that Mr. Eldon’s disposition cannot affect us.’

‘My dear child, what I meant was this: it is impossible for him to go to law with your husband to recover the uttermost farthing. How are you to restore money that is long since spent? and it isn’t as if it had been spent in the ordinary way—it has been devoted to public purposes. Mr. Eldon will of course

take all these things into consideration. And really one must say that it is very strange for a wealthy man to leave his property entirely to strangers.'

'Not entirely,' put in Adela rather absently.

'A hundred and seven pounds a year!' exclaimed her mother protestingly. 'My dear love, what *can* be done with such a paltry sum as that!'

'We must do a good deal with it, dear mother. It will be all we have to depend upon until Richard finds—finds some position.'

'But you are not going to leave the Manor at once?'

'As soon as ever we can. I don't know what arrangement my husband is making. We shall see Mr. Yottle again to-morrow.'

'Adela, this is positively shocking! It seems incredible; I never thought such things could happen. No wonder you looked white when you went out of church. How little I imagined! But you know you can come here at any moment. You can sleep with me, or we'll have another bed put up in the room. Oh, dear; oh, dear! It will take me a long time to understand it. Your husband could not possibly object to your living here till he found you a suitable home. What *will* Alfred say? Oh, you must certainly come here. I shan't have a moment's rest if

you go away somewhere whilst things are in this dreadful state.'

'I don't think that will be necessary,' Adela replied with a reassuring smile. It might very well have happened that we had nothing at all, not even the hundred pounds; but a wife can't run away for reasons of that kind—can she, Letty?'

Letty gazed with her eyes of loving pity, and sighed, 'I suppose not, dear.'

Adela sat with them for only a few minutes more. She did not feel able to chat at length on a crisis such as this, and the tone of her mother's sympathy was not soothing to her. Mrs. Waltham had begun to put a handkerchief to her eyes.

'You mustn't take it to heart,' Adela said as she bent and kissed her cheek. You can't think how little it troubles me—on my own account. Letty, I look to you to keep mother cheerful. Only think what numbers of poor creatures would dance for joy if they had a hundred a year left them! We must be philosophers, you see. I couldn't shed a tear if I tried ever so hard. Good-bye, dear mother!'

Mrs. Waltham did not rise, but Letty followed her friend into the hall. She had been very silent and undemonstrative; now she embraced Adela tenderly. There was still something of the old diffidence in her manner, but

the effect of her motherhood was discernible. Adela was childless—a circumstance in itself provocative of a gentle sense of protection in Letty's heart.

‘You'll let us see you every day, darling?’

‘As often as I can, Letty. Don't let mother get low-spirited. There's nothing to grieve about.’

Letty returned to the sitting-room; Mrs. Waltham was still pressing the handkerchief on this cheek and that alternately.

‘How wonderful she is!’ Letty exclaimed. ‘I feel as if I could never again fret over little troubles.’

‘Adela has a strong character,’ assented the mother with mournful pride.

Letty, unable to sit long without her baby, fetched it from the nurse's arms. The infant's luncheon-hour had arrived, and the nourishment was still of Letty's own providing. It was strange to see on her face the slow triumph of this ineffable bliss over the grief occasioned by the recent conversation. Mrs. Waltham had floated into a stream of talk.

‘Now, what a strange thing it is!’ she observed, after many other reflections, and when the sound of her own voice had had time to soothe. On the very morning of the wedding I had the most singular misgiving, a feeling I couldn't explain. One would almost think I

had foreseen this very thing. And you know very well, my dear, that the marriage troubled me in many ways. It was not *the* match for Adela, but then——. Adela, as you say, has a strong character ; she is not very easy to reason with. I tried to make both sides of the question clear to her. But then her prejudice against Mr. Eldon was very strong, and how naturally, poor child ! Young people don't like to trust to time ; they think everything must be done quickly. If she had been one to marry for reasons of interest it might look like a punishment ; but then it was so far otherwise. How much better it would have been to wait a few years ! One really never knows what is going to happen. Young people really ought to trust others' experience.'

Letty was only lending half an ear. The general character of her mother-in-law's monologues did not encourage much attention. She was conscious of a little surprise, even now and then of a mild indignation ; but the baby sucking at her breast lulled her into a sweet maternal apathy. She could only sigh from time to time and wonder whether it was a good thing or the contrary that Adela had no baby in her trials.



## CHAPTER II.

MUTIMER did not come to the Manor for luncheon. Rodman, who had been spending an hour at the works, brought word that business pressed; a host of things had to be unexpectedly finished off and put in order. He, Alice, and Adela made pretence of a midday meal; then he went into the library to smoke a cigar and meditate. The main subject of his meditation was an interview with Adela which he purposed seeking in the course of the afternoon. But he had also half-a-dozen letters of the first importance to despatch to town by the evening post, and these it was well to get off hand. He had finished them by half-past three. Then he went to the drawing-room, but found it vacant. He sought his wife's chamber. Alice was endeavouring to read a novel, but there was recent tear-shedding about her eyes, which had not come of the author's pathos.

'You'll be a pretty picture soon if that goes on,' Rodman remarked, with a frankness which

was sufficiently brutal in spite of his jesting tone.

‘I can’t think how you take it so lightly,’ Alice replied with utter despondency, flinging the book aside.

‘What’s the good of taking it any other way? Where’s Adela?’

‘Adela?’ She looked at him as closely as her eyes would let her. ‘Why do you want her?’

‘I asked you where she was. Please to get into the habit of answering my questions at once. It’ll save time in future.’

She seemed about to resent his harshness, but the effort cost her too much. She let her head fall forward almost upon her knees and sobbed unrestrainedly.

Rodman touched her shoulder and shook her, but not roughly.

‘Do not be such an eternal fool!’ he grumbled. ‘Do you know where Adela is or not?’

‘No, I don’t,’ came the smothered reply. Then, raising her head, ‘Why do you think so much about Adela?’

He leaned against the dressing-table and laughed mockingly.

‘That’s the matter, eh? You think I’m after her! Don’t be such a goose.’

‘I’d rather you call me a goose than a fool, Willis.’

‘Why, there’s not much difference. Now if you’ll sit up and behave sensibly, I’ll tell you why I want her.’

‘Really? Will you give me a kiss first?’

‘Poor blubbery princess! Pah! your lips are like a baby’s. Now just listen, and mind you hold your tongue about what I say. You know there used to be something between Adela and Eldon. I’ve a notion it went farther than we know of. Well, I don’t see why we shouldn’t get her to talk him over into letting you keep your money, or a good part of it. So you see it’s you I’m thinking about after all, little stupid.’

‘Oh, you really mean that! Kiss me again,—look, I’ve wiped my lips. You really think you can do that, Willis?’

‘No, I don’t think I can, but it’s worth having a try. Eldon has a soft side, I know. The thing is to find *her* soft side. I’m going to have a try to talk her over. Now, where is she likely to be?—out in the garden?’

‘Perhaps she’s at her mother’s.’

‘Confound it! Well, I’ll go and look about; I can’t lose time.’

‘You’ll never get her to do anything for *me*, Willis.’

‘Very likely not. But the things that you succeed in are always the most unlikely, as you’d understand if you’d lived my life.’

‘At all events, I shan’t have to give up my dresses?’

‘Hang your dresses——on the wardrobe pegs!’

He went downstairs again and out into the garden, thence to the entrance gate. Adela had passed it but a few minutes before, and he saw her a little distance off. She was going in the direction away from Wanley, seemingly on a mere walk. He decided to follow her and only join her when she had gone some way. She walked with her head bent, walked slowly and with no looking about her. Presently it was plain that she meant to enter the wood. This was opportune. But he lost sight of her as soon as she passed among the trees. He quickened his pace; saw her turning off the main path among the copses. In his pursuit he got astray; he must have missed her track. Suddenly he was checked by the sound of voices, which seemed to come from a lower level just in front of him. Cautiously he stepped forward, till he could see through hazel bushes that there was a steep descent before him. Below, two persons were engaged in conversation, and he could hear every word.

The two were Adela and Hubert Eldon. Adela had come to sit for the last time in the green retreat which was painfully dear to her. Her husband’s absence gave her freedom; she

used it to avoid the Rodmans and to talk with herself. She was, as we may conjecture, far from looking cheerfully into the future. Nor was she content with herself, with her behaviour in the drama of these two days. In thinking over the scene with her husband she experienced a shame before her conscience which could not at first be readily accounted for, for of a truth she had felt no kind of shame in steadfastly resisting Mutimer's dishonourable impulse. But she saw now that in the judgment of one who could read all her heart she would not come off with unmingled praise. Had there not been another motive at work in her besides zeal for honour? Suppose the man benefiting by the will had been another than Hubert Eldon? Surely that would not have affected her behaviour? Not in practice, doubtless; but here was a question of feeling, a scrutiny of the soul's hidden velleities. No difference in action, be sure; that must ever be upright. But what of the heroism in this particular case? The difference declared itself; here there had been no heroism whatever. To strip herself and her husband when a moment's winking would have kept them well clad? Yes, but on whose behalf? Had there not been a positive pleasure in making herself poor that Hubert might be rich? There was the fatal element in the situation. She came out of the church palpitating with joy;

the first assurance of her husband's ignominious yielding to temptation filled her with, not mere scorn, but with dread. Had she not been guilty of mock nobleness in her voice, her bearing? At the time she did not feel it, for the thought of Hubert was kept altogether in the background. Yes, but she saw now how it had shed light and warmth upon her; the fact was not to be denied, because her consciousness had not then included it. She was shamed.

A pity, is it not? It were so good to have seen her purely noble, indignant with unmixed righteousness. But, knowing our Adela's heart, is it not even sweeter to bear with her? You will go far before you find virtue in which there is no dear sustaining comfort of self. For my part, Adela is more to me for the imperfection, infinitely more to me for the confession of it in her own mind. How can a woman be lovelier than when most womanly, or more precious than when she reflects her own weakness in clarity of soul?

As she made her way through the wood her trouble of conscience was lost in deeper suffering. The scent of undergrowths, which always brought back to her the glad days of maidenhood, filled her with the hopelessness of the future. There was no return on the path of life; every step made those memories of happiness more distant and thickened the gloom

about her. She could be strong when it was needful, could face the world as well as any woman who makes a veil of pride for her bleeding heart; but here, amid the sweet wood-perfumes, in silence and secrecy, self-pity caressed her into feebleness. The light was dimmed by her tears; she rather felt than saw her way. And thus, with moist eyelashes, she came to her wonted resting-place. But she found her seat occupied, and by the man whom in this moment she could least bear to meet.

Hubert sat there, bareheaded, lost in thought. Her light footfall did not touch his ear. He looked up to find her standing before him, and he saw that she had been shedding tears. For an instant she was powerless to direct herself; then sheer panic possessed her and she turned to escape.

Hubert started to his feet.

‘Mrs. Mutimer! Adela!’

The first name would not have stayed her, for her flight was as unreasoning as that of a fawn. The second, her own name, uttered with almost desperate appeal, robbed her of the power of movement. She turned to bay, as though an obstacle had risen in her path, and there was terror in her white face.

Hubert drew a little nearer and spoke hurriedly.

‘Forgive me! I could not let you go.

You seem to have come in answer to my thought; I was wishing to see you. Do forgive me!

She knew that he was examining her moist eyes; a rush of blood passed over her features.

‘Not unless you are willing,’ Hubert pursued, his voice at its gentlest and most courteous. ‘But if I might speak to you for a few minutes——?’

‘You have heard from Mr. Yottle?’ Adela asked, without raising her eyes, trying her utmost to speak in a merely natural way.

‘Yes. I happened to be at my mother’s house. He came last night to obtain my address.’

The truth was, that a generous impulse, partly of his nature, and in part such as any man might know in a moment of unanticipated good fortune, had bade him put aside his prejudices and meet Mutimer at once on a footing of mutual respect. Incapable of ignoble exultation, it seemed to him that true delicacy dictated a personal interview with the man who, judging from Yottle’s report, had so cheerfully acquitted himself of the hard task imposed by honour. But as he walked over from Agworth this zeal cooled. Could he trust Mutimer to appreciate his motive? Such a man was capable of acting honourably, but the power of understanding delicacies of behaviour



was not so likely to be his. Hubert's prejudices were insuperable; to his mind class differences necessarily argued a difference in the grain. And it was not only this consideration that grew weightier as he walked. In the great joy of recovering his ancestral home, in the sight of his mother's profound happiness, he all but forgot the thoughts that had besieged him since his meetings with Adela in London. As he drew near to Wanley his imagination busied itself almost exclusively with her; distrust and jealousy of Mutimer became fear for Adela's future. Such a change as this would certainly have a dire effect upon her life. He thought of her frail appearance; he remembered the glimpse of her face that he had caught when her husband entered Mrs. Westlake's drawing-room, the startled movement she could not suppress. It was impossible to meet Mutimer with any show of good-feeling; he wondered how he could have set forth with such an object. Instead of going to the Manor he turned his steps to the Vicarage, and joined Mr. Wyvern at luncheon. The vicar had of course heard nothing of the discovery as yet. In the afternoon Hubert started to walk back to Agworth, but instead of taking the direct road he strayed into the wood. He was loth to leave the neighbourhood of the Manor; intense anxiety to know what Adela

was doing made him linger near the place where she was. Was she already suffering from brutal treatment? What wretchedness might she not be undergoing within those walls!

He said she seemed to have sprung up in answer to his desire. In truth, her sudden appearance overcame him; her tearful face turned to irresistible passion that yearning which, consciously or unconsciously, was at all times present in his life. Her grief could have but one meaning; his heart went out to her with pity as intense as its longing. Other women had drawn his eyes, had captured him with the love of a day; but the deep still affection which is independent of moods and impressions flowed ever towards Adela. As easily could he have become indifferent to his mother as to Adela. As a married woman she was infinitely more to him than she had been as a girl; from her conversation, her countenance, he knew how richly she had developed, how her intelligence had ripened, how her character had established itself in maturity. In that utterance of her name the secret escaped him before he could think how impossible it was to address her so familiarly. It was the perpetual key-word of his thoughts; only when he had heard it from his own lips did he realise what he had done.

When he had given the brief answer to her question he could find no more words. But Adela spoke.

‘What do you wish to say to me, Mr. Eldon?’

Whether or no he interpreted her voice by his own feelings, she seemed to plead with him to be manly and respect her womanhood.

‘Only to say the common things which anyone must say in my position, but to say them so that you will believe they are not only a form. The circumstances are so strange. I want to ask you for your help; my position is perhaps harder than yours and Mr. Mutimer’s. We must remember that there is justice to be considered. If you will give me your aid in doing justice as far as I am able——’

In fault of any other possible reply he had involved himself in a subject which he knew it was far better to leave untouched. He could not complete his sentence, but stood before her with his head bent.

Adela scarcely knew what he said; in anguish she sought for a means of quitting him, of fleeing and hiding herself among the trees. His accent told her that she was the object of his compassion, and she had invited it by letting him see her tears. Of necessity he must think that she was sorrowing on her own account. That was true, indeed, but how impossible for him to interpret her grief rightly! The shame

of being misjudged by him all but drove her to speak, and tell him that she cared less than nothing for the loss that had befallen her. Yet she could not trust herself to speak such words. Her heart was beating insufferably; all the woman in her rushed towards hysteria and self-abandonment. It was well that Hubert's love was of quality to stand the test of these terrible moments. Something he must say, and the most insignificant phrase was the best.

‘Will you sit—rest after your walk?’

She did so; scarcely could she have stood longer. And with the physical ease there seemed to come a sudden mental relief. A thought sprang up, opening upon her like a haven of refuge.

‘There is one thing I should like to ask of you,’ she began, forcing herself to regard him directly. ‘It is a great thing, I am afraid; it may be impossible.’

‘Will you tell me what it is?’ he said, quietly filling the pause that followed.

‘I am thinking of New Wanley.’

She saw a change in his face, slight, but still a change. She spoke more quickly.

‘Will you let the works remain as they are, on the same plan? Will you allow the work-people to live under the same rules? I have been among them constantly, and I am sure that nothing but good results have come of—of what

my husband has done. There is no need to ask you to deal kindly with them, I know that. But if you could maintain the purpose——? It will be such a grief to my husband if all his work comes to nothing. There cannot be anything against your principles in what I ask. It is so simply for the good of men and women whose lives are so hard. Let New Wanley remain as an example. Can you do this?’

Hubert, as he listened, joined his hands behind his back, and turned his eyes to the upper branches of the silver birch, which once in his thoughts he had likened to Adela. What he heard from her surprised him, and upon surprise followed mortification. He knew that she had in appearance adopted Mutimer’s principles, but his talk with her in London at Mrs. Boscobel’s had convinced him that her heart was in far other things than economic problems and schemes of revolution. She had listened so eagerly to his conversation on art and kindred topics; it was so evident that she was enjoying a temporary release from a mode of life which chilled all her warmer instincts. Yet she now made it her entreaty that he would continue Mutimer’s work. Beginning timidly, she grew to an earnestness which it was impossible to think feigned. He was unprepared for anything of the kind; his emotions resented it. Though consciously harbouring no single

unworthy desire, he could not endure to find Adela zealous on her husband's behalf.

Had he misled himself? Was the grief that he had witnessed really that of a wife for her husband's misfortune? For whatever reason she had married Mutimer—and that *could* not be love—married life might have engendered affection. He knew Adela to be deeply conscientious; how far was it in a woman's power to subdue herself to love at the bidding of duty?

He allowed several moments to pass before replying to her. Then he said, courteously but coldly:

'I am very sorry that you have asked the one thing I cannot do.'

Adela's heart sank. In putting a distance between him and herself she had obeyed an instinct of self-preservation; now that it was effected, the change in his voice was almost more than she could bear.

'Why do you refuse?' she asked, trying, though in vain, to look up at him.

'Because it is impossible for me to pretend sympathy with Mr. Mutimer's views. In the moment that I heard of the will my action with regard to New Wanley was determined. What I purpose doing is so inevitably the result of my strongest convictions that nothing could change me.'

‘Will you tell me what you are going to do?’ Adela asked, in a tone more like his own.

‘It will pain you.’

‘Yet I should like to know.’

‘I shall sweep away every trace of the mines and the works and the houses, and do my utmost to restore the valley to its former state.’

He paused, but Adela said nothing. Her fingers played with the leaves which grew beside her.

‘Your associations with Wanley of course cannot be as strong as my own. I was born here, and every dearest memory of my life connects itself with the valley as it used to be. It was one of the loveliest spots to be found in England. You can have no idea of the feelings with which I saw this change fall upon it, this desolation and defilement—I must use the words which come to me. I might have overcome that grief if I had sympathised with the ends. But, as it is, I should act in the same way even if I had no such memories. I know all that you will urge. It may be inevitable that the green and beautiful spots of the world shall give place to furnaces and mechanics’ dwellings. For my own part, in this little corner, at all events, the ruin shall be delayed. In this matter I will give my instincts free play. Of New Wanley not one brick shall

remain on another. I will close the mines, and grass shall again grow over them; I will replant the orchards and mark out the fields as they were before.'

He paused again.

'You see why I cannot do what you ask.'

It was said in a gentler voice, for insensibly his tone had become almost vehement.

He found a strange pleasure in emphasising his opposition to her. Perhaps he secretly knew that Adela hung upon his words, and in spite of herself was drawn into the current of his enthusiasm. But he did not look into her face. Had he done so he would have seen it fixed and pale.

'Then you think grass and trees of more importance than human lives?'

She spoke in a voice which sounded coldly ironical in its attempt to be merely calm.

'I had rather say that I see no value in human lives in a world from which grass and trees have vanished. But, in truth, I care little to make my position logically sound. The ruling motive in my life is the love of beautiful things; I fight against ugliness because it's the only work in which I can engage with all my heart. I have nothing of the enthusiasm of humanity. In the course of centuries the world may perhaps put itself right again; I am only concerned with the present, and I see that everywhere



the tendency is towards the rule of mean interests, ignoble ideals.'

'Do you call it ignoble,' broke in Adela, 'to aim at raising men from hopeless and degrading toil to a life worthy of human beings?'

'The end which *you* have in mind cannot be ignoble. But it is not to be reached by means such as these.' He pointed down to the valley. 'That may be the only way of raising the standard of comfort among people who work with their hands; I take the standpoint of the wholly unpractical man, and say that such efforts do not concern me. From my point of view no movement can be tolerated which begins with devastating the earth's surface. You will clothe your workpeople better, you will give them better food and more leisure; in doing so you injure the class that has finer sensibilities, and give power to the class which not only postpones everything to material well-being, but more and more regards intellectual refinement as an obstacle in the way of progress. Progress—the word is sufficient; you have only to think what it has come to mean. It will be good to have an example of reaction.'

'When reaction means misery to men and women and little children?'

'Yes, even if it meant that. As far as I am concerned, I trust it will have no such results.'

You must distinguish between humanity and humanitarianism. I hope I am not lacking in the former; the latter seems to me to threaten everything that is most precious in the world.'

'Then you are content that the majority of mankind should be fed and clothed and kept to labour?'

'Personally, quite content; for I think it very unlikely that the majority will ever be fit for anything else. I *know* that at present they desire nothing else.'

'Then they must be taught to desire more.'

Hubert again paused. When he resumed it was with a smile which strove to be good-humoured.

'We had better not argue of these things. If I said all that I think you would accuse me of brutality. In logic you will overcome me. Put me down as one of those who represent reaction and class-prejudice. I am all prejudice.'

Adela rose.

'We have talked a long time,' she said, trying to speak lightly. 'We have such different views. I wish there were less class-prejudice.'

Hubert scarcely noticed her words. She was quitting him, and he clung to the last moment of her presence.

'Shall you go—eventually go to London?' he asked.

‘ I can’t say. My husband has not yet been able to make plans.’

The word irritated him. He half averted his face.

‘ Good-bye, Mr. Eldon.’

She did not offer her hand—durst not do so. Hubert bowed without speaking.

When she was near the Manor gates she heard footsteps behind her. She turned and saw her husband. Her cheeks flushed, for she had been walking in deep thought. It seemed to her for an instant as if the subject of her preoccupation could be read upon her face.

‘ Where have you been?’ Mutimer asked, indifferently.

‘ For a walk. Into the wood.’

He was examining her, for the disquiet of her countenance could not escape his notice.

‘ Why did you go alone? It would have done Alice good to get her out a little.’

‘ I’m afraid she wouldn’t have come.’

He hesitated.

‘ Has she been saying anything to you?’

‘ Only that she is troubled and anxious.’

They walked on together in silence, Mutimer with bowed head and knitted brows.

## CHAPTER III.

THE making a virtue of necessity, though it argues lack of ingenuousness, is perhaps preferable to the wholly honest demonstration of snarling over one's misfortunes. It may result in good even to the hypocrite, who occasionally surprises himself with the pleasure he finds in wearing a front of nobility, and is thereby induced to consider the advantages of upright behaviour adopted for its own sake. Something of this kind happened in the case of Richard Mutimer. Seeing that there was no choice but to surrender his fortune, he set to work to make the most of abdication, and with the result that the three weeks occupied in settling his affairs at New Wanley and withdrawing from the Manor were full of cheerful activity. He did not meet Hubert Eldon, all business being transacted through Mr. Yottle. When he heard from the latter that it was Eldon's intention to make a clean sweep of mines, works, and settlements, though for a

moment chagrined, he speedily saw that such action, by giving dramatic completeness to his career at Wanley and investing its close with something of tragic pathos, was in truth what he should most have desired. It enabled him to take his departure with an air of profounder sadness ; henceforth no gross facts would stand in the way of his rhetoric when he should enlarge on the possibilities thus nipped in the bud. He was more than ever a victim of cruel circumstances ; he could speak with noble bitterness of his life's work having been swept into oblivion.

He was supported by a considerable amount of epistolary sympathy. The local papers made an interesting story of what had happened in the old church at Wanley, and a few of the London journals reported the circumstances ; in this way Mutimer became known to a wider public than had hitherto observed him. Not only did his fellow-Unionists write to encourage and moralise, but a number of those people who are ever ready to indite letters to people of any prominence, the honestly admiring and the windily egoistic, addressed communications either to Wanley Manor or to the editor of the *Fiery Cross*. Mutimer read eagerly every word of each most insignificant scribbler ; his eyes gleamed and his cheeks grew warm. All such letters he

brought to Adela, and made her read them aloud; he stood with his hands behind his back, his face slightly elevated and at a listening angle. At the end he regarded her, and his look said: 'Behold the man who is your husband!'

But at length there came one letter distinct from all the rest; it had the seal of a Government office. With eyes which scarcely credited what they saw Mutimer read some twenty or thirty words from a Minister of the Crown, a gentleman of vigorously Radical opinions, who had 'heard with much regret that the undertaking conceived and pursued with such single-hearted zeal' had come to an untimely end. Mutimer rushed to Adela like a school-boy who has a holiday to announce.

'Read that now! What do you think of that? Now there's some hope of a statesman like that!'

Adela gave forth the letter in a voice which was all too steady. But she said:

'I am very glad. It must gratify you. He writes very kindly.'

'You'll have to help me to make an answer.'

Adela smiled, but said nothing.

The ceremonious opening of the hall at New Wanley had been a great day; Mutimer tried his best to make the closing yet more

effective. Mr. Westlake was persuaded to take the chair, but this time the oration was by the founder himself. There was a numerous assembly. Mutimer spoke for an hour and a quarter, reviewing what he had done, and enlarging on all that he might and would have done. There was as much applause as even he could desire. The proceedings closed with the reading of an address which was signed by all the people of the works, a eulogium and an expression of gratitude, not without one or two sentences of fiery Socialism. The spokesman was a fine fellow of six feet two, a man named Redgrave, the ideal of a revolutionist workman. He was one of the few men at the works whom Adela, from observation of their domestic life, had learnt sincerely to respect. Before reading the document he made a little speech of his own, and said in conclusion :

‘Here’s an example of how the law does justice in a capitalist society. The man who makes a grand use of money has it all taken away from him by the man who makes no use of it at all, except to satisfy his own malice and his own selfishness. If we don’t one and all swear to do our utmost to change such a state of things as that, all I can say is we’re a poor lot, and deserve to be worse treated than the animals, that haven’t the sense to use their strength!’

In his reply to the address Richard surpassed himself. He rose in excitement; the words that rushed to his lips could scarcely find articulate flow. After the due thanks :

‘To-morrow I go to London; I go as poor as the poorest of you, a mechanical engineer in search of work. Whether I shall find it or not there’s no saying. If they turned me out because of my opinions three years ago, it’s not very likely that they’ve grown fonder of me by this time. As poor as the poorest of you, I say. Most of you probably know that a small legacy is left to me under the will which gives this property into other hands. That money will be used, every penny of it, for the furtherance of our cause!’

It was a magnificent thought, one of those inspirations which reveal latent genius. The hall echoed with shouts of glorification. Adela, who sat with her mother and Letty (Mrs. Westlake had not accompanied her husband), kept her eyes fixed on the ground; the uproar made her head throb.

All seemed to be over and dispersal was beginning, when a gentleman stood up in the middle of the hall and made signs that he wished to be heard for a moment. Mutimer aided him in gaining attention. It was Mr. Yottle, a grizzle-headed, ruddy-cheeked veteran of the law.



‘I merely desire to use this opportunity of reminding those who have been employed at the works that Mr. Eldon will be glad to meet them in this hall at half-past ten o’clock to-morrow morning. It will perhaps be better if the men alone attend, as the meeting will be strictly for business purposes.’

Adela was among the last to leave the room. As she was moving between the rows of benches Mr. Westlake approached her. He had only arrived in time to take his place on the platform, and he was on the point of returning to London.

‘I have a note for you from Stella,’ he said. ‘She has been ailing for a fortnight; it wasn’t safe for her to come. But she will soon see you, I hope.’

‘I hope so,’ Adela replied mechanically, as she took the letter.

Mr. Westlake only added his ‘good-bye,’ and went to take leave of Mutimer, who was standing at a little distance.

Among those who remained to talk with the hero of the day was our old friend Keene. Keene had risen in the world, being at present sub-editor of a Belwick journal. His appearance had considerably improved, and his manner was more ornate than ever. He took Mutimer by the arm and led him aside.

‘A suggestion—something that occurred to

me whilst you were speaking. You must write the history of New Wanley. Not too long; a thing that could be printed in pamphlet form and sold at a penny or twopence. Speak to Westlake; see if the Union won't publish. Some simple title: 'My Work in New Wanley,' for instance. I'll see that it's well noticed in our rag.'

'Not a bad idea!' Mutimer exclaimed, throwing back his head.

'Trust me, not half bad. Be of use in the Propaganda. Just think it over, and, if you care to, allow me to read it in manuscript. There's a kind of art—eh? you know what I mean; it's only to be got by journalistic practice. Yes, "My Work in New Wanley"; I think that would do.'

'I'm going to lecture at Commonwealth Hall next Sunday,' Mutimer observed. 'I'll take that for my title.'

'By-the-by, how—what was I going to say? Oh yes, how is Mrs. Rodman?'

'Tolerable, I believe.'

'In London, presumably?'

'Yes.'

'Not much—not taking it to heart much, I hope?'

'Not particularly, I think.'

'I should be glad to be remembered—a

word when you see her. Thanks, Mutimer, thanks. I must be off.'

Adela was making haste to reach the Manor, that she might read Stella's letter. She and her husband were to dine this evening with the Walthams—a farewell meal. With difficulty she escaped from her mother and Letty; Stella's letter demanded a quarter of an hour of solitude.

She reached her room, and broke the envelope. Stella never wrote at much length, but to-day there were only a few lines.

'My love to you, heart's darling. I am not well enough to come, and I think it likely you had rather I did not. But in a few hours you will be near me. Come as soon as ever you can. I wait for you like the earth for spring.'

'STELLA.'

She kissed the paper and put it in the bosom of her dress. It was already time to go to her mother's.

She found her mother and Letty with grave faces; something seemed to have disturbed them. Letty tried to smile and appear at ease, but Mrs. Waltham was at no pains to hide the source of her dissatisfaction.

'Did you know of that, Adela?' she asked, with vexation. 'About the annuity, I mean. Had Richard spoken to you of his intention?'

Adela replied with a simple negative. She had not given the matter a thought.

‘Then he certainly should have done. It was his duty, I consider, to tell *me*. It is in express contradiction of all he has led me to understand. What are you going to live on, I should like to know? It’s very unlikely that he will find a position immediately. He is absolutely reckless, wickedly thoughtless! My dear, it is not too late even now. I insist on your staying with us until your husband has found an assured income. The idea of your going to live in lodgings in an obscure part of London is more than I can bear, and *now* it really appals me. Adela, my child, it’s impossible for you to go under these circumstances. The commonest decency will oblige him to assent to this arrangement.’

‘My dear mother,’ Adela replied seriously, ‘pray do not reopen that. It surely ought to be needless for me to repeat that it is my duty to go to London.’

‘But, Adela darling,’ began Letty, very timorously, ‘wouldn’t it be relieving your husband? How much freer he would be to look about, knowing you are here safe and in comfort. I really—I do really think mother is right.’

Before Adela could make any reply there sounded a knock at the front door; Richard came in. He cast a glance round at the three.

The others might have escaped his notice, but Mrs. Waltham was too plainly perturbed.

‘Has anything happened?’ he asked in an offhand way.

‘I am distressed, more than I can tell you,’ began his mother-in-law. ‘Surely you did not mean what you said about the money——’

‘Mother!’ came from Adela’s lips, but she checked herself.

Mutimer thrust his hands into his pockets and stood smiling.

‘Yes, I meant it.’

‘But, pray, what are you and Adela going to live upon?’

‘I don’t think we shall have any difficulty.’

‘But surely one must more than *think* in a matter such as this. You mustn’t mind me speaking plainly, Richard. Adela is my only daughter, and the thought of her undergoing needless hardships is so dreadful to me that I really must speak. I have a plan, and I am sure you will see that it is the very best for all of us. Allow Adela to remain with me for a little while, just till you have—have made things straight. It certainly would ease your mind. She is so very welcome to a share of our home. You would feel less hampered. I am sure you will consent to this.’

Mutimer’s smile died away. He avoided Mrs. Waltham’s face, and let her eyes pass in a

cold gaze from Letty, who almost shrank, to Adela, who stood with an air of patience.

‘What do you say to this?’ he asked of his wife, in a tone civil indeed, but very far from cordial.

‘I have been trying to show mother that I cannot do as she wishes. It is very kind of her, but, unless you think it would be better for me to stay, I shall of course accompany you.’

‘You can stay if you like.’

Adela understood too well what that permission concealed.

‘I have no wish to stay.’

Mutimer turned his look on Mrs. Waltham, without saying anything.

‘Then I can say no more,’ Mrs. Waltham replied. ‘But you must understand that I take leave of my daughter with the deepest concern. I hope you will remember that her health for a long time has been anything but good, and that she was never accustomed to do hard and coarse work.’

‘We won’t talk any more of this, mother,’ Adela interposed firmly. ‘I am sure you need have no fear that I shall be tried beyond my strength. You must remember that I go with my husband.’

The high-hearted one! She would have died rather than let her mother perceive that

her marriage was less than happy. To the end she would speak that word 'my husband,' when it was necessary to speak it at all, with the confidence of a woman who knows no other safeguard against the ills of life. To the end she would shield the man with her own dignity, and protect him as far as possible even against himself.

Mutimer smiled again, this time with satisfaction.

'I certainly think we can take care of ourselves,' he remarked briefly.

In a few minutes they were joined by Alfred, who had only just returned from Belwick, and dinner was served. It was not a cheerful evening. At Adela's request it had been decided in advance that the final leave-taking should be to-night; she and Mutimer would drive to Agworth Station together with Alfred the first thing in the morning. At ten o'clock the parting came. Letty could not speak for sobbing; she just kissed Adela and hurried from the room. Mrs. Waltham preserved a rather frigid stateliness.

'Good-bye, my dear,' she said, when released from her daughter's embrace. 'I hope I may have good news from you.'

With Mutimer she shook hands.

It was a starry and cold night. The two walked side by side without speaking. When

they were fifty yards on their way, a figure came out of a corner of the road, and Adela heard Letty call her name.

‘I will overtake you,’ she said to her husband.

‘Adela, my sweet, I *couldn't* say good-bye to you in the house!’

Letty hung about her dear one's neck. Adela choked; she could only press her cheek against that moist one.

‘Write to me often—oh, write often,’ Letty sobbed. ‘And tell me the truth, darling, will you?’

‘It will be all well, dear sister,’ Adela whispered.

‘Oh, that is a dear name! Always call me that. I can't say good-bye, darling. You will come to see us as soon as ever you can?’

‘As soon as I can, Letty.’

Adela found her husband awaiting her.

‘What did she want?’ he asked, with genuine surprise.

‘Only to say good-bye.’

‘Why, she'd said it once.’

The interior of the Manor was not yet disturbed, but all the furniture was sold, and would be taken away on the morrow. They went to the drawing-room. After some insignificant remarks Mutimer asked:

‘What letter was that Westlake gave you?’



‘It was from Stella—from Mrs. Westlake.’

He paused. Then :

‘Will you let me see it?’

‘Certainly, if you wish.’

She felt for it in her bosom and handed it to him. It shook in her fingers.

‘Why does she think you’d rather she didn’t come?’

‘I suppose because the occasion seems to her painful.’

‘I don’t see that it was painful at all. What did you think of my speech?’

‘The first one or the second?’

‘Both, if you like. I meant the first.’

‘You told the story very well.’

‘You’ll never spoil me by over-praise.’

Adela was silent.

‘About this,’ he resumed, tapping the note which he still held. ‘I don’t think you need go there very often. It seems to me you don’t get much good from them.’

She looked at him inquiringly.

‘Theirs isn’t the kind of Socialism I care much about,’ he continued, with the air of giving a solid reason. ‘It seems to me that Westlake’s going off on a road of his own, and one that leads nowhere. All that twaddle to-day about the development of society! I don’t think he spoke of me as he might have done.’

You'll see there won't be half a report in the *Fiery Cross*.'

Adela was still silent.

'I don't mean to say you're not to see Mrs. Westlake at all, if you want to,' he pursued. 'I shouldn't have thought she was the kind of woman to suit you. If the truth was known, I don't think she's a Socialist at all. But then, no more are you, eh?'

'There is no one with a more passionate faith in the people than Mrs. Westlake,' Adela returned.

'Faith! That won't do much good.'

He was silent a little, then went to another subject.

'Rodman writes that he's no intention of giving up the money. I knew it would come to that.'

'But the law will compel him,' Adela exclaimed.

'It's a roundabout business. Eldon's only way of recovering it is to bring an action against me. Then I shall have to go to law with Rodman.'

'But how can he refuse? It is——'

She checked herself, remembering that words were two-edged.

'Oh, he writes in quite a friendly way—makes a sort of joke of it. We've to get what we can out of him, he says. But he doesn't

get off if I can help it. I must see Yottle on our way to-morrow.'

'Keene wants me to write a book about New Wanley,' he said presently.

'A book?'

'Well, a small one. It could be called, "My Work at New Wanley." It might do good.'

'Yes, it might,' Adela assented absently.

'You look tired. Get off to bed; you'll have to be up early in the morning, and it'll be a hard day.'

Adela went, hopeful of oblivion till the 'hard day' should dawn.

The next morning they were in Belwick by half-past nine. Alfred took leave of them and went off to business. He promised to 'look them up' in London before very long, probably at Christmas. Between him and Mutimer there was make-believe of cordiality at parting; they had long ceased to feel any real interest in each other.

Adela had to spend the time in the railway waiting-room whilst her husband went to see Yottle. It was a great bare place; when she entered, she found a woman in mourning, with a little boy, sitting alone. The child was eating a bun, his mother was silently shedding tears. Adela seated herself as far from them as possible, out of delicacy, but she saw the woman

look frequently towards her, and at last rise as if to come and speak. She was a feeble, helpless-looking being of about thirty; evidently the need of sympathy overcame her, for she had no other excuse for addressing Adela save to tell that her luggage had gone astray, and that she was waiting in the hope that something might be heard of it. Finding a gentle listener, she talked on and on, detailing the wretched circumstances under which she had recently been widowed, and her miserable prospects in a strange town whither she was going. Adela made an effort to speak in words of comfort, but her own voice sounded hopeless in her ears. In the station was a constant roaring and hissing, bell-ringing and the shriek of whistles, the heavy trundling of barrows, the slamming of carriage-doors; everywhere a smell of smoke. It impressed her as though all the world had become homeless, and had nothing to do but journey hither and thither in vain search of a resting-place. And her waiting lasted more than an hour. But for the effort to dry another's tears it would have been hard to restrain her own.

The morning had threatened rain; when at length the journey to London began, the black skies yielded a steady downpour. Mutimer was anything but cheerful; establishing himself in a corner of the third-class carriage, he for a time

employed himself with a newspaper; then, throwing it on to Adela's lap, closed his eyes as if he hoped to sleep. Adela glanced up and down the barren fields of type, but there was nothing that could hold her attention, and, by chance looking at her husband's face, she continued to examine it. Perhaps he was asleep, perhaps only absorbed in thought. His lips were sullenly loose beneath the thick reddish moustache; his eyebrows had drawn themselves together, scowling. She could not avert her gaze; it seemed to her that she was really scrutinising his face for the first time, and it was as that of a stranger. Not one detail had the stamp of familiarity: the whole repelled her. What was the meaning now first revealed to her in that countenance? The features had a massive regularity; there was nothing grotesque, nothing on the surface repulsive; yet, beholding the face as if it were that of a man unknown to her, she felt that a whole world of natural antipathies was between it and her.

It was the face of a man by birth and breeding altogether beneath her.

Never had she understood that as now; never had she conceived so forcibly the reason which made him and her husband and wife only in name. Suppose that apparent sleep of his to be the sleep of death; he would pass from her consciousness like a shadow from the field, leaving

no trace behind. Their life of union was a mockery; their married intimacy was an unnatural horror. He was not of her class, not of her world; only by violent wrenching of the laws of nature had they come together. She had spent years in trying to convince herself that there were no such distinctions, that only an unworthy prejudice parted class from class. One moment of true insight was worth more than all her theorising on abstract principles. To be her equal this man must be born again, of other parents, in other conditions of life. 'I go back to London a mechanical engineer in search of employment.' They were the truest words he had ever uttered; they characterised him, classed him.

She had no claims to aristocratic descent, but her parents were gentlefolk; that is to say, they were both born in a position which encouraged personal refinement rather than the contrary, which expected of them a certain education in excess of life's barest need, which authorised them to use the service of ruder men and women in order to secure to themselves a margin of life for life's sake. Perhaps for three generations her ancestors could claim so much gentility; it was more than enough to put a vast gulf between her and the Mutimers. Favourable circumstances of upbringing had endowed her with delicacy of heart and mind not inferior to

that of any woman living ; mated with an equal husband, the children born of her might hope to take their place among the most beautiful and the most intelligent. And her husband was a man incapable of understanding her idlest thought.

He opened his eyes, looked at her blankly for a moment, stirred his limbs to make his position easier.

Pouring rain in London streets. The cab drove eastward, but for no great distance. Adela found herself alighting at a lodging-house not far from the reservoir at the top of Pentonville Hill. Mutimer had taken these rooms a week ago.

A servant fresh from the blackleading of a grate opened the door to them, grinning with recognition at the sight of Mutimer. The latter had to help the cabman to deposit the trunks in the passage. Then Adela was shown to her bedroom.

It was on the second floor, the ordinary bedroom of cheap furnished lodgings, with scant space between the foot of the bed and the fireplace, with a dirty wall-paper and a strong musty odour. The window looked upon a backyard.

She passed from the bedroom to the sitting-room ; here was the same vulgar order, the same musty smell. The table was laid for dinner.

Mutimer read his wife's countenance furtively. He could not discover how the abode impressed her, and he put no question. When he returned from the bedroom she was sitting before the fire, pensive.

'You're hungry, I expect?' he said.

Her appetite was far from keen, but in order not to appear discontented she replied that she would be glad of dinner.

The servant, her hands and face half washed, presently appeared with a tray on which were some mutton-chops, potatoes, and a cabbage. Adela did her best to eat, but the chops were ill-cooked, the vegetables poor in quality. There followed a rice-pudding; it was nearly cold; coagulated masses of rice appeared beneath yellowish water. Mutimer made no remark about the food till the table was cleared. Then he said:

'They'll have to do better than that. The first day, of course—— You'll have a talk with the landlady whilst I'm out to-night. Just let her see that you won't be content with *anything*; you have to talk plainly to these people.'

'Yes, I'll speak about it,' Adela replied.

'They made a trouble at first about waiting on us,' Mutimer pursued. 'But I didn't see how we could get our own meals very well. You can't cook, can you?'



He smiled, and seemed half ashamed to ask the question.

‘Oh, yes; I can cook ordinary things,’ Adela said. ‘But—we haven’t a kitchen, have we?’

‘Well, no. If we did anything of that kind, it would have to be on this fire. She charges us four shillings a week more for cooking the dinner.’

He added this information in a tone of assumed carelessness.

‘I think we might save that,’ Adela said. ‘If I had the necessary things—— I should like to try, if you will let me.’

‘Just as you please. I don’t suppose the stuff they send us up will ever be very eatable. But it’s too bad to ask you to do work of that kind.’

‘Oh, I shan’t mind it in the least! It will be far better, better in every way.’

Mutimer brightened up.

‘In that case we’ll only get them to do the housemaid work. You can explain that to the woman; her name’s Mrs. Gulliman.’

He paused.

‘Think you can make yourself at home here?’

‘Yes, certainly.’

‘That’s all right. I shall go out now for an hour or so. You can unpack your boxes and get things in order a bit.’

Adela had her interview with Mrs. Gulliman in the course of the evening, and fresh arrangements were made, not perhaps to the landlady's satisfaction, though she made a show of absorbing interest and vast approval. She was ready to lend her pots and pans till Adela should have made purchase of those articles.

Adela had the satisfaction of saving four shillings a week.

Two days later Mutimer sought eagerly in the *Fiery Cross* for a report of the proceedings at New Wanley. Only half a column was given to the subject, the speeches being summarised. He had fully expected that the week's 'leader' would be concerned with his affairs, but there was no mention of him.

He bought the *Tocsin*. Foremost stood an article headed, 'The Bursting of a Soap Bubble.' It was a satirical review of the history of New Wanley, signed by Comrade Roodhouse. He read in one place: 'Undertakings of this kind, even if pursued with genuine enthusiasm, are worse than useless; they are positively pernicious. They are half measures, and can only result in delaying the Revolution. It is assumed that working men can be kept in a good temper with a little better housing and a little more money. That is to aid the capitalists, to smooth over huge wrongs with petty concessions, to cry peace where there

is no peace. We know this kind of thing of old. It is the whole system of wage-earning that must be overthrown—the ideas which rule the relations of employers and employed. Away with these palliatives; let us rejoice when we see working men starving and ill-clad, for in that way their eyes will be opened. The brute who gets the uttermost farthing out of the toil of his wage-slaves is more a friend to us and our cause than any namby-pamby Socialist, such as the late Dukeling of New Wanley. Socialist indeed! But enough. We have probably heard the last of this *parvenu* and his loudly-trumpeted schemes. No true friend of the Revolution can be grieved.'

Mutimer bit his lip.

'Heard the last of me, have they? Don't be too hasty, Roodhouse.'

## CHAPTER IV.

A WEEK later ; the scene, the familiar kitchen in Wilton Square. Mrs. Mutimer, upon whom time has laid unkind hands since last we saw her, is pouring tea for Alice Rodman, who has just come all the way from the West End to visit her. Alice, too, has suffered from recent vicissitudes ; her freshness is to seek, her bearing is no longer buoyant, she is careless in attire. To judge from the corners of her mouth, she is confirmed in querulous habits ; her voice evidences the same.

She was talking of certain events of the night before.

‘ It was about half-past twelve—I’d just got into bed—when the servant knocks at my door. “ Please, mum,” she says, “ there’s a policeman wants to see master.” You may think if I wasn’t frightened out of my life ! I don’t think it was two minutes before I got downstairs, and there the policeman stood in the

hall. I told him I was Mrs. Rodman, and then he said a young man called Henry Mutimer had got locked up for making a disturbance outside a music hall, and he'd sent to my husband to bail him out. Well, just as we were talking in comes Willis. Rare and astonished he was to see me with all my things huddled on and a policeman in the house. We did so laugh afterwards; he said he thought I'd been committing a robbery. But he wouldn't bail 'Arry, and I couldn't blame him. And now he says 'Arry'll have to do as best he can. He won't get him another place.'

'He's lost his place too?' asked the mother gloomily.

'He was dismissed yesterday. He says that's why he went drinking too much. Out of ten days that he's been in the place he's missed two and hasn't been punctual once. I think you might have seen he got off at the proper time in the morning, mother.'

'What's the good o' blamin' me?' exclaimed the old woman fretfully. 'A deal o' use it is for me to talk. If I'm to be held 'countable he doesn't live here no longer; I know that much.'

'Dick was a fool to pay his fine. I'd have let him go to prison for seven days; it would have given him a lesson.'

'Mrs. Mutimer sighed deeply, and lost her-

self in despondent thought. Alice sipped her tea and went on with her voluble talk.

‘I suppose he’ll show up some time to-night unless Dick keeps him. But he can’t do that, neither, unless he makes him sleep on the sofa in their sitting-room. A nice come-down for my lady, to be living in two furnished rooms! But it’s my belief they’re not so badly off as they pretend to be. It’s all very well for Dick to put on his airs and go about saying he’s given up every farthing; he doesn’t get me to believe that. He wouldn’t go paying away his pounds so readily. And they have attendance from the landlady; Mrs. Adela doesn’t soil her fine fingers, trust her. You may depend upon it, they’ve plenty. She wouldn’t speak a word for us; if she’d cared to, she could have persuaded Mr. Eldon to let me keep my money, and then there wouldn’t have been all this law bother.’

‘What bother’s that?’

‘Why, Dick says he’ll go to law with my husband to recover the money he paid him when we were married. It seems he has to answer for it, because he’s what they call the administrator, and Mr. Eldon can compel him to make it all good again.’

‘But I thought you said you’d given it all up?’

‘That’s my own money, what was settled

on me. I don't see what good it was to me ; I never had a penny of it to handle. Now they want to get all the rest out of us. How are we to pay back the money that's spent and gone, I'd like to know? Willis says they'll just have to get it if they can. And here's Dick going on at me because we don't go into lodgings! I don't leave the house before I'm obliged, I know that much. We may as well be comfortable as long as we can.'

'The mean thing, that Adela!' she pursued after a pause. 'She was to have married Mr. Eldon, and broke it off when she found he wasn't going to be as rich as she thought; then she caught hold of Dick. I should like to have seen her face when she found that will!—I wish it had been me!'

Alice laughed unpleasantly. Her mother regarded her with an air of curious inquiry, then murmured:

'Dick an' she did the honest thing. I'll say so much for them.'

'I'll be even with Mrs. Adela yet,' pursued Alice, disregarding the remark. 'She wouldn't speak for me, but she's spoken for herself, no fear. She and her airs!'

There was silence; then Mrs. Mutimer said:

'I've let the top bedroom for four-and-six.'

'Arry's room? What's he going to do then?'

‘He’ll have to sleep on the chair-bedstead, here in the kitchen. That is, if I have him in the ’ouse at all. And I don’t know yet as I shall.’

‘Have you got enough money to go on with?’ Alice asked.

‘Dick sent me a pound this morning. I didn’t want it.’

‘Has he been to see you yet, mother?’

The old woman shook her head.

‘Do you want him to come, or don’t you?’

There was silence. Alice looked at her mother askance. The leathern mask of a face was working with some secret emotion.

‘He’ll come if he likes, I s’pose,’ was her abrupt answer.

In the renewed silence they heard some one enter the house and descend the kitchen stairs. ’Arry presented himself. He threw his hat upon a chair, and came forward with a swagger to seat himself at the tea-table.

His mother did not look at him.

‘Anything to eat?’ he asked, more loudly than was necessary, as if he found the silence oppressive.

‘There’s bread and butter,’ replied Alice, with lofty scorn.

‘Hullo! Is it you?’ exclaimed the young man, affecting to recognise his sister. ‘I thought



you was above coming here! Have they turned you out of your house?’

‘That’s what’ll happen to you, I shouldn’t wonder.’

’Arry cast a glance towards his mother. Seeing that her eyes were fixed in another direction, he began pantomimic interrogation of Alice. The latter disregarded him.

’Arry presented an appearance less than engaging. He still bore the traces of last night’s debauch and of his sojourn in the police-cell. There was dry mud on the back of his coat, his shirt-cuffs and collar were of a slaty hue, his hands and face filthy. He began to eat bread and butter, washing down each morsel with a gulp of tea. The spoon remained in the cup whilst he drank. To ’Arry it was a vast relief to be free from the conventionalities of Adela’s table.

‘That lawyer fellow Yottle’s been to see them to-day,’ he remarked presently.

Alice looked at him eagerly.

‘What about?’

‘There was talk about you and Rodman.’

‘What did they say?’

‘Couldn’t hear. I was in the other room. But I heard Yottle speaking your name.’

He had, in fact, heard a few words through the keyhole, but not enough to gather the sense

of the conversation, which had been carried on in discreet tones.

‘There you are!’ Alice exclaimed, addressing her mother. ‘They’re plotting against us, you see.’

‘I don’t think it ’ud be Dick’s wish to do you harm,’ said Mrs. Mutimer absently.

‘Dick ’ll do whatever she tells him.’

‘Adela, eh?’ observed ’Arry. ‘She’s a cat.’

‘You mind your own business!’ returned his sister.

‘So it is my business. She looked at me as if I wasn’t good enough to come near her ’igh-and-mightiness. I’m glad to see *her* brought down a peg, chance it!’

Alice would not condescend to join her reprobate brother, even in abuse of Adela. She very shortly took leave of her mother, who went up to the door with her.

‘Are you going to see Dick?’ Mrs. Mutimer said, in the passage.

‘I shan’t see him till he comes to my house,’ replied Alice sharply.

The old woman stood on the doorstep till her daughter was out of sight, then sighed and returned to her kitchen.

Alice returned to her more fashionable quarter by omnibus. Though Rodman had declined to make any change in their establishment, he practised economy in the matter of

his wife's pin-money. Gone were the delights of shopping, gone the little lunches in confectioners' shops to which Alice, who ate sweet things like a child, had been much addicted. Even the carriage she could seldom make use of, for Rodman had constant need of it—to save cab-fares, he said. It was chiefly employed in taking him to and from the City, where he appeared to have much business at present.

On reaching home Alice found a telegram from her husband.

‘Shall bring three friends to dinner. Be ready for us at half-past seven.’

Yet he had assured her that he would dine quietly alone with her at eight o'clock. Alice, who was weary of the kind of men her husband constantly brought, felt it as a bitter disappointment. Besides, it was already after six, and there were no provisions in the house. But for her life she durst not cause Rodman annoyance by offering a late or insufficient dinner. She thanked her stars that her return had been even thus early.

The men when they presented themselves were just of the kind she expected—loud-talking—their interests divided between horse-racing and the money-market; she was a cypher at her own table, scarcely a remark being addressed to her. The conversation was meaningless to her; it seemed, indeed, to be

made purposely mysterious; terms of the stock-exchange were eked out with nods and winks. Rodman was in far better spirits than of late, whence Alice gathered that some promising rascality was under consideration.

The dinner over, she was left to amuse herself as she could in the drawing-room. Rodman and his friends continued their talk round the table, and did not break up till close upon midnight. Then she heard the men take their departure. Rodman presently came up to her and threw himself into a chair. His face was very red, a sign with which Alice was familiar; but excessive potations apparently had not produced the usual effect, for he was still in the best of tempers.

‘Seen that young blackguard?’ he began by asking.

‘I went to see mother, and he came while I was there.’

‘He’ll have to look after himself in future. You don’t catch me helping him again.’

‘He says Mr. Yottle came to see them to-day.’

‘To see who?’

‘Dick and his wife. He heard them talking about us.’

Rodman laughed.

‘Let ’em go ahead! I wish them luck.’

‘But can’t they ruin us if they like?’

‘It’s all in a life. It wouldn’t be the first time I’ve been ruined, old girl. Let’s enjoy ourselves whilst we can. There’s nothing like plenty of excitement.’

‘It’s all very well for you, Willis. But if you had to sit at home all day doing nothing, you wouldn’t find it so pleasant.’

‘Get some novels.’

‘I’m tired of novels,’ she replied, sighing.

‘So Yottle was with them?’ Rodman said musingly, a smile still on his face. ‘I wish I knew what terms they’ve come to with Eldon.’

‘I wish I could do something to pay out that woman!’ exclaimed Alice bitterly. ‘She’s at the bottom of it all. She hates both of us. Dick ’ud never have gone against you but for her.’

Rodman, extended in the low chair at full length, fixed an amused look on her.

‘You’d like to pay her out, eh?’

‘Wouldn’t I just!’

‘Ha! ha! what a vicious little puss you are! It’s a good thing I don’t tell you everything, or you might do damage.’

Alice turned to him with eagerness.

‘What do you mean?’

He let his head fall back, and laughed with a drunken man’s hilarity. Alice persisted with her question.

‘Come and sit here,’ Rodman said, patting his knee.

Alice obeyed him.

‘What is it, Willis? What have you found out? Do tell me, there’s a dear!’

‘I’ll tell you one thing, old girl: you’re losing your good looks. Nothing like what you were when I married you.’

She flushed and looked miserable.

‘I can’t help my looks. I don’t believe you care how I look.’

‘Oh, don’t I, though! Why, do you think I’d have stuck to you like this if I didn’t? What was to prevent me from realising all the cash I could and clearing off, eh? ’Twouldn’t have been the first——’

‘The first what?’ Alice asked sharply.

‘Never mind. You see I didn’t do it. Too bad to leave the Princess in the lurch, wouldn’t it be?’

Alice seemed to have forgotten the other secret. She searched his face for a moment, deeply troubled, then asked:

‘Willis, I want to know who Clara is?’

He moved his eyes slowly, and regarded her with a puzzled look.

‘Clara? What Clara?’

‘Somebody you know of. You’ve got a habit of talking in your sleep lately. You

were calling out 'Clara!' last night, and that's the second time I've heard you.'

He was absent for a few seconds, then laughed and shook his head.

'I don't know anybody called Clara. It's your mistake.'

'I'm quite sure it isn't,' Alice murmured discontentedly.

'Well, then, we'll say it is,' he rejoined in a firmer voice. 'If I talk in my sleep, perhaps it'll be better for you to pay no attention. I might find it inconvenient to live with you.'

Alice looked frightened at the threat.

'You've got a great many secrets from me,' she said despondently.

'Of course I have. It is for your good. I was going to tell you one just now, only you don't seem to care to hear it.'

'Yes, yes, I do!' Alice exclaimed, recollecting. 'Is it something about Adela?'

He nodded.

'Wouldn't it delight you to go and get her into a terrible row with Dick?'

'Oh, do tell me! What's she been doing?'

'I can't quite promise you the fun,' he replied, laughing. 'It may miss fire. What do you think of her meeting Eldon alone in the wood that Monday afternoon, the day after she found the will, you know?'

‘You mean that?’

‘I saw them together.’

‘But she—you don’t mean she——?’

Even Alice, with all her venom against her brother’s wife, had a difficulty in attributing this kind of evil to Adela. In spite of herself she was incredulous.

‘Think what you like,’ said Rodman. ‘It looks queer, that’s all.’

It was an extraordinary instance of malice perpetrated out of sheer good-humour. Had he not been assured by what he heard in the wood of the perfectly innocent relations between Adela and Eldon, he would naturally have made some profitable use of his knowledge before this. As long as there was a possibility of advantage in keeping on good terms with Adela, he spoke to no one of that meeting which he had witnessed. Even now he did not know but that Adela had freely disclosed the affair to her husband. But his humour was genially mischievous. If he could gratify Alice and at the same time do the Mutimers an ill turn, why not amuse himself?

‘I’ll tell Dick the very first thing in the morning!’ Alice declared, aglow with spiteful anticipation.

Rodman approved the purpose, and went off to bed laughing uproariously.



## CHAPTER V.

ADELA allowed a week to pass before speaking of her desire to visit Mrs. Westlake. In Mutimer a fit of sullenness had followed upon his settlement in lodgings. He was away from home a good deal, but his hours of return were always uncertain, and Adela could not help thinking that he presented himself at unlikely times, merely for the sake of surprising her and discovering her occupation. Once or twice she had no knowledge of his approach until he opened the door of the room; when she remarked on his having ascended the stairs so quietly, he professed not to understand her. On one of those occasions she was engaged on a letter to her mother; he inquired to whom she was writing, and for reply she merely held out the sheet for his perusal. He glanced at the superscription, and handed it back. Breathing this atmosphere of suspicion, she shrank from irritating him by a mention of Stella, and to go without his express permission

was impossible. Stella did not write; Adela began to fear lest her illness had become more serious. When she spoke at length, it was in one of the moments of indignation, almost of revolt, which at intervals came to her, she knew not at what impulse. At Wanley her resource at such times had been to quit the house, and pace her chosen walk in the garden till she was weary. In London she had no refuge, and the result of her loss of fresh air had speedily shown itself in moods of impatience which she found it very difficult to conquer. Her husband came home one afternoon about five o'clock, and, refusing to have any tea, sat for several hours in complete silence; occasionally he pretended to look at a pamphlet which he had brought in with him, but for the most part he sat, with his legs crossed, frowning at vacancy. Adela grew feverish beneath the oppression of this brooding ill-temper; her endeavour to read was vain; the silence was a constraint upon her moving, her breathing. She spoke before she was conscious of an intention to do so.

‘I think I must go and see Mrs. Westlake to-morrow morning.’

Mutimer vouchsafed no answer, gave no sign of having heard. She repeated the words.

‘If you must, you must.’

‘I wish to,’ Adela said with an emphasis

she could not help. 'Do you object to my going?'

He was surprised at her tone.

'I don't object. I've told you I think you get no good there. But go if you like.'

She said after a silence :

'I have no other friend in London ; and if it were only on account of her kindness to me, I owe her a visit.'

'All right, don't talk about it any more ; I'm thinking of something.'

The evening wore on. At ten o'clock the servant brought up a jug of beer, which she fetched for Mutimer every night ; he said he could not sleep without this sedative. It was always the sign for Adela to go to bed.

She visited Stella in the morning, and found her still suffering. They talked for an hour, then it was time for Adela to hasten homewards, in order to have dinner ready by half-past one. From Stella she had no secret, save the one which she did her best to make a secret even to herself ; she spoke freely of her mode of life, though without comment. Stella made no comments in her replies.

'And you cannot have lunch with me?' she asked when her friend rose.

'I cannot, dear.'

'May I write to you?' Stella said with a meaning look.

‘Yes, to tell me how you are.’

Adela had not got far from the house when she saw her husband walking towards her. She looked at him steadily.

‘I happened to be near,’ he explained, ‘and thought I might as well go home with you.’

‘I might have been gone.’

‘Oh, I shouldn’t have waited long.’

The form of his reply discovered that he had no intention of calling at the house; Adela understood that he had been in Avenue Road for some time, probably had reached it very soon after her.

The next morning there arrived for Mutimer a letter from Alice. She desired to see him; her husband would be from home all day, and she would be found at any hour; her business was of importance—underlined.

Mutimer went shortly after breakfast, and Alice received him very much as she would have done in the days before the catastrophe. She had arrayed herself with special care; he found her leaning on cushions, her feet on a stool, the eternal novel on her lap. Her brother had to stifle anger at seeing her thus in appearance unaffected by the storm which had swept away his own happiness and luxuries.

‘What is it you want?’ he asked at once, without preliminary greeting.

‘You are not very polite,’ Alice returned.  
‘Perhaps you’ll take a chair.’

‘I haven’t much time, so please don’t waste what I can afford.’

‘Are you so busy? Have you found something to do?’

‘I’m likely to have enough to do with people who keep what doesn’t belong to them.’

‘It isn’t my doing, Dick,’ she said more seriously.

‘I don’t suppose it is.’

‘Then you oughtn’t to be angry with me.’

‘I’m not angry. What do you want?’

‘I went to see mother yesterday. I think she wants you to go; it looked like it.’

‘I’ll go some day.’

‘It’s too bad that she should have to keep ’Arry in idleness.’

‘She hasn’t to keep him. I send her money.’

‘But how are you to afford that?’

‘That’s not your business.’

Alice looked indignant.

‘I think you might speak more politely to me in my own house.’

‘It isn’t your own house.’

‘It is as long as I live in it. I suppose you’d like to see me go back to a workroom. It’s all very well for you; if you live in lodgings, that doesn’t say you’ve got no money.’

We have to do the best we can for ourselves ; we haven't got your chances of making a good bargain.'

It was said with much intention ; Alice half closed her eyes and curled her lips in a disdainful smile.

'What chances? What do you mean?'

'Perhaps if I'd been a particular friend of Mr. Eldon's—never mind.'

He flashed a look at her.

'What are you talking about? Just speak plainly, will you? What do you mean by "particular friend"? I'm no more a friend of Eldon's than you are, and I've made no bargain with him.'

'I didn't say *you*.'

'Who then?' he exclaimed sternly.

'Don't you know? Some one is so very proper, and such a fine lady, I shouldn't have thought she'd have done things without your knowing.'

He turned pale, and seemed to crush the floor with his foot, that he might stand firm.

'You're talking of Adela?'

Alice nodded.

'What about her? Say at once what you've got to say.'

Inwardly she was a little frightened, perhaps half wished that she had not begun. Yet it was sweet to foresee the thunderbolt that would

fall on her enemy's head. That her brother would suffer torments did not affect her imagination ; she had never credited him with strong feeling for his wife. And it was too late to draw back.

‘ You know that she met Mr. Eldon in the wood at Wanley on the day after she found the will ? ’

Mutimer knitted his brows to regard her. But in speaking he was more self-governed than before.

‘ Who told you that ? ’

‘ My husband. He saw them together. ’

‘ And heard them talking ? ’

‘ Yes. ’

Rodman had only implied this. Alice's subsequent interrogation had failed to elicit more from him than dark hints.

Mutimer drew a quick breath.

‘ He must be good at spying. Next time I hope he'll find out something worth talking about. ’

Alice was surprised.

‘ You know about it ? ’

‘ Just as much as Rodman, do you understand that ? ’

‘ You don't believe ? ’

She herself had doubts.

‘ It's nothing to you whether I believe it or not. Just be good enough in future to mind

your own business ; you'll have plenty of it before long. I suppose that's what you brought me here for ?'

She made no answer ; she was vexed and puzzled.

'Have you anything else to say ?'

Alice maintained a stubborn silence.

'Alice, have you anything more to tell me about Adela ?'

'No, I haven't.'

'Then you might have spared me the trouble. Tell Rodman with my compliments that it would be as well for him to keep out of my way.'

He left her.

On quitting the house he walked at a great pace for a quarter of a mile before he remembered the necessity of taking either train or omnibus. The latter was at hand, but when he had ridden for ten minutes the constant stoppages so irritated him that he jumped out and sought a hansom. Even thus he did not travel fast enough ; it seemed an endless time before the ascent of Pentonville Hill began. He descended a little distance from his lodgings.

As he was paying the driver another hansom went by ; he by chance saw the occupant, and it was Hubert Eldon. At least he felt convinced of it, and he was in no mind to balance the possibilities of mistake. The hansom had



come from the street which Mutimer was just entering.

He found Adela engaged in cooking the dinner ; she wore an apron, and the sleeves of her dress were pushed up. As he came into the room she looked at him with her patient smile ; finding that he was in one of his worst tempers, she said nothing and went on with her work. A coarse cloth was thrown over the table ; on it lay a bowl of vegetables which she was preparing for the saucepan.

Perhaps it was the sight of her occupation, of the cheerful simplicity with which she addressed herself to work so unworthy of her ; he could not speak at once as he had meant to. He examined her with eyes of angry, half-foiled suspicion. She had occasion to pass him ; he caught her arm and stayed her before him.

‘ What has Eldon been doing here ? ’

She paused and shrank a little.

‘ Mr. Eldon has not been here. ’

He thought her face betrayed a guilty agitation.

‘ I happen to have met him going away. I think you’d better tell me the truth. ’

‘ I have told you the truth. If Mr. Eldon has been to the house, I was not aware of it. ’

He looked at her in silence for a moment, then asked :

‘ Are you the greatest hypocrite living ? ’

Adela drew farther away. She kept her eyes down. Long ago she had suspected what was in Mutimer's mind, but she had only been apprehensive of the results of jealousy on his temper and on their relations to each other; it had not entered her thought that she might have to defend herself against an accusation. This violent question affected her strangely. For a moment she referred it entirely to the secrets of her heart, and it seemed impossible to deny what was imputed to her, impossible even to resent his way of speaking. Was she not a hypocrite? Had she not many, many times concealed with look and voice an inward state which was equivalent to infidelity? Was not her whole life a pretence, an affectation of wifely virtues? But the hypocrisy was involuntary; her nature had no power to extirpate its causes and put in their place the perfect dignity of uprightness.

'Why do you ask me that?' she said at length, raising her eyes for an instant.

'Because it seems to me I've good cause. I don't know whether to believe a word you say.'

'I can't remember to have told you falsehoods.' Her cheeks flushed. 'Yes, one; that I confessed to you.'

It brought to his mind the story of the wedding ring.

‘There’s such a thing as lying when you tell the truth. Do you remember that I met you coming back to the Manor that Monday afternoon, a month ago, and asked you where you’d been?’

Her heart stood still.

‘Answer me, will you?’

‘I remember it.’

‘You told me you’d been for a walk in the wood. You forgot to say who it was you went to meet.’

How did he know of this? But that thought came to her only to pass. She understood at length the whole extent of his suspicion. It was not only her secret feelings that he called in question, he accused her of actual dishonour as it is defined by the world—that clumsy world with its topsy-turvydom of moral judgments. To have this certainty flashed upon her was, as soon as she had recovered from the shock, a sensible assuagement of her misery. In face of this she could stand her ground. Her womanhood was in arms; she faced him scornfully.

‘Will you please to make plain your charge against me?’

‘I think it’s plain enough. If a married woman makes appointments in quiet places with a man she has no business to see anywhere, what’s that called? I fancy I’ve seen something of

that kind before now in cases before the Divorce Court.'

It angered him that she was not overwhelmed. He saw that she did not mean to deny having met Eldon, and to have Alice's story thus confirmed inflamed his jealousy beyond endurance.

'You must believe of me what you like,' Adela replied in a slow, subdued voice. 'My word would be vain against that of my accuser, whoever it is.'

'Your accuser, as you say, happened not only to see you, but to hear you talking.'

He waited for her surrender before this evidence. Instead of that Adela smiled.

'If my words were reported to you, what fault have you to find with me?'

Her confidence, together with his actual ignorance of what Rodman had heard, troubled him with doubt.

'Answer this question,' he said. 'Did you make an appointment with that man?'

'I did not.'

'You did not? Yet you met him?'

'Unexpectedly.'

'But you talked with him?'

'How can you ask? You know that I did.'

He collected his thoughts.

'Repeat to me what you talked about.'

‘That I refuse to do.’

‘Of course you do!’ he cried, driven to frenzy. ‘And you think I shall let this rest where it is? Have you forgotten that I came to the Westlakes’ and found Eldon there with you? And what was he doing in this street this morning if he hadn’t come to see you? I begin to understand why you were so precious eager about giving up the will. That was your fine sense of honesty, of course! You are full of fine senses, but your mistake is to think I’ve no sense at all. What do you take me for?’

The thin crust of refinement was shattered; the very man came to light, coarse, violent, whipped into fury by his passions, of which injured self-love was not the least. Whether he believed his wife guilty or not he could not have said; enough that she had kept things secret from him, and that he could not overawe her. Whensoever he had shown anger in conversation with her, she had made him sensible of her superiority; at length he fell back upon his brute force and resolved to bring her to his feet, if need be by outrage. Even his accent deteriorated as he flung out his passionate words; he spoke like any London mechanic, with defect and excess of aspirates, with neglect of g’s at the end of words, and so on. Adela could not bear it; she moved to the door. But he caught her and thrust her back; it was

all but a blow. Her face half recalled him to his senses.

‘Where are you going?’ he stammered.

‘Anywhere, anywhere, away from this house and from you!’ Adela replied. Effort to command herself was vain; his heavy hand had completed the effect of his language, and she, too, spoke as nature impelled her. ‘Let me pass! I would rather die than remain here!’

‘All the same, you’ll stay where you are!’

‘Yes, your strength is greater than mine. You can hold me by force. But you have insulted me beyond forgiveness, and we are as much strangers as if we had never met. You have broken every bond that bound me to you. You can make me your prisoner, but like a prisoner my one thought will be of escape. I will touch no food whilst I remain here. I have no duties to you, and you no claim upon me!’

‘All the same, you stay!’

Before her sobbing vehemence he had grown calm. These words were so unimaginable on her lips that he could make no reply save stubborn repetition of his refusal. And having uttered that he went from the room, changing the key to the outside and locking her in. Fear lest he might be unable to withhold himself from laying hands upon her was the cause of his retreat. The lust of cruelty was boiling in

him, as once or twice before. Her beauty in revolt made a savage of him. He went into the bedroom and there waited.

Adela sat alone, sobbing still, but tearless. Her high-spirited nature once thoroughly aroused, it was some time before she could reason on what had come to pass. The possibility of such an end to her miseries had never presented itself even in her darkest hours; endurance was all she could ever look forward to. As her blood fell into calmer flow she found it hard to believe that she had not dreamt this scene of agony. She looked about the room. There on the table were the vegetables she had been preparing; her hands bore the traces of the work she had done this morning. It seemed as though she had only to rise and go on with her duties as usual.

Her arm was painful, just below the shoulder. Yes, that was where he had seized her with his hard hand to push her away from the door.

What had she said in her distraction? She had broken away from him, had repudiated her wifhood. Was it not well done? If he believed her unfaithful to him——

At an earlier period of her married life such a charge would have held her mute with horror. Its effect now was not quite the same; she could face the thought, interrogate

herself as to its meaning, with a shudder, indeed, but a shudder which came of fear as well as loathing. Life was no longer an untried country, its difficulties and perils to be met with the sole aid of a few instincts and a few maxims ; she had sounded the depths of misery and was invested with the woeful knowledge of what we poor mortals call the facts of existence. And sitting here, as on the desert bed of a river whose water had of a sudden ceased to flow, she could regard her own relation to truths, however desolating, with the mind which had rather brave all than any longer seek to deceive itself.

Of that which he imputed to her she was incapable ; that such suspicion of her could enter his mind branded him with baseness. But his jealousy was justified ; howsoever it had awakened in him, it was sustained by truth. Was it her duty to tell him that, and so to render it impossible for him to seek to detain her ?

But would the confession have any such result ? Did he not already believe her criminal, and yet forbid her to leave him ? On what terms did she stand with a man whose thought was devoid of delicacy, who had again and again proved himself without understanding of the principles of honour ? And could she indeed make an admission which would compel



her at the same time to guard against revolting misconceptions?

The question of how he had obtained this knowledge recurred to her. It was evident that the spy had intentionally calumniated her, professing to have heard her speak incriminating words. She thought of Rodman. He had troubled her by his private request that she would appeal to Eldon on Alice's behalf, a request which was almost an insult. Could he have been led to make it in consequence of his being aware of that meeting in the wood? That might well be; she distrusted him and believed him capable even of a dastardly revenge.

What was the troublesome thought that hung darkly in her mind and would not come to consciousness? She held it at last; Mutimer had said that he met Hubert in the street below. How to explain that? Hubert so near to her, perhaps still in the neighbourhood?

Again she shrank with fear. What might it mean, if he had really come in hope of seeing her? That was unworthy of him. Had she betrayed herself in her conversation with him? Then he was worse than cruel to her.

It seemed to her that hours passed. From time to time she heard a movement in the

next room ; Mutimer was still there. There sounded at the house door a loud postman's knock, and in a few minutes someone came up the stairs, doubtless to bring a letter. The bedroom door opened ; she heard her husband thank the servant and again shut himself in.

The fire which she had been about to use for cooking was all but dead. She rose and put fresh coals on. There was a small oblong mirror over the mantelpiece ; it showed her so ghastly a face that she turned quickly away.

If she succeeded in escaping from her prison, whither should she go ? Her mother would receive her, but it was impossible to go to Wanley, to live near the Manor. Impossible, too, to take refuge with Stella. If she fled and hid herself in some other part of London, how was life to be supported ? But there were graver obstacles. Openly to flee from her husband was to subject herself to injurious suspicions—it might be, considering Mutimer's character, to involve Hubert in some intolerable public shame. Or, if that worst extremity were avoided, would it not be said that she had deserted her husband because he had suddenly become poor ?

That last thought brought the blood to her cheeks.

But to live with him after this, to smear over a deadly wound and pretend it was healed,

to read hourly in his face the cowardly triumph over her weakness, to submit herself—Oh, what rescue from this hideous degradation! She went to the window, as if it had been possible to escape by that way; she turned again and stood moaning, with her hands about her head. When was the worst to come in this life so long since bereft of hope, so forsaken of support from man or God? The thought of death came to her; she subdued the tumult of her agony to weigh it well. Whom would she wrong by killing herself? Herself, it might be; perchance not even death would be sacred against outrage.

She heard a neighbouring clock strike five, and shortly after her husband entered the room. Had she looked at him she would have seen an inexplicable animation in his face. He paced the floor once or twice in silence, then asked in a hard voice, though the tone was quite other than before:

‘Will you tell me what it was you talked of that day in the wood?’

She did not reply.

‘I suppose by refusing to speak you confess that you dare not let me know?’

Physical torture could not have wrung a word from her. She felt her heart surge with hatred.

He went to the cupboard in which food

was kept, took out a loaf of bread, and cut a slice. He ate it, standing before the window. Then he cleared the table and sat down to write a letter; it occupied him for half an hour. When it was finished, he put it in his pocket and began again to pace the room.

‘Are you going to sit like that all night?’ he asked suddenly.

She drew a deep sigh and rose from her seat. He saw that she no longer thought of escaping him. She began to make preparations for tea. As helpless in his hands as though he had purchased her in a slave-market, of what avail to sit like a perverse child? The force of her hatred warned her to keep watch lest she brought herself to his level. Without defence against indignities which were bitter as death, by law his chattel, as likely as not to feel the weight of his hand if she again roused his anger, what remained but to surrender all outward things to unthinking habit, and to keep her soul apart, nourishing in silence the fire of its revolt? It was the most pity-moving of all tragedies, a noble nature overcome by sordid circumstances. She was deficient in the strength of character which will subdue all circumstances; her strength was of the kind that supports endurance rather than breaks a way to freedom. Every day, every hour, is some such tragedy played through; it is the inevitable result of

our social state. Adela could have wept tears of blood ; her shame was like a branding iron upon her flesh.

She was on the second floor of a lodging-house in Pentonville, making tea for her husband.

That husband appeared to have undergone a change since he quitted her a few hours ago. He was still venomous towards her, but his countenance no longer lowered dangerously. Something distinct from his domestic troubles seemed to be occupying him, something of a pleasant nature. He all but smiled now and then ; the glances he cast at Adela were not wholly occupied with her. He plainly wished to speak, but could not bring himself to do so.

He ate and drank of what she put before him. Adela took a cup of tea, but had no appetite for food. When he had satisfied himself, she removed the things.

Another half-hour passed. Mutimer was pretending to read. Adela at length broke the silence.

‘ I think,’ she said, ‘ I was wrong in refusing to tell you what passed between Mr. Eldon and myself when I by chance met him. Someone seems to have misled you. He began by hoping that we should not think ourselves bound to leave the Manor until we had had full time to make the necessary arrangements. I thanked

him for his kindness, and then asked something further. It was that, if he could by any means do so, he would continue the works at New Wanley without any change, maintaining the principles on which they had been begun. He said that was impossible, and explained to me what his intentions were, and why he had formed them. That was our conversation.'

Mutimer observed her with a smile which affected incredulity.

'Will you take your oath that that is true?' he asked.

'No. I have told you because I now see that the explanation was owing, since you have been deceived. If you disbelieve me, it is no concern of mine.'

She had taken up some sewing, and, having spoken, went on with it. Mutimer kept his eyes fixed upon her. His suspicions never resisted a direct word from Adela's lips, though other feelings might exasperate him. What he had just heard he believed the more readily because it so surprised him; it was one of those revelations of his wife's superiority which abashed him without causing evil feeling. They always had the result of restoring to him for a moment something of the reverence with which he had approached her in the early days of their acquaintance. Even now he could not escape the impression.

‘What was Eldon doing about here to-day?’ he asked after a pause.

‘I have told you that I did not even know he had been near.’

‘Perhaps not. Now, will you just tell me this: Have you written to Eldon, or had any letter from him since our marriage?’

Her fingers would not continue their work. A deadening sensation of disgust made her close her eyes as if to shut out the meaning of his question. Her silence revived his distrust.

‘You had rather not answer?’ he said significantly.

‘Cannot you see that it degrades me to answer such a question? What is your opinion of me? Have I behaved so as to lead you to think that I am an abandoned woman?’

After hesitating he muttered: ‘You don’t give a plain yes or no.’

‘You must not expect it. If you think I use arts to deceive you—if you have no faith whatever in my purity—it was your duty to let me go from you when I would have done so. It is horrible for us to live together from the moment that there is such a doubt on either side. It makes me something lower than your servant—something that has no name!’

She shuddered. Had not that been true of her from the very morrow of their marriage? Her life was cast away upon shoals of debase-

ment; no sanctity of womanhood remained in her. Was not her indignation half a mockery? She could not even defend her honesty, her honour in the vulgarest sense of the word, without involving herself in a kind of falsehood, which was desolation to her spirit. It had begun in her advocacy of uprightness after her discovery of the will; it was imbuing her whole nature, making her, to her own conscience, that which he had called her—a very hypocrite.

He spoke more conciliatingly.

‘Well, there’s one thing, at all events, that you can’t refuse to explain. Why didn’t you tell me that you had met Eldon, and what he meant to do?’

She had not prepared herself for the question, and it went to the root of her thoughts; none the less she replied instantly, careless how he understood the truth.

‘I kept silence because the meeting had given me pain, because it distressed me to have to speak with Mr. Eldon at that place and that time, because I *knew* how you regard him, and was afraid to mention him to you.’

Mutimer was at a loss. If Adela had calculated her reply with the deepest art she could not have chosen words better fitted to silence him.

‘And you have told me every word that passed between you?’ he asked.



‘That would be impossible. I have told you the substance of the conversation.’

‘Why did you ask him to keep the works going on my plan?’

‘I can tell you no more.’

Her strength was spent. She put aside her sewing and moved towards the door.

‘Where are you going?’

‘I don’t feel well. I must rest.’

‘Just stop a minute. I’ve something here I want to show you.’

She turned wearily. Mutimer took a letter from his pocket.

‘Will you read that?’

She took it. It was written in a very clear, delicate hand, and ran thus:—

‘DEAR SIR,—I who address you have lain for two years on a bed from which I shall never move till I am carried to my grave. My age is three-and-twenty; an accident which happened to me a few days after my twenty-first birthday left me without the use of my limbs; it often seems to me that it would have been better if I had died, but there is no arguing with fate, and the wise thing is to accept cheerfully whatever befalls us. I hoped at one time to take an active part in life, and my interest in the world’s progress is as strong as ever, especially in everything that concerns social reform. I have for

some time known your name, and have constantly sought information about your grand work at New Wanley. Now I venture to write (by the hand of a dear friend), to express my admiration for your high endeavour, and my grief at the circumstances which have made you powerless to continue it.

‘I am possessed of means, and, as you see, can spend but little on myself. I ask you, with much earnestness, to let me be of some small use to the cause of social justice, by putting in your hands the sum of five hundred pounds, to be employed as may seem good to you. I need not affect to be ignorant of your position, and it is my great fear lest you should be unable to work for Socialism with your undivided energies. Will you accept this money, and continue by means of public lecturing to spread the gospel of emancipation? That I am convinced is your first desire. If you will do me this great kindness, I shall ask your permission to arrange that the same sum be paid to you annually, for the next ten years, whether I still live or not. To be helping in this indirect way would cheer me more than you can think. I enclose a draft on Messrs. —.

‘As I do not know your private address, I send this to the office of the *Fiery Cross*. Pardon me for desiring to remain anonymous; many reasons necessitate it. If you grant me

this favour, will you advertise the word "Accepted" in the *Times* newspaper within ten days?

‘With heartfelt sympathy and admiration,  
‘I sign myself,  
‘A FRIEND.’

Adela was unmoved; she returned the letter as if it had no interest for her.

‘What do you think of that?’ said Mutimer, forgetting their differences in his exultation.

‘I am glad you can continue your work,’ Adela replied absently.

She was moving away when he again stopped her.

‘Look here, Adela.’ He hesitated. ‘Are you still angry with me?’

She was silent.

‘I am sorry I lost my temper. I didn’t mean all I said to you. Will you try and forget it?’

Her lips spoke for her.

‘I will try.’

‘You needn’t go on doing housework now,’ he said assuringly. ‘Are you going? Come and say good-night.’

He approached her and laid his hand upon her shoulder. Adela shrank from his touch, and for an instant gazed at him with wide eyes of fear.

He dropped his hands and let her go.

## CHAPTER VI.

THE valley rested. On the morning of Mutimer's departure from Wanley there was no wonted clank of machinery, no smoke from the chimneys, no roar of iron-melting furnaces; the men and women of the colony stood idly before their houses, discussing prospects, asking each other whether it was seriously Mr. Eldon's intention to raze New Wanley, many of them grumbling or giving vent to revolutionary threats. They had continued in work thus long since the property in fact changed hands, and to most of them it seemed unlikely, in spite of everything, that they would have to go in search of new employments. This morning they would hear finally.

The valley rested. For several days there had been constant rain; though summer was scarcely over, it had turned cold and the sky was cheerless. Over Stanbury Hill there were always heavy, dripping clouds, and the leaves of Adela's favourite wood were already falling. At the Manor there was once more disorder;

before Mutimer and his wife took their departure the removal of furniture had commenced. Over the whole scene brooded a spirit of melancholy. It needed faith in human energy to imagine the pollutions swept away, and the seasons peacefully gliding as of old between the hill-sides and amid meadows and garden closes.

Hubert Eldon drove over from Agworth, and was in the Public Hall at the appointed time. His business with the men was simple and brief. He had to inform them that their employment here was at an end, but that each one would receive a month's wages and permission to inhabit their present abodes for yet a fortnight. After that they had no longer right of tenancy. He added that if any man considered himself specially aggrieved by this arrangement, he was prepared to hear and judge the individual case.

There was a murmur of discontent through the room, but no one took upon himself to rise and become spokesman of the community. Disregarding the manifestation, Hubert described in a few words how and when this final business would be transacted, then he left the hall by the door which led from the platform.

Then followed a busy week. Claims of all kinds were addressed to him, some reasonable, most of them not to be entertained. Mr.

Yottle was constantly at the Manor; there he and Hubert held a kind of court. Hubert was not well fitted for business of this nature; he easily became impatient, and, in spite of humane intentions, often suffered from a tumult of his blood, when opposed by some dogged mechanic.

‘I can’t help it!’ he exclaimed to Mr. Wyvern one night, after a day of peculiar annoyance. ‘We are all men, it is true; but for the brotherhood—feel it who can! I am illiberal, if you like, but in the presence of those fellows I feel that I am facing enemies. It seems to me that I have nothing in common with them but the animal functions. Absurd? Yes, of course it is absurd; but I speak of how intercourse with them affects me. They are our enemies, yours as well as mine; they are the enemies of every man who speaks the pure English tongue and does not earn a living with his hands. When they face me I understand what revolution means; some of them look at me as they would if they had muskets in their hands.’

‘You are not conciliating,’ remarked the vicar.

‘I am not, and cannot be. They stir the worst feelings in me; I grow arrogant, autocratic. As long as I have no private dealings with them I can consider their hardships and

judge their characters dispassionately ; but I must not come to close quarters.'

'You have special causes of prejudice.'

'True. If I were a philosopher I should overcome all that. However, my prejudice is good in one way, it enables me thoroughly to understand the detestation with which they regard me and the like of me. If I had been born one of them I should be the most savage anarchist. The moral is, that I must hold apart. Perhaps I shall grow cooler in time.'

The special causes of prejudice were quite as strong on the side of the workmen ; Hubert might have been far less aristocratic in bearing, they would have disliked him as cordially. Most of them took it as a wanton outrage that they should be driven from the homes in which they had believed themselves settled for life. The man Redgrave—he of the six feet two who had presented the address to Mutimer—was a powerful agent of ill-feeling ; during the first few days he was constantly gathering impromptu meetings in New Wanley and haranguing them violently on the principles of Socialism. But in less than a week he had taken his departure, and the main trouble seemed at an end.

Mrs. Eldon was so impatient to return to the Manor that a room was prepared for her as soon as possible, and she came from her house

at Agworth before Mutimer had been gone a week. Through the summer her strength had failed rapidly; it was her own conviction that she could live but a short time longer. The extreme agitation caused by the discovery of the will had visibly enfeebled her; it was her one desire to find herself once more in her old home, and there to breathe her last. The journey from Agworth cost her extreme suffering; she was prostrate, almost lifeless, for three days after it. But her son's society revived her. Knowing him established in his family possessions, she only cared to taste for a little while this unhopèd for joy. Lying on a couch in her familiar chamber, she delighted to have flowers brought to her from the garden, even leaves from the dear old trees, every one of which she knew as a friend. But she had constant thought for those upon whose disaster her own happiness was founded; of Adela she spoke often.

‘What will become of that poor child?’ she asked one evening, when Hubert had been speaking of Rodman’s impracticable attitude, and of the proceedings Mutimer was about to take. ‘Do you know anything of her life, Hubert?’

‘I met her in the wood here a few weeks ago,’ he replied, mentioning the incident for the



first time. 'She wanted to make a Socialist of me.'

'Was that after the will came to light?'

'The day after. She pleaded for New Wanley—hoped I should keep it up.'

'Then she has really accepted her husband's views?'

'It seems so. I am afraid she thought me an obstinate tyrant.'

He spoke carelessly.

'But she must not suffer, dear. How can they be helped?'

'They can't fall into absolute want. And I suppose his Socialist friends will do something for him. I have been as considerate as it was possible to be. I dare say he will make me a commonplace in his lectures henceforth, a type of the brutal capitalist.'

He laughed when he had said it, and led the conversation to another subject.

About the workmen, too, Mrs. Eldon was kindly thoughtful. Hubert spared her his prejudices and merely described what he was doing. She urged him to be rather too easy than too exacting with them. It was the same in everything; the blessing which had fallen upon her made her full of gentleness and sweet charity.

The fortnight's grace was at an end, and it

was announced to Hubert that the last family had left New Wanley. The rain still continued; as evening set in Hubert returned from an inspection of the deserted colony, his spirits weighed upon by the scene of desolation. After dinner he sat as usual with his mother for a couple of hours, then went to his own room and read till eleven o'clock. Just as he had thrown aside his book the silence of the night was riven by a terrific yell, a savage cry of many voices, which came from the garden in the front of the house, and at the same instant there sounded a great crashing of glass. The windows behind his back were broken and a couple of heavy missiles thundered near him upon the floor—stones they proved to be. He rushed from the room. All the lights in the house except his own and that in Mrs. Eldon's room were extinguished. He reached his mother's door. Before he could open it the yell and the shower of stones were repeated, again with ruin of windows, this time on the east side of the Manor. In a moment he was by his mother's bed; he saw her sitting up in terror; she was speechless and unable even to stretch her arms towards him. An inner door opened and the woman who was always in attendance rushed in half-dressed. At the same time there were sounds of movement in other parts of the house. Once more the

furious voices and the stone-volley; Hubert put his arm about his mother and tried to calm her.

‘Don’t be frightened; it’s those cowardly roughs. They have had their three shots, now they’ll take to their heels. Mrs. Winter is here, mother; she will stay with you whilst I go down and see what has to be done. I’ll be back directly if there is no more danger.’

He hastened away. The servants had collected upon the front staircase, with lamps and candles, in fright and disorder unutterable. Hubert repeated to them what he had said to his mother, and it seemed to be the truth, for the silence outside was unbroken.

‘I shouldn’t wonder,’ he cried, ‘if they’ve made an attempt to set the house on fire. We must go about and examine.’

The door-bell was rung loudly. The servants rushed back up the stairs; Hubert went into the dining-room, carrying no light, and called through the shattered windows asking who had rung. It was the vicar; the shouts had brought him forth.

‘They are gone,’ he said, in his strong, deep voice, in itself reassuring. ‘I think there were only some ten or a dozen; they’ve made off up the hill. Is anybody hurt?’

‘No, they have only broken all the windows,’ Hubert replied. ‘But I am terribly

afraid for the effect upon my mother. We must have the doctor round at once.'

The vicar was admitted to the house, and a messenger forthwith despatched for the medical man, who resided half-way between Wanley and Agworth. On returning to his mother's room Hubert found his fears only too well justified; Mrs. Eldon lay motionless, her eyes open, but seemingly without intelligence. At intervals of five minutes a sigh was audible, else she could scarcely be perceived to breathe. The attendant said that she had not spoken.

It was some time before the doctor arrived. After a brief examination, he came out with Hubert; his opinion was that the sufferer would not see daybreak.

She lived, however, for some twelve hours, if that could be called life which was only distinguishable from the last silence by the closest scrutiny. Hubert did not move from the bedside, and from time to time Mr. Wyvern came and sat with him. Neither of them spoke. Hubert had no thought of food or rest; the shadow of a loss, of which he only understood the meaning now that it was at hand, darkened him and all the world. Behind his voiceless misery was immeasurable hatred of those who had struck him this blow; at moments a revengeful fury all but maddened him. He held his mother's hand; if he could but feel one

pressure of the slight fingers before they were impotent for ever ! And this much was granted him. Shortly before midday the open eyes trembled to consciousness, the lips moved in endeavour to speak. To Hubert it seemed that his intense gaze had worked a miracle, affecting that which his will demanded. She saw him and understood.

‘Mother, can you speak? Do you know me, dear?’

She smiled, and her lips tried to shape words. He bent over her, close, close. At first the faint whisper was unintelligible, then he heard:

‘They did not know what they were doing.’

Something followed, but he could not understand it. The whisper ended in a sigh, the smiling features quivered. He held her, but was alone. . . .

A hand was laid gently upon his shoulder. Through blinding tears he discerned Mr. Wyvern’s solemn countenance. He resisted the efforts to draw him away, but was at length persuaded.

Early in the evening he fell asleep, lying dressed upon his bed, and the sleep lasted till midnight. Then he left his room, and descended the stairs, for the lower part of the house was still lighted. In the hall Mr. Wyvern met him.

‘Let us go into the library,’ he said to the clergyman. ‘I want to talk to you.’

He had resumed his ordinary manner. Without mention of his mother, he began at once to speak of the rioters.

‘They were led by that man Redgrave; there can be no doubt of that. I shall go to Agworth at once and set the police at work.’

‘I have already done that,’ replied the vicar. ‘Three fellows have been arrested in Agworth.’

‘New Wanley men?’

‘Yes; but Redgrave is not one of them.’

‘He shall be caught, though!’

Hubert appeared to have forgotten everything but his desire of revenge. It supported him through the wretched days that followed—even at the funeral his face was hard-set and his eyes dry. But in spite of every effort it was impossible to adduce evidence against any but the three men who had loitered drinking in Agworth. Redgrave came forward voluntarily and proved an alibi; he was vastly indignant at the charge brought against him, declared that window-breaking was not his business, and that had he been on the spot he should have used all his influence to prevent such contemptible doings. He held a meeting in Belwick of all the New Wanleyers he could gather together: those who came repudiated the outrage

as useless and unworthy. On the whole, it seemed probable that only a handful of good-for-nothings had been concerned in the affair, probably men who had been loafing in the Belwick public-houses, indisposed to look for work. The *Fiery Cross* and the *Tocsin* commented on the event in their respective ways. The latter organ thought that an occasional demonstration of this kind was not amiss; it was a pity that apparently innocent individuals should suffer (an allusion to the death of Mrs. Eldon); but, after all, what member of the moneyed classes was in reality innocent? An article on the subject in the *Fiery Cross* was signed 'Richard Mutimer.' It breathed righteous indignation and called upon all true Socialists to make it known that they pursued their ends in far other ways than by the gratification of petty malice. A copy of this paper reached Wanley Manor. Hubert glanced over it.

It lay by him when he received a visit from Mr. Wyvern the same evening.

'How is it to be explained,' he asked; 'a man like Westlake mixing himself up with this crew?'

'Do you know him personally?' the vicar inquired.

'I have met him. But I have seen more of Mrs. Westlake. She is a tenth muse, the

muse of lyrical Socialism. From which of them the impulse came I have no means of knowing, but surely it must have been from her. In her case I can understand it; she lives in an æsthetic reverie; she idealises everything. Naturally she knows nothing whatever of real life. She is one of the most interesting women I ever met, but I should say that her influence on Westlake has been deplorable.'

'Mrs. Mutimer is greatly her friend, I believe,' said the vicar.

'I believe so. But let us speak of this paper. I want if possible to understand Westlake's position. Have you ever read the thing?'

'Frequently.'

'Now here is an article signed by Westlake. You know his books? How has he fallen to this? His very style has abandoned him, his English smacks of the street corners, of Radical clubs. The man is ruined; it is next to impossible that he should ever again do good work, such as we used to have from him. The man who wrote "Daphne"! Oh, it is monstrous!'

It is something of a problem to me,' Mr. Wyvern admitted. 'Had he been a younger man, or if his writing had been of a different kind. Yet his sincerity is beyond doubt.'

'I doubt it,' Hubert broke in. 'Not his sincerity in the beginning; but he must long



since have ached to free himself. It is such a common thing for a man to commit himself to some pronounced position in public life and for very shame shrink from withdrawing. He would not realise what it meant. Now in the revolutionary societies of the Continent there is something that appeals to the imagination. A Nihilist, with Siberia or death before him, fighting against a damnable tyranny—the best might sacrifice everything for that. But English Socialism! It is infused with the spirit of shop-keeping; it appeals to the vulgarest minds; it keeps one eye on personal safety, the other on the capitalist's strong-box; it is stamped commonplace, like everything originating with the English lower classes. How does it differ from Radicalism, the most contemptible clap-trap of politics, except in wanting to hurry a little the rule of the mob? Well, I am too subjective. Help me, if you can, to understand Westlake.'

Hubert was pale and sorrow-stricken; his movements were heavy with weariness, but he had all at once begun to speak with the old fire, the old scorn. He rested his chin upon his hand and waited for his companion's reply.

'At your age,' said Mr. Wyvern, smiling half sadly, 'I, too, had a habit of vehement speaking, but it was on the other side. I was a badly paid curate working in a wretched

parish. I lived among the vilest and poorest of the people, and my imagination was constantly at boiling point. I can only suppose that Westlake has been led to look below the surface of society and has been affected as I was then. He has the mind of a poet; probably he was struck with horror to find over what a pit he had been living in careless enjoyment. He is tender-hearted; of a sudden he felt himself criminal, to be playing with beautiful toys whilst a whole world lived only to sweat and starve. The appeal of the miserable seemed to be to him personally. It is what certain sects call conversion in religion, a truth addressing itself with unwonted and invincible force to the individual soul.'

'And you, too, were a Socialist?'

'At that age and under those conditions it was right and good. I should have been void of feeling and imagination otherwise. Such convictions are among relative truths. To be a social enthusiast is in itself neither right nor wrong, neither praiseworthy nor the opposite; it is a state to be judged in relation to the other facts of a man's life. You will never know that state; if you affected it you would be purely contemptible. And I myself have outgrown it.'

'But you must not think that I am inhuman,' said Hubert. 'The sight of distress touches

me deeply. To the individual poor man or woman I would give my last penny. It is when they rise against me as a class that I become pitiless.'

'I understand you perfectly, though I have not the same prejudices. My old zeal lingers with me in the form of tolerance. I can enter into the mind of a furious proletarian as easily as into the feeling which you represent.'

'But how did your zeal come to an end?'

'In this way. I worked under the conditions I have described to you till I was nearly thirty. Then I broke down physically. At the same time it happened that I inherited a small competency. I went abroad, lived in Italy for a couple of years. I left England with the firm intention of getting my health and then returning to work harder than ever. But during those two years I educated myself. When I reached England again I found that it was impossible to enter again on the old path. I should have had to force myself; it would have been an instance of the kind of thing you suggest in explanation of Westlake's persistence. Fortunately I yielded to my better sense and altogether shunned the life of towns. I was no longer of those who seek to change the world, but of those who are content that it should in substance remain as it is.'

'But how can you be content, if you are

convinced that the majority of men live only to suffer ?’

‘It is you who attribute the conviction to me,’ said the vicar, smiling good-naturedly. ‘My conviction is the very opposite. One of the pet theories I have developed for myself in recent years is, that happiness is very evenly distributed among all classes and conditions. It is the result of sober reflection on my experience of life. Think of it a moment. The bulk of men are neither rich nor poor, taking into consideration their habits and needs ; they live in much content, despite social imperfections and injustices, despite the ills of nature. Above and below are classes of extreme characterisation ; I believe the happiness assignable to those who are the lowest stratum of civilisation is, relatively speaking, no whit less than that we may attribute to the thin stratum of the surface, using the surface to mean the excessively rich. It is a paradox, but anyone capable of thinking may be assured of its truth. The life of the very poorest is a struggle to support their bodies ; the richest, relieved of that one anxiety, are overwhelmed with such a mass of artificial troubles that their few moments of genuine repose do not exceed those vouchsafed to their antipodes. You would urge the sufferings of the criminal class under punishment? I balance against it the

misery of the rich under the scourge of their own excesses. It is a mistake due to mere thoughtlessness, or ignorance, to imagine the labouring, or even the destitute, population as ceaselessly groaning beneath the burden of their existence. Go along the poorest street in the East End of London, and you will hear as much laughter, witness as much gaiety, as in any thoroughfare of the West. Laughter and gaiety of a miserable kind? I speak of it as relative to the habits and capabilities of the people. A being of superior intelligence regarding humanity with an eye of perfect understanding would discover that life was enjoyed every bit as much in the slum as in the palace.'

'You would consider it fair to balance excessive suffering of the body in one class against excessive mental suffering in another?'

'Undoubtedly. It is a fair application of my theory. But let me preach a little longer. It is my belief that, though this equality of distribution remains a fact, the sum total of happiness in nations is seriously diminishing. Not only on account of the growth of population; the poor have more to suffer, the rich less of true enjoyment, the mass of comfortable people fall into an ever-increasing anxiety. A Radical will tell you that this is a transitional state. Possibly, if we accept the

Radical theories of progress. I held them once in a very light-hearted way; I am now far less disposed to accept them as even imaginably true. Those who are enthusiastic for the spirit of the age proceed on the principle of countenancing evil that good may some day come of it. Such a position astonishes me. Is the happiness of a man now alive of less account than that of the man who shall live two hundred years hence? Altruism is doubtless good, but only so when it gives pure enjoyment; that is to say, when it is embraced instinctively. Shall I frown on a man because he *cannot* find his bliss in altruism and bid him perish to make room for a being more perfect? What right have we to live thus in the far-off future? Thinking in this way, I have a profound dislike and distrust of this same progress. Take one feature of it—universal education. That, I believe, works most patently for the growing misery I speak of. Its results affect all classes, and all for the worse. I said that I used to have a very bleeding of the heart for the half-clothed and quarter-fed hangers-on to civilisation; I think far less of them now than of another class in appearance much better off. It is a class created by the mania of education, and it consists of those unhappy men and women whom unspeakable cruelty endows with intellectual needs whilst refusing them the suste-

nance they are taught to crave. Another generation, and this class will be terribly extended, its existence blighting the whole social state. Every one of these poor creatures has a right to curse the work of those who clamour progress, and pose as benefactors of their race.'

'All that strikes me as very good and true,' remarked Hubert; 'but can it be helped? Or do you refuse to believe in the modern conception of laws ruling social development?'

'I wish I could do so. No; when I spoke of the right to curse, I should have said, from their point of view. In truth, I fear we must accept progress. But I cannot rejoice in it; I will even do what little I can in my own corner to support the old order of things. You may be aware that I was on very friendly terms with the Mutimers, that I even seemed to encourage them in their Socialism. Yes, and because I felt that in that way I could best discharge my duty. What I really encouraged was sympathy and humanity. When Mutimer came asking me to be present at his meetings I plainly refused. To have held apart from him and his wife would have been as wrong in me as to publicly countenance their politics.'

Mr. Wyvern was on the point of referring to his private reasons for befriending Adela, but checked himself.

‘What I made no secret of approving was their substitution of human relations between employer and employed for the detestable “nexus of cash payment,” as Carlyle calls it. That is only a return to the good old order, and it seems to me that it becomes more impossible every day. Thus far I am with the Socialists, in that I denounce the commercial class, the *bourgeois*, the capitalists—call them what you will—as the supremely maleficent. They hold us at their mercy, and their mercy is nought. Monstrously hypocritical, they cry for progress when they mean increased opportunities of swelling their own purses at the expense of those they employ, and of those they serve; vulgar to the core, they exalt a gross ideal of well-being, and stink in their prosperity. The very poor and the uncommercial wealthy alike suffer from them; the intellect of the country is poisoned by their influence. They it is who indeed are oppressors; they grow rich on the toil of poor girls in London garrets and of men who perish prematurely to support their children. I won’t talk of these people; I should lose my calm views of things and use language too much like this of the *Fiery Cross*.

Hubert was thoughtful.

‘What is before us?’ he murmured.

‘Evil; of that I am but too firmly assured.



Progress will have its way, and its path will be a path of bitterness. A pillar of dark cloud leads it by day, and of terrible fire by night. I do not say that the promised land may not lie ahead of its guiding, but woe is me for the desert first to be traversed! Two vices are growing among us to dread proportions—indifference and hatred: the one will let poverty anguish at its door, the other will hound on the vassal against his lord. Papers like the *Fiery Cross*, even though such a man as Westlake edit them, serve the cause of hatred; they preach, by implication at all events, the childish theory of the equality of men, and seek to make discontented a whole class which only needs regular employment on the old conditions to be perfectly satisfied.'

'Westlake says here that they have no *right* to be satisfied.'

'I know. It is one of the huge fallacies of the time; it comes of the worship of progress. I am content with the fact that, even in our bad day, as a class they *are* satisfied. No, these reforms address themselves to the wrong people; they begin at the wrong end. Let us raise our voices, if we feel impelled to do so at all, for the old simple Christian rules, and do our best to get the educated by the ears. I have my opinion about the clergy; I will leave you to guess it.'

‘Have you any belief in the possibility of this revolution they threaten?’

‘None whatever. Changes will come about, but not of these men’s making or devising. And for the simple reason that they are not sincere. I put aside an educated enthusiast such as Westlake. The proletarian Socialists do not believe what they say, and therefore they are so violent in saying it. They are not themselves of pure and exalted character; they cannot ennoble others. If the movement continue we shall see miserable examples of weakness led astray by popularity, of despicable qualities aping greatness.’

He paused somewhat abruptly, for he was thinking of Mutimer, and did not wish to make the application too obvious. Hubert restrained a smile.

They parted shortly after, but not till Hubert had put one more question.

‘Do you, or do you not, approve of what I am doing down in the valley?’

Mr. Wyvern thought a moment, and replied gravely :

‘You being yourself, I approve it heartily. It will gladden my eyes to see the grass growing when spring comes round.’

He shook Hubert’s hand affectionately and left him.

## CHAPTER VII.

WE must concern ourselves for a little with the affairs of our old acquaintance, Daniel Dabbs.

Daniel's disillusionment with regard to Richard Mutimer did not affect his regularity of attendance at the Socialist lectures. In most things a typical English mechanic, he was especially so in his relation to the extreme politics of which he declared himself a supporter. He became a Socialist because his friend Dick was one; when that was no longer a reason, he numbered himself among the followers of Comrade Roodhouse—first as a sort of angry protest against Mutimer's private treachery, then again because he had got into the habit of listening to inflammatory discourses every Sunday night, and on the whole found it a pleasant way of passing the evening. He enjoyed the oratory of Messrs. Cowes and Cullen; he liked to shout 'Hear, hear!' and to stamp when there was general applause; it affected

him with an agreeable sensation, much like that which follows upon a good meal, to hear himself pitied as a hard-working, ill-used fellow, and the frequent allusion to his noble qualities sweetly flattered him. When he went home to the public-house after a lively debate, and described the proceedings to his brother Nicholas, he always ended by declaring that it was 'as good as a play.'

He read the *Tocsin*, that is to say, he glanced his eye up and down the columns and paused wherever he caught words such as 'villains,' 'titled scoundrels,' 'vampires,' and so on. The expositions of doctrine he passed over; anything in the nature of reasoning muddled him. From hearing them incessantly repeated he knew the root theories of Socialism, and could himself hold forth on such texts as 'the community of the means of production' with considerable fluency and vehemence; but in very fact he concerned himself as little with economic reforms as with the principles of high art, and had as little genuine belief in the promised revolution as in the immortality of his own soul. Had he been called upon to suffer in any way for the 'cause of the people,' it would speedily have been demonstrated of what metal his enthusiasm was made.

But there came a different kind of test. In the winter which followed upon Mutimer's

downfall, Nicholas Dabbs fell ill and died. He was married but had no children, and his wife had been separated from him for several years. His brother Daniel found himself in flourishing circumstances, with a public-house which brought in profits of forty pounds a week. It goes without saying that Daniel forthwith abandoned his daily labour and installed himself behind the bar. The position suited him admirably; with a barmaid and a potman at his orders (he paid them no penny more than the market rate), he stood about in his shirt sleeves and gossiped from morn to midnight with such of his friends as had leisure (and money) to spend in the temple of Bacchus. From the day that saw him a licensed victualler he ceased to attend the Socialist meetings; it was, of course, a sufficient explanation to point to the fact that he could not be in two places at the same time, for Sunday evening is a season of brisk business in the liquor trade. At first he was reticent on the subject of his old convictions, but by degrees he found it possible to achieve the true innkeeper's art, and speak freely in a way which could offend none of his customers. And he believed himself every bit as downright and sincere as he had ever been.

Comfortably established on a capitalist basis, his future assured because it depended upon the signal vice of his class, it one day

occurred to Daniel that he ought to take to himself a helpmeet, a partner of his joys and sorrows. He had thought of it from time to time during the past year, but only in a vague way; he had even directed his eyes to the woman who might perchance be the one most suitable, though with anything but assurance of his success if he seriously endeavoured to obtain her. Long ago he had ceased to trouble himself about his first love; with characteristic acceptance of the accomplished fact, he never really imagined that Alice Mutimer, after she became an heiress, could listen to his wooing, and, to do him justice, he appreciated the delicacy of his position, if he should continue to press his suit. It cost him not a little suffering altogether to abandon his hopes, for the Princess had captivated him, and if he could have made her his wife he would—for at least twelve months—have been a proud and exultant man. But all that was over; Daniel was heart-free, when he again began to occupy himself with womankind; it was a very different person towards whom he found himself attracted. This was Emma Vine.

After that chance meeting with Mrs. Clay in the omnibus he lost sight of the sisters for a while, but one day Kate came to the public-house and desired to see him. She was in great misery. Emma had fallen ill, gravely ill, and

Kate had no money to pay a doctor. The people in the house where she lodged were urging her to send for the parish doctor, but that was an extremity to be avoided as long as a single hope remained. She had come to borrow a few shillings in order that she might take Emma in a cab to the hospital ; perhaps they would receive her as an in-patient. Daniel put his hand in his pocket. He did more ; though on the point of returning from breakfast to his work, he sacrificed the morning to accompany Mrs. Clay and help her to get the sick girl to the hospital. Fortunately it was found possible to give her a bed ; Emma remained in the hospital for seven weeks.

Daniel was not hasty in forming attachments. During the seven weeks he called three or four times to inquire of Mrs. Clay what progress her sister was making, but when Emma came home again, and resumed her usual work, he seemed to have no further interest in her. At length Kate came to the public-house one Saturday night and wished to pay back half the loan. Daniel shook his head. ' All right, Mrs. Clay ; don't you hurt yourself. Let it wait till you're a bit better off.' Nicholas was behind the bar, and when Kate had gone he asked his brother if he hadn't observed something curious in Mrs. Clay's behaviour. Daniel certainly had ; the brothers agreed that she must

have been drinking rather more than was good for her.

‘I shouldn’t wonder,’ said Daniel, ‘if she started with the whole o’ the money.’

Which, indeed, was a true conjecture.

Time went on, and Daniel had been six months a licensed victualler. It was summer once more, and thirsty weather. Daniel stood behind the bar in his shirt sleeves, collarless for personal ease, with a white waistcoat, and trousers of light tweed. Across his stomach, which already was more portly than in his engineering days, swayed a heavy gold chain; on one of his fingers was a demonstrative ring. His face and neck were very red; his hair, cropped extremely short, gleamed with odorous oils. You could see that he prided himself on the spotlessness of his linen; his cuffs were turned up to avoid alcoholic soilure; their vast links hung loose for better observance by customers. Daniel was a smiling and a happy man.

It was early on Sunday evening; Hoxton had shaken itself from the afternoon slumber, had taken a moderate tea, and was in no two minds about the entirely agreeable way of getting through the hours till bedtime. Daniel beamed on the good thirsty souls who sought refuge under his roof from the still warm rays of the sun. Whilst seeing that no customer



lacked due attention, he conversed genially with a group of his special friends. One of these had been present at a meeting held on Clerkenwell Green that morning, a meeting assembled to hear Richard Mutimer. Richard, a year having passed since his temporary eclipse, was once more prominent as a popular leader. He was addressing himself to the East End especially, and had a scheme to propound which, whatever might be its success or the opposite, kept him well before the eyes of men.

‘What’s all this ’ere about?’ cried one of the group in an impatiently contemptuous tone. ‘I can’t see nothin’ in it myself.’

‘I can see as he wants money,’ observed another, laughing. ‘There’s a good many ways o’ gettin’ money without earnin’ it, particular if you’ve got a tongue as goes like a steam engine.’

‘I don’t think so bad of him as all that,’ said the man who had attended the meeting. ‘’Tain’t for himself as he wants the money. What do *you* think o’ this ’ere job, Dan?’

‘I’ll tell you more about that in a year’s time,’ replied Dabbs, thrusting his fingers into his waistcoat pockets. ‘’Cording to Mike, we’re all goin’ to be rich before we know it. Let’s hope it’ll come true.’

He put his tongue in his cheek and let his eye circle round the group.

‘Seems to me,’ said the contemptuous man, ‘he’d better look after his own people first. Charity begins at ’ome, eh, mates?’

‘What do you mean by that?’ inquired a voice.

‘Why, isn’t his brother—what’s his name? Bill—Jack——’

‘’Arry,’ corrected Daniel.

‘To be sure, ’Arry; I don’t know him myself, but I ’eard talk of him. It’s him as is doin’ his three months ’ard labour.’

‘That ain’t no fault o’ Dick Mutimer’s,’ asserted the apologist. ‘He always was a bad ’un, that ’Arry. Why, you can say so much, Dan? No, no, I don’t ’old with a man’s bein’ cried down ’cause he’s got a brother as disgraces himself. It was Dick as got him his place, an’ a good place it was. It wasn’t Dick as put him up to thievin’, I suppose?’

‘No, no, that’s right enough,’ said Dabbs. ‘Let a man be judged by his own sayin’s and doin’s. There’s queer stories about Dick Mutimer himself, but—was it Scotch or Irish, Mike?’

Mike had planted his glass on the counter in a manner suggesting replenishment.

‘Now that’s what I call a cruel question!’ cried Mike humorously. ‘The man as doesn’t stick to his country, I don’t think much of him.’

The humour was not remarkable, but it caused a roar of laughter to go up.

‘Now what I want to know,’ exclaimed one, returning to the main subject, ‘is where Mutimer gets his money to live on. He does no work, we know that much.’

‘He told us all about that this mornin’,’ replied the authority. ‘He has friends as keeps him goin’, that’s all. As far as I can make out it’s a sort o’ subscription.’

‘Now, there you are!’ put in Daniel with half a sneer. ‘I don’t call that Socialism. Let a man support himself by his own work, then he’s got a right to say what he likes. No, no, *we* know what Socialism means, eh, Tom?’

The man appealed to answered with a laugh.

‘Well, blest if I do, Dan! There’s so many kinds o’ Socialism nowadays. Which lot does he pretend to belong to? There’s the *Fiery Cross*, and there’s Roodhouse with his *Tocsin*, and now I s’pose Dick’ll be startin’ another paper of his own.’

‘No, no,’ replied Mutimer’s supporter. ‘He holds by the *Fiery Cross*, still, so he said this mornin’. I’ve no opinion o’ Roodhouse myself. He makes a deal o’ noise, but I can’t see as he *does* anything.’

‘You won’t catch Dick Mutimer sidin’ with

Roodhouse,' remarked Daniel with a wink. 'That's an old story, eh, Tom?'

Thus the talk went on, and the sale of beverages kept pace with it. About eight o'clock the barmaid informed Daniel that Mrs. Clay wished to see him. Kate had entered the house by the private door, and was sitting in the bar-parlour. Daniel went to her at once.

She was more slovenly in appearance than ever, and showed all the signs of extreme poverty. Her face was not merely harsh and sour, it indicated a process of degradation. The smile with which she greeted Daniel was disagreeable through excessive anxiety to be ingratiating. Her eyes were restless and shrewd. Daniel sat down opposite to her, and rested his elbows on the table.

'Well, how's all at 'ome?' he began, avoiding her look as he spoke.

'Nothing much to boast of,' Kate replied with an unpleasant giggle. 'We keep alive.'

'Emma all right?'

'She's all right, except for her bad 'ead-aches. She's had another of 'em this week. But I think it's a bit better to-day.'

'She'll have a rest to-morrow.'

The following day was the August bank-holiday.

'No, she'll have no rest. She's going to do some cleaning in Goswell Road.'

Daniel drummed with his fingers on the table.

‘She isn’t fit to do it, that’s quite certain,’ Mrs. Clay continued. ‘I wish I could get her out for an hour or two. She wants fresh air, that’s what it is. I s’pose you’re going somewhere to-morrow?’

It was asked insinuatingly, and at the same time with an air of weary resignation.

‘Well, I did think o’ gettin’ as far as Epping Forest. D’you think you could persuade Emma to come? you and the children as well, you know. I’ll have the mare out if she will.’

‘I can ask her and see. It ’ud be a rare treat for us. I feel myself as if I couldn’t hold up much longer, it’s that hot!’

She threw a glance towards the bar.

‘Will you have a bottle o’ lemonade?’ Daniel asked.

‘It’s very kind of you. I’ve a sort o’ fainty feeling. If you’d just put ever such a little drop in it, Mr. Dabbs.’

Daniel betrayed a slight annoyance. But he went to the door and gave the order.

‘Still at the same place?’ he asked on resuming his seat.

‘Emma, you mean? Yes, but it’s only been half a week’s work, this last. And I’ve

as good as nothing to do. There's the children runnin' about with no soles to their feet.'

The lemonade—with a dash in it—was brought to her, and she refreshed herself with a deep draught. Perhaps the dash was not perceptible enough; she did not seem entirely satisfied, though pretending to be so.

'Suppose I come round to-night and ask her myself?' Daniel said, as the result of a short reflection.

'It 'ud be kind of you if you would, Mr. Dabbs. I'm afraid she'll tell me she can't afford to lose the day.'

He consulted his watch, then again reflected, still drumming on the table.

'All right, we'll go,' he said, rising from his chair.

His coat was hanging on a peg behind the door. He drew it on, and went to tell the barmaid that he should be absent exactly twenty minutes. It was Daniel's policy to lead his underlings to expect that he might return at any moment, though he would probably be away a couple of hours.

The sisters were now living in a street crossing the angle between Goswell Road and the City Road. Daniel was not, as a rule, lavish in his expenditure, but he did not care to walk any distance, and there was no line of omnibuses available. He took a hansom.

It generally fell to Emma's share to put her sister's children to bed, for Mrs. Clay was seldom at home in the evening. But for Emma, indeed, the little ones would have been sadly off for motherly care. Kate had now and then a fit of maternal zeal, but it usually ended in impatience and slappings; for the most part she regarded her offspring as encumbrance, and only drew attention to them when she wished to impress people with the hardships of her lot. The natural result was that the boy and girl only knew her as mother by name; they feared her, and would shrink to Emma's side when Kate began to speak crossly.

All dwelt together in one room, for life was harder than ever. Emma's illness had been the beginning of a dark and miserable time. Whilst she was in the hospital her sister took the first steps on the path which leads to destruction; with scanty employment, much time to kill, never a sufficiency of food, companions only too like herself in their distaste for home duties and in the misery of their existence, poor Kate got into the habit of straying aimlessly about the streets, and, the inevitable consequence, of seeking warmth and company in the public-house. Her children lived as the children of such mothers do: they played on the stairs or on the pavements, had accidents, were always dirty, cried themselves to sleep in

hunger and pain. When Emma returned, still only fit for a convalescent home, she had to walk about day after day in search of work, conciliating the employers whom Mrs. Clay had neglected or disgusted, undertaking jobs to which her strength was inadequate, and, not least, striving her hardest to restore order in the wretched home. It was agreed that Kate should use the machine at home, whilst Emma got regular employment in a workroom.

Emma never heard of that letter which her sister wrote to Mutimer's wife. Kate had no expectation that help would come of it; she hoped that it had done Mutimer harm, and the hope had to satisfy her. She durst not let Emma suspect that she had done such a thing.

Emma heard, however, of the loan from Daniel Dabbs, and afterwards thanked him for his kindness, but she resolutely set her face against the repetition of such favours, though Daniel would have willingly helped when she came out of the hospital. Kate, of course, was for accepting anything that was offered; she lost her temper, and accused Emma of wishing to starve the children. But she was still greatly under her sister's influence, and when Emma declared that there must be a parting between them if she discovered that anything was secretly accepted from Mr. Dabbs, Kate sullenly yielded the point.



Daniel was aware of all this, and it made an impression upon him.

To-night Emma was as usual left alone with the children. After tea, when Kate left the house, she sat down to the machine and worked for a couple of hours ; for her there was small difference between Sunday and week day. Whilst working she told the children stories ; it was a way of beguiling them from their desire to go and play in the street. They were strange stories, half recollected from a childhood which had promised better things than a maidenhood of garret misery, half Emma's own invention. They had a grace, a spontaneity, occasionally an imaginative brightness, which would have made them, if they had been taken down from the lips, models of tale-telling for children. Emma had two classes of story : the one concerned itself with rich children, the other with poor ; the one highly fanciful, the other full of a touching actuality, the very essence of a life such as that led by the listeners themselves. Unlike the novel which commends itself to the world's grown children, these narratives had by no means necessarily a happy ending ; for one thing Emma saw too deeply into the facts of life, and was herself too sad, to cease her music on a merry chord ; and, moreover, it was half a matter of principle with her to make the little ones thoughtful and sym-

pathetic ; she believed that they would grow up kinder and more self-reliant if they were in the habit of thinking that we are ever dependent on each other for solace and strengthening under the burden of life. The most elaborate of her stories, one wholly of her own invention, was called 'Blanche and Janey.' It was a double biography. Blanche and Janey were born on the same day, they lived ten years, and then died on the same day. But Blanche was the child of wealthy parents ; Janey was born in a garret. Their lives were recounted in parallel, almost year by year, and there was sadness in the contrast. Emma had chosen the name of the poor child in memory of her own sister, her ever dear Jane, whose life had been a life of sorrow.

The story ended thus :

'Yes, they died on the same day, and they were buried on the same day. But not in the same cemetery, oh no ! Blanche's grave is far away over there'—she pointed to the west—'among tombstones covered with flowers, and her father and mother go every Sunday to read her name, and think and talk of her. Janey was buried far away over yonder'—she pointed to the east—'but there is no stone on her grave, and no one knows the exact place where she lies, and no one, no one ever goes to think and talk of her.'

The sweetness of the story lay in the fact that the children were both good, and both deserved to be happy; it never occurred to Emma to teach her hearers to hate little Blanche just because hers was the easier lot.

Whatever might be her secret suffering, with the little ones Emma was invariably patient and tender. However dirty they had made themselves during the day, however much they cried when hunger made them irritable, they went to their aunt's side with the assurance of finding gentleness in reproof and sympathy with their troubles. Yet once she was really angry. Bertie told her a deliberate untruth, and she at once discovered it. She stood silent for a few moments, looking as Bertie had never seen her look. Then she said:

‘Do you know, Bertie, that it is wrong to try and deceive?’

Then she tried to make him understand why falsehood was evil, and as she spoke to the child her voice quivered, her breast heaved. When the little fellow was overcome, and began to sob, Emma checked herself, recollecting that she had lost sight of the offender's age, and was using expressions which he could not understand. But the lesson was effectual. If ever the brother and sister were tempted to hide anything by a falsehood they remembered

‘ Aunt Emma’s ’ face, and durst not incur the danger of her severity.

So she told her stories to the humming of the machine, and when it was nearly the children’s bedtime she broke off to ask them if they would like some bread and butter. Among all the results of her poverty the bitterest to Emma was when she found herself *hoping that the children would not eat much*. If their appetite was poor it made her anxious about their health, yet it happened sometimes that she feared to ask them if they were hungry lest the supply of bread should fail. It was so to-night. The week’s earnings had been three shillings; the rent itself was four. But the children were as ready to eat as if they had had no tea. It went to her heart to give them each but one half-slice and tell them that they could have no more. Gladly she would have robbed herself of breakfast next morning on their account, but that she durst not do, for she had undertaken to scrub out an office in Goswell Road, and she knew that her strength would fail if she went from home fasting.

She put them to bed—they slept together on a small bedstead, which was a chair during the day—and then sat down to do some patching at a dress of Kate’s. Her face when she communed with her own thoughts was pro-

foundly sad, but far from the weakness of self-pity. Indeed she did her best not to think of herself; she knew that to do so cost her struggles with feelings she held to be evil, resentment and woe of passion and despair. She tried to occupy herself solely with her sister and the children, planning how to make Kate more home-loving and how to find the little ones more food.

She had no companions. The girls whom she came to know in the workroom for the most part took life very easily; she could not share in their genuine merriment; she was often revolted by their way of thinking and speaking. They thought her dull, and paid no attention to her. She was glad to be relieved of the necessity of talking.

Her sister thought her hard. Kate believed that she was for ever brooding over her injury. This was not true, but a certain hardness in her character there certainly was. For her life, both of soul and body, was ascetic; she taught herself to expect, to hope for, nothing. When she was hungry she had a sort of pleasure in enduring; when weary she worked on as if by effort she could overcome the feeling. But Kate's chief complaint against her was her determination to receive no help save in the way of opportunity to earn money. This was something more than ordinary pride.

Emma suffered intensely in the recollection that she had lived at Mutimer's expense during the very months when he was seeking the love of another woman, and casting about for means of abandoning herself. When she thought of Alice coming with the proposal that she and her sister should still occupy the house in Wilton Square, and still receive money, the heat of shame and anger never failed to rise to her cheeks. She could never accept from anyone again a penny which she had not earned. She believed that Daniel Dabbs had been repaid, otherwise she could not have rested a moment.

It was her terrible misfortune to have feelings too refined for the position in which fate had placed her. Had she only been like those other girls in the workroom! But we are interesting in proportion to our capacity for suffering, and dignity comes of misery nobly borne.

As she sat working on Kate's dress, she was surprised to hear a heavy step approaching. There came a knock at the door; she answered, admitting Daniel.

He looked about the room, partly from curiosity, partly through embarrassment. Dusk was falling.

'Young 'uns in bed?' he said, lowering his voice.

‘Yes, they are asleep,’ Emma replied.

‘You don’t mind me coming up?’

‘Oh no!’

He went to the window and looked at the houses opposite, then at the flushed sky.

‘Bank holiday to-morrow. I thought I’d like to ask you whether you and Mrs. Clay and the children ’ud come with me to Epping Forest. If it’s a day like this, it’ll be a nice drive—do you good. You look as if you wanted a breath of fresh air, if you don’t mind me sayin’ it.’

‘It’s very kind of you, Mr. Dabbs,’ Emma replied. ‘I am very sorry I can’t come myself, but my sister and the children perhaps——’

She could not refuse for them likewise, yet she was troubled to accept so far.

‘But why can’t *you* come?’ he asked good-naturedly, slapping his hat against his leg.

‘I have some work that’ll take me nearly all day.’

‘But you’ve no business to work on a bank holiday. I’m not sure as it ain’t breakin’ the law.’

He laughed, and Emma did her best to show a smile. But she said nothing.

‘But you *will* come, now? You can lose just the one day? It’ll do you a power o’ good. You’ll work all the better on Tuesday,

now see if you don't. Why, it ain't worth livin', never to get a holiday.'

'I'm very sorry. It was very kind indeed of you to think of it, Mr. Dabbs. I really can't come.'

He went again to the window, and thence to the children's bedside. He bent a little and watched them breathing.

'Bertie's growin' a fine little lad.'

'Yes, indeed, he is.'

'He'll have to go to school soon, I s'pose—I'm afraid he gives you a good deal of trouble, that is, I mean—you know how I mean it.'

'Oh, he is very good,' Emma said, looking at the sleeping face affectionately.

'Yes, yes.'

Daniel had meant something different; he saw that Emma would not understand him.

'We see changes in life,' he resumed, musingly. 'Now who'd a' thought I should end up with having more money than I know how to use? The 'ouse has done well for eight years now, an' it's likely to do well for a good many years yet, as far as I can see.'

'I am glad to hear that,' Emma replied constrainedly.

'Miss Vine, I wanted you to come to Epping Forest to-morrow because I thought I should have a chance of a little talk. I don't



mean that was the only reason; it's too bad you never get a holiday, and I should like it to a' done you good. But I thought I might a' found a chance o' sayin' something, something I've thought of a long time, and that's the honest truth. I want to help you and your sister and the young 'uns, but *you* most of all. I don't like to see you livin' such a hard life, 'cause you deserve something better, if ever anyone did. Now will you let me help you? There's only one way, and it's the way I'd like best of any. The long an' the short of it is, I want to ask you if you'll come an' live at the 'ouse, come and bring Mrs. Clay an' the children?'

Emma looked at him in surprise and felt uncertain of his meaning, though his speech had painfully prepared her with an answer.

'I'd do my right down best to make you a good 'usband, that I would, Emma!' Daniel hurried on, getting flustered. 'Perhaps I've been a bit too sudden? Suppose we leave it till you've had time to think over? It's no good talking to you about money an' that kind o' thing; you'd marry a poor man as soon as a rich, if only you cared in the right way for him. I won't sing my own praises, but I don't think you'd find much to complain of in me. I'd never ask you to go into the bar, 'cause I know

you ain't suited for that, and, what's more, I'd rather you didn't. Will you give it a thought?'

It was modest enough, and from her knowledge of the man Emma felt that he was to be trusted for more than his word. But he asked an impossible thing. She could not imagine herself consenting to marry any man, but the reasons why she could not marry Daniel Dabbs were manifold. She felt them all, but it was only needful to think of one.

Yet it was a temptation, and the hour of it might have been chosen. With a scarcity of food for the morrow, with dark fears for her sister, suffering incessantly on the children's account, Emma might have been pardoned if she had taken the helping hand. But the temptation, though it unsteadied her brain for a moment, could never have overcome her. She would have deemed it far less a crime to go out and steal a loaf from the baker's shop than to marry Daniel because he offered rescue from destitution.

She refused him, as gently as she could, but with firmness which left him no room for misunderstanding her. Daniel was awed by her quiet sincerity.

'But I can wait,' he stammered; 'if you'd take time to think it over?'

Useless; the answer could at no time be other.

‘Well, I’ve no call to grumble,’ he said. ‘You say straight out what you mean. No woman can do fairer than that.’

His thought recurred for a moment to Alice, whose fault had been that she was ever ambiguous.

‘It’s hard to bear. I don’t think I shall ever care to marry any other woman. But you’re doin’ the right thing and the honest thing; I wish all women was like you.’

At the door he turned.

‘There’d be no harm if I take Mrs. Clay and the children, would there?’

‘I am sure they will thank you, Mr. Dabbs.’

It did not matter now that there was a clear understanding.

At a little distance from the house door Daniel found Mrs. Clay waiting.

‘No good,’ he said cheerlessly.

‘She won’t go?’

‘No. But I’ll take you and the children, if you’ll come.’

Kate did not immediately reply. A grave disappointment showed itself in her face.

‘Can’t be helped,’ Daniel replied to her look. ‘I did my best.’

Kate accepted his invitation, and they arranged the hour of meeting. As she approached the house to enter, now looking

ill-tempered, a woman of her acquaintance met her. After a few minutes' conversation they walked away together.

Emma sat up till twelve o'clock. The thought on which she was brooding was not one to make the time go lightly ; it was—how much and how various evil can be wrought by a single act of treachery. And the instance in her mind was more fruitful than her knowledge allowed her to perceive.

Kate appeared shortly after midnight. She had very red cheeks and very bright eyes, and her mood was quarrelsome. She sat down on the bed and began to talk of Daniel Dabbs, as she had often done already, in a maundering way. Emma kept silence ; she was beginning to undress.

'There's a man with money,' said Kate, her voice getting louder ; 'money, I tell you, and you've only to say a word. And you won't even be civil to him. You've got no feeling ; you don't care for nobody but yourself. I'll take the children and leave you to go your own way, that's what I'll do !'

It was hard to make no reply, but Emma succeeded in commanding herself. The maundering talk went on for more than an hour. Then came the wretched silence of night.

Emma did not sleep. She was too wo-

begone to find a tear. Life stood before her in the darkness like a hideous spectre.

In the morning she told her sister that Daniel had asked her to marry him and that she had refused. It was best to have that understood. Kate heard with black brows. But even yet she knew something of shame when she remembered her return home the night before ; it kept her from giving utterance to her anger.

There followed a scene such as had occurred two or three times during the past six months. Emma threw aside all her coldness, and with passionate entreaty besought her sister to draw back from the gulf's edge whilst there was yet time. For her own sake, for the sake of Bertie and the little girl, by the memory of that dear dead one who lay in the waste cemetery !

‘ Pity me, too ! Think a little of me, Kate, dear ! You are driving me to despair.’

Kate was moved, she had not else been human. The children were looking up with frightened, wondering eyes. She hid her face and muttered promises of amendment.

Emma kissed her, and strove hard to hope.

## CHAPTER VIII.

WITH his five hundred pounds lodged in the bank, Mutimer felt ill at ease in the lodgings in Pentonville. He began to look about for an abode more suitable to the dignity of his position, and shortly discovered a house in Holloway, the rent twenty-eight pounds, the situation convenient for his purposes. By way of making some amends to Adela for his less than civil behaviour, he took the house and had it modestly furnished (at the cost of one hundred and ten pounds) before saying anything to her of his plans. Then, on the pretext of going to search for pleasanter lodgings, he one day took her to Holloway and led her into her own dwelling. Adela was startled, but did her best to seem grateful.

They returned to Pentonville, settled their accounts, packed their belongings, and by evening were able to sit down to a dinner cooked by their own servant—under Adela's supervision. Mutimer purchased a couple of bottles of claret on the way home, that the

first evening might be wholly cheerful. Of a sudden he had become a new man; the sullenness had passed and he walked from room to room with much the same air of lofty satisfaction as when he first surveyed the interior of Wanley Manor. He made a show of reading in the hour before dinner, but could not keep still for more than a few minutes at a time; he wanted to handle the furniture, to survey the prospect from the windows, to walk out into the road and take a general view of the house. When their meal had begun, and the servant, instructed to wait at table, chanced to be out of the room, he remarked:

‘We’ll begin, of course, to dine at the proper time again. It’s far better, don’t you think so?’

‘Yes, I think so.’

‘And, by-the-by, you’ll see that Mary has a cap.’

Adela smiled.

‘Yes, I’ll see she has.’

Mary herself entered. Some impulse she did not quite understand led Adela to look at the girl in her yet capless condition. She said something which would require Mary to answer, and found herself wondering at the submissive tone, the repeated ‘Mum.’

‘Yes,’ she mused with herself, ‘she is our creature. We pay her and she must attire

herself to suit our ideas of propriety. She must remember her station.'

'What is it?' Mutimer asked, noticing that she had again smiled.

'Nothing.'

His pipe lit, his limbs reposing in the easy-chair, Mutimer became expansive. He requested Adela's attention whilst he rendered a full account of all the moneys he had laid out, and made a computation of the cost of living on this basis.

'The start once made,' he said, 'you see it isn't a bit dearer than the lodgings. And the fact is, I couldn't have done much in that hole. Now here, I feel able to go to work. It isn't in reality spending money on ourselves, though it may look like it. You see I must have a place where people can call to see me; we'd no room before.'

He mused.

'You'll write and tell your mother?'

'Yes.'

'Don't say anything about the money. You haven't done yet, I suppose?'

'No.'

'Better not. That's our own business. You can just say you're more comfortable. Of course,' he added, 'there's no secret. I shall let people understand in time that I am carrying out the wishes of a Socialist friend. That's



simple enough. But there's no need to talk about it just yet. I must get fairly going first.'

His face gathered light as he proceeded.

'Ah, *now* I'll do something! see if I don't. You see, the fact of the matter is, there are some men who are cut out for leading in a movement, and I have the kind of feeling—well, for one thing, I'm readier at public speaking than most. You think so, don't you?'

Adela was sewing together some chintzes. She kept her eyes closely on the work.

'Yes, I think so.'

'Now the first thing I shall get done,' her husband pursued, a little disappointed that she gave no warmer assent, 'is that book, "My Work at New Wanley." The Union 'll publish it. It ought to have a good sale in Belwick and round about there. You see I must get my name well known; that's everything. When I've got that off hand, then I shall begin on the East End. I mean to make the East End my own ground. I'll see if something can't be done to stir 'em up. I haven't quite thought it out yet. There must be some way of getting them to take an interest in Socialism. Now we'll see what can be done in twelve months. What'll you bet me that I don't add a thousand members to the Union in this next year?'

‘I dare say you can.’

‘There’s no “dare say” about it. I mean to! I begin to think I’ve special good luck; things always turn out right in the end. When I lost my work because I was a Socialist, then came Wanley. Now I’ve lost Wanley, and here comes five hundred a year for ten years! I wonder who that poor fellow may be? I suppose he’ll die soon, and then no doubt we shall hear his name. I only wish there were a few more like him.’

‘The East End!’ he resumed presently. ‘That’s my ground. I’ll make the East End know me as well as they know any man in England. What we want is personal influence. It’s no use asking them to get excited about a *movement*; they must have a *man*. Just the same in *bourgeois* politics. It isn’t Liberalism they care for; it’s Gladstone. Wait and see!’

He talked for three hours, at times as if he were already on the platform before a crowd of East Enders who were shouting, ‘Mutimer for ever!’ Adela fell into physical weariness; at length she with difficulty kept her eyes open. His language was a mere buzzing in her ears; her thoughts were far away.

‘My Work at New Wanley’ was written and published; Keene had the glory of revising the manuscript. It made a pamphlet of thirty-two pages, and was in reality an autobiography.

It presented the ideal working man ; the author stood as a type for ever of the noble possibilities inherent in his class. Written of course in the first person, it contained passages of monumental self-satisfaction. Adela, too, was mentioned ; to her horror she found a glowing description of the work she had done among the women and children. After reading that page she threw the pamphlet aside and hid her face in her hands. She longed for the earth to cover her.

But the publication had no sale worth speaking of. A hundred copies were got rid of at the Socialist centres, and a couple of hundred more when the price was reduced from twopence to a penny. This would not satisfy Mutimer. He took the remaining three hundred off the hands of the Union and sowed them broadcast over the East End, where already he was actively at work. Then he had a thousand more struck off, and at every meeting which he held gave away numerous copies. Keene wrote to suggest that in a new edition there should be a woodcut portrait of the author on the front. Mutimer was delighted with the idea, and at once had it carried out.

Through this winter and the spring that followed he worked hard. It had become a necessity of his existence to hear his name on

the lips of men, to be perpetually in evidence. Adela saw that day by day his personal vanity grew more absorbing. When he returned from a meeting he would occupy her for hours with a recitation of the speeches he had made, with a minute account of what others had said of him. He succeeded in forming a new branch of the Union in Clerkenwell, and by contributing half the rent obtained a room for meetings. In this branch he was King Mutimer.

In the meantime the suit against Rodman was carried through; it could have of course but one result. Rodman was sold up, but the profit accruing to Hubert Eldon was trifling, for the costs were paid out of the estate, and it appeared that Rodman, making hay whilst the sun shone, had spent all but the whole of his means. There remained the question whether he was making fraudulent concealments. Mutimer was morally convinced that this was the case, and would vastly have enjoyed laying his former friend by the heels for the statutable six weeks, but satisfactory proofs were not to be obtained. Through Mr. Yottle, Eldon expressed the desire that, as far as he was concerned, the matter might rest. But it was by no means with pure zeal for justice that Mutimer had proceeded thus far. He began the suit in anger, and, as

is wont to be the case with litigants, grew more bitter as it went on. The selling up of Rodman's house was an occasion of joy to him; he went about singing and whistling.

Adela marvelled that he could so entirely forget the sufferings of his sister; she had had so many proofs of his affection for Alice. In fact he was far from forgetting her, but he made strange distinction between her and her husband, and had a feeling that in doing his utmost to injure Rodman he was in a manner avenging Alice. His love for Alice was in no degree weakened, but—if the state can be understood—he was jealous of the completeness with which she had abandoned him to espouse the cause of her husband. Alice had renounced her brother; she never saw him, and declared that she never would speak to him again. And Mutimer had no fear lest she should suffer want. Rodman had a position of some kind in the City; he and his wife lived for a while in lodgings, then took a house at Wimbledon.

One of Mutimer's greatest anxieties had been lest he should have a difficulty henceforth in supporting his mother in the old house. The economical plan would have been for Adela and himself to go and live with the old woman, but he felt that to be impossible. His mother would never become reconciled to Adela, and,

if the truth must be told, he was ashamed to make known to Adela his mother's excessive homeliness. Then again he was still estranged from the old woman. Though he often thought of what Alice had said to him on that point, month after month went by and he could not make up his mind to go to Wilton Square. Having let the greater part of her house, Mrs. Mutimer needed little pecuniary aid; once she returned money which he had sent to her. 'Arry still lived with her, and 'Arry was a never-ending difficulty. After his appearance in the police court, he retired for a week or two into private life; that is to say, he contented himself with loafing about the streets of Hoxton and the City, and was at home by eleven o'clock nightly, perfectly sober. The character of this young man was that of a distinct class, comprising the sons of mechanics who are ruined morally by being taught to consider themselves above manual labour. Had he from the first been put to a craft, he would in all likelihood have been no worse than the ordinary English artisan—probably drinking too much and loafing on Mondays, but not sinking below the level of his fellows in the workshop. His positive fault was that shared by his brother and sister—personal vanity. It was encouraged from the beginning by immaturity from the only kind of work for which

he was fitted, and the undreamt-of revolution in his prospects gave fatal momentum to all his worst tendencies. Keene and Rodman successively did their best, though unintentionally, to ruin him. He was now incapable of earning his living by any continuous work. Since his return to London he had greatly extended his circle of acquaintances, which consisted of idle fellows of the same type, youths who hang about the lowest fringe of clerkdom till they definitely class themselves either with the criminal community or with those who make a living by unrecognised pursuits which at any time may chance to bring them within the clutches of the law. To use a coarse but expressive word, he was a hopeless black-guard.

Let us be just; 'Arry had, like every other man, his better moments. He knew that he had made himself contemptible to his mother, to Richard, and to Alice, and the knowledge was so far from agreeable that it often drove him to recklessness. That was his way of doing homage to the better life; he had no power of will to resist temptation, but he could go to meet it doggedly out of sheer dissatisfaction with himself. Our social state ensures destruction to such natures; it has no help for them, no patient encouragement. Naturally he hardened himself in vicious habits. Despised

by his own people, he soothed his injured vanity by winning a certain predominance among the contemptible. The fact that he had been on the point of inheriting a fortune in itself gave him standing; he told his story in public-houses and elsewhere, and relished the distinction of having such a story to tell. Even as his brother Richard could not rest unless he was prominent as an agitator, so it became a necessity to 'Arry to lead in the gin-palace and the music-hall. He made himself the aristocrat of rowdyism.

But it was impossible to live without ready money, and his mother, though supplying him with board and lodging, refused to give him a penny. He made efforts on his own account to obtain employment, but without result. At last there was nothing for it but to humble himself before Richard.

He did it with an ill-enough grace. Early one morning he presented himself at the house in Holloway. Richard was talking with his wife in the sitting-room, breakfast being still on the table. On the visitor's name being brought to him, he sent Adela away and allowed the scapegrace to be admitted.

'Arry shuffled to a seat and sat leaning forward, holding his hat between his knees.

'Well, what do you want?' Richard asked severely. He was glad that 'Arry had at



length come, and he enjoyed assuming the magisterial attitude.

‘I want to find a place,’ ’Arry replied, without looking up, and in a dogged voice. ‘I’ve been trying to get one, and I can’t. I think you might help a feller.’

‘What’s the good of helping you? You’ll be turned out of any place in a week or two.’

‘No, I shan’t!’

‘What sort of place do you want?’

‘A clerk’s, of course.’

He pronounced the word ‘clerk’ as it is spelt; it made him seem yet more ignoble.

‘Have you given up drink?’

No answer.

‘Before I try to help you,’ said Mutimer, ‘you’ll have to take the pledge.’

‘All right,’ ’Arry muttered.

Then a thought occurred to Richard. Bidding his brother stay where he was, he went in search of Adela and found her in an upper room.

‘He’s come to ask me to help him to get a place,’ he said. ‘I don’t know very well how to set about it, but I suppose I must do something. He promises to take the pledge.’

‘That will be a good thing,’ Adela replied.

‘Good if he keeps it. But I can’t talk to him; I’m sick of doing so. And I don’t

think he even listens to me.' He hesitated. 'Do you think you—would you mind speaking to him? I believe you might do him good.'

Adela did not at once reply.

'I know it's a nasty job,' he pursued. 'I wouldn't ask you if I didn't really think you might do some good. I don't see why he should go to the dogs. He used to be a good enough fellow when he was a little lad.'

It was one of the most humane speeches Adela had ever heard from her husband. She replied with cheerfulness :

'If you really think he won't take it amiss, I shall be very glad to do my best.'

'That's right ; thank you.'

Adela went down and was alone with 'Arry for half-an-hour. She was young to undertake such an office, but suffering had endowed her with gravity and understanding beyond her years, and her native sweetness was such that she could altogether forget herself in pleading with another for a good end. No human being, however perverse, could have taken ill the words that were dictated by so pure a mind, and uttered in so musical and gentle a voice. She led 'Arry to speak frankly.

'It seems to me a precious hard thing,' he said, 'that they've let Dick keep enough money to live on comfortable, and won't give me a penny. My right was as good as his.'

‘Perhaps it was,’ Adela replied kindly. ‘But you must remember that money was left to your brother by the will.’

‘But you don’t go telling me that he lives on two pounds a week? Everybody knows he doesn’t. Where does the rest come from?’

‘I don’t think I must talk about that. I think very likely your brother will explain if you ask him seriously. But is it really such a hard thing after all, Harry? I feel so sure that you will only know real happiness when you are earning a livelihood by steady and honourable work. You remember how I used to go and see the people in New Wanley? I shall never forget how happy the best of them were, those who worked their hardest all day and at night came home to rest with their families and friends. And you yourself, how contented you used to be when your time was thoroughly occupied! But I’m sure you feel the truth of this. You have been disappointed; it has made you a little careless. Now work hard for a year and then come and tell me if I wasn’t right about that being the way to happiness. Will you?’

She rose and held her hand to him, the hand to which he should have knelt. But he said nothing; there was an obstacle in his throat. Adela understood his silence and left him.

Richard went to work among his friends, and in a fortnight had found his brother employment of a new kind. It was a place in an ironmonger's shop in Hoxton; 'Arry was to serve at the counter and learn the business. For three months he was on trial and would receive no salary.

Two of the three months passed, and all seemed to be going well. Then one day there came to Mutimer a telegram from 'Arry's employer; it requested that he would go to the shop as soon as possible. Foreseeing some catastrophe, he hastened to Hoxton. His brother was in custody for stealing money from the till.

The ironmonger was inexorable. 'Arry passed through the judicial routine and was sentenced to three months of hard labour.

It was in connection with this wretched affair that Richard once more met his mother. He went from the shop to tell her what had happened.

He found her in the kitchen, occupied as he had seen her many, many times, ironing newly washed linen. One of the lodgers happened to come out from the house as he ascended the steps, so he was able to go down without announcing himself. The old woman had a nervous start; the iron stopped in its smooth backward and forward motion; the hand with

which she held it trembled. She kept her eyes on Richard's face, which foretold evil.

‘Mother, I have brought you bad news.’

She pushed the iron aside and stood waiting. Her hard lips grew harder; her deep-set eyes had a stern light. Not much ill could come to pass for which she was not prepared

He tried to break the news. His mother interrupted him.

‘What’s he been a-doin’? You’ve no need to go round about. I like straightforwardness.’

Richard told her. It did not seem to affect her strongly; she turned to the table and resumed her work. But she could no longer guide the iron. She pushed it aside and faced her son with such a look as one may see in the eyes of a weak animal cruelly assailed. Her tongue found its freedom and bore her whither it would.

‘What did I tell you? What was it I said that night you come in and told me you was all rich? Didn’t I warn you that there’d no good come of it? Didn’t I say you’d remember my words? You laughed at me; you got sharp-tempered with me an’ as good as called me a fool. An’ what *has* come of it? What’s come of it to me? I had a ’ome once an’ children about me, an’ now I’ve neither the one nor the other. You call it a ’ome with strangers takin’ up well nigh all the ’ouse? Not such a ’ome

as I thought to end my days in. It fair scrapes on my heart every time I hear their feet goin' up an' down the stairs. An' where are my children gone? Two of 'em as 'ud never think to come near me if it wasn't to bring ill news, an' one in prison. How 'ud that sound in your father's ears, think you? I may have been a fool, but I knew what 'ud come of a workin' man's children goin' to live in big 'ouses, with their servants an' their carriages. What better are you? It's come an' it's gone, an' there's shame an' misery left be'ind it !'

Richard listened without irritation ; he was heavy-hearted, the shock of his brother's disgrace had disposed him to see his life on its dark side. And he pitied his poor old mother. She had never been tender in her words, could not be tender ; but he saw in her countenance the suffering through which she had gone, and read grievous things in the eyes that could no longer weep. For once he yielded to rebuke. Her complaint that he had not come to see her touched him, for he had desired to come, but could not subdue his pride. Her voice was feebler than when he last heard it raised in reproach ; it reminded him that there would come a day when he might long to hear even words of upbraiding, but the voice would be mute for ever. It needed a moment such as this to stir his sluggish imagination.

‘What you say is true, mother, but we couldn’t help it. It’s turned out badly because we live in bad times. It’s the state of society that’s to blame.’

He was sincere in saying it ; that is to say, he used the phrase so constantly that it had become his natural utterance in difficulty ; it may be that in his heart he believed it. Who, indeed, shall say that he was wrong ? But what made such an excuse so disagreeable in his case was that he had not—intellectually speaking—the right to avail himself of it. The difference between truth and cant often lies only in the lips that give forth the words.

‘Yes, that’s what you always said,’ replied Mrs. Mutimer impatiently. ‘It’s always someone else as is to blame, an’ never yourself. The world’s a good enough world if folk ’ud only make it so. Was it the bad times as made you leave a good, honest girl when you’d promised to marry her ? No, you must have a fine lady for your wife ; a plain girl as earnt her own bread, an’ often had hard work to get it, wasn’t good enough for you. Don’t talk to me about bad times. There’s some men as does right an’ some as does wrong ; it always was so, an’ the world’s no worse nor no better, an’ not likely to be.’

The poor woman could not be generous. A

concession only led her on to speak the thoughts it naturally suggested to her. And her very bitterness was an outcome of her affection ; it soothed her to rail at her son after so long a silence. He had injured her by his holding aloof ; she was urged on by this feeling quite as much as by anger with his faults. And still Mutimer showed no resentment. In him, too, there was a pleasure which came of memories revived. Let her say to him what she liked, he loved his mother and was glad to be once more in her presence.

‘I wish I could have pleased you better, mother,’ he said. ‘What’s done can’t be helped. We’ve trouble to bear together, and it won’t be lighter for angry words.’

The old woman muttered something inaudible and, after feeling her iron and discovering that it was cold, she put it down before the fire. Her tongue had eased itself, and she fell again into silent grief.

Mutimer sat listening to the tick of the familiar clock. That and the smell of the fresh linen made his old life very present to him ; there arose in his heart a longing for the past, it seemed peaceful and fuller of genuine interests than the life he now led. He remembered how he used to sit before the kitchen fire reading the books and papers which stirred his thought to criticism of the order of things ;



nothing now absorbed in the same way. Coming across a sentence that delighted him, he used to read it aloud to his mother, who perchance was ironing as now, or sewing, or preparing a meal, and she would find something to say against it; so that there ensued a vigorous debate between her old-fashioned ideas and the brand-new theories of the age of education. Then Alice would come in and make the dispute a subject for sprightly mockery. Alice was the Princess in those days. He quarrelled with her often, but only to resume the tone of affectionate banter an hour after. Alice was now Mrs. Rodman, and had declared that she hated him, that in her life she would never speak to him again. Would it not have been better if things had gone the natural course? Alice would no doubt have married Daniel Dabbs, and would have made him a good wife, if a rather wilful one. 'Arry would have given trouble, but surely could not have come to hopeless shame. He, Richard, would have had Emma Vine for his wife, a true wife, loving him with all her heart, thinking him the best and cleverest of working men. Adela did not love him; what she thought of his qualities it was not easy to say. Yes, the old and natural way was better. He would have had difficulties enough, because of his opinions, but at least he would have

continued truly to represent his class. He knew very well that he did not represent it now ; he belonged to no class at all ; he was a professional agitator, and must remain so through his life—or till the Revolution came. The Revolution? . . .

His mother was speaking to him, asking what he meant to do about 'Arry. He raised his eyes, and for a moment looked at her sadly.

'There's nothing to be done. I can pay a lawyer, but it'll be no good.'

He remained with his mother for yet an hour ; they talked intermittently, without in appearance coming nearer to each other, though in fact the barrier was removed. She made tea for him, and herself made pretence of taking some. When he went away he kissed her as he had used to. He left her happier than she had been for years, in spite of the news he had brought.

Thenceforward Mutimer went to Wilton Square regularly once a week. He let Adela know of this, saying casually one morning that he could not do something that day because his mother would expect him in the afternoon as usual. He half hoped that she might put some question which would lead to talk on the subject, for the reconciliation with his mother had brought about a change in his feelings,

and it would now have been rather agreeable to him to exhibit his beautiful and gentlemanly wife. But Adela merely accepted the remark.

He threw himself into the work of agitation with more energy than ever. By this time he had elaborated a scheme which was original enough to ensure him notoriety if only he could advertise it sufficiently throughout the East End. He hit upon it one evening when he was smoking his pipe after dinner. Adela was in the room with him reading. He took her into his confidence at once.

‘I’ve got it at last! I want something that’ll attract their attention. It isn’t enough to preach theories to them; they won’t wake up; there’s no getting them to feel in earnest about Socialism. I’ve been racking my brain for something to set them talking, it didn’t much matter what, but better of course if it was useful in itself at the same time. Now I think I’ve got it. It’s a plan for giving them a personal interest, a money interest, in me and my ideas. I’ll go and say to them, “How is it you men never save any money even when you could? I’ll tell you: it’s because the savings would be so little that they don’t seem worth while; you think you might as well go and enjoy yourselves in the public-house while you can. What’s the use of laying up a few

shillings? The money comes and goes, and it's all in a life." Very well, then, I'll put my plan before them. "Now look here," I'll say, "instead of spending so much on beer and spirits, come to me and *let me keep your money for you!*" They'll burst out laughing at me, and say, "Catch us doing that!" Yes, but I'll persuade them, see if I don't. And in this way. "Suppose," I'll say, "there's five hundred men bring me threepence each every week. Now what man of you doesn't spend threepence a week in drink, get the coppers how he may? Do you know how much that comes to, five hundred threepenny bits? Why, it's six pounds five shillings. And do you know what that comes to in a year? Why, no less than three hundred and twenty-five pounds! Now just listen to that, and think about it. Those threepenny bits are no use to you; you *can't* save them, and you spend them in a way that does you no good, and it may be harm. Now what do you think I'll do with that money? Why, I'll use it as the capitalists do. I'll put it out to interest; I'll get three per cent. for it, and perhaps more. But let's say three per cent. What's the result? Why, this: in one year your three hundred and twenty-five pounds has become three hundred and thirty-four pounds fifteen; I owe each of

you thirteen shillings and fourpence halfpenny, and a fraction more.”’

He had already jotted down calculations, and read from them, looking up between times at Adela with the air of conviction which he would address to his audience of East Enders.

“Now if you’d only saved the thirteen shillings—which you wouldn’t and couldn’t have done by yourselves—it would be well worth the while; but you’ve got the interest as well, and the point I want you to understand is that you can only get that increase by clubbing together and investing the savings as a whole. You may say fourpence halfpenny isn’t worth having. Perhaps not, but those of you who’ve learnt arithmetic—be thankful if our social state allowed you to learn anything—will remember that there’s such a thing as compound interest. It’s a trick the capitalists found out. Interest was a good discovery, but compound interest a good deal better. Leave your money with me a second year, and it’ll grow more still, I’ll see to that. You’re all able, I’ve no doubt, to make the calculation for yourselves.”’

He paused to see what Adela would say.

‘No doubt it will be a very good thing if you can persuade them to save in that way,’ she remarked.

‘ Good, yes; but I’m not thinking so much of the money. Don’t you see that it’ll give me a hold over them? Every man who wants to save on my plan must join the Union. They’ll come together regularly; I can get at them and make them listen to me. Why, it’s a magnificent idea! It’s fighting the capitalists with their own weapons! You’ll see what the *Tocsin* ’ll say. Of course they’ll make out that I’m going against Socialist principles. So I am, but it’s for the sake of Socialism for all that. If I make Socialists, it doesn’t much matter how I do it.’

Adela could have contested that point, but did not care to do so. She said:

‘ Are you sure you can persuade the men to trust you with their money?’

‘ That’s the difficulty, I know; but see if I don’t get over it. I’ll have a committee, holding themselves responsible for all sums paid to us. I’ll publish weekly accounts—just a leaflet, you know. And do you know what? I’ll promise that as soon as they’ve trusted me with a hundred pounds, I’ll add another hundred of my own. See if that won’t fetch them!’

As usual when he saw a prospect of noisy success he became excited beyond measure, and talked incessantly till midnight.

‘ Other men don’t have these ideas!’ he ex-

claimed at one moment. 'That's what I meant when I told you I was born to be a leader. And I've the secret of getting people's confidence. They'll trust me, see if they don't!'

In spite of Adela's unbroken reserve, he had seldom been other than cordial in his behaviour to her since the recommencement of his prosperity. His active life gave him no time to brood over suspicions, though his mind was not altogether free from them. He still occasionally came home at hours when he could not be expected, but Adela was always occupied either with housework or reading, and received him with the cold self-possession which came of her understanding his motives. Her life was lonely; since a visit they had received from Alfred at the past Christmas she had seen no friend. One day in spring Mutimer asked her if she did not wish to see Mrs. Westlake; she replied that she had no desire to, and he said nothing more. Stella did not write; she had ceased to do so since receiving a certain lengthy letter from Adela, in which the latter begged that their friendship might feed on silence for a while. When the summer came there were pressing invitations from Wanley, but Adela declined them. Alfred and his wife were going again to South Wales; was it impossible for Adela to join them?

Letty wrote a letter full of affectionate pleading, but it was useless.

In August, Mutimer proposed to take his wife for a week to the Sussex coast. He wanted a brief rest himself, and he saw that Adela was yet more in need of change. She never complained of ill-health, but was weak and pale. With no inducement to leave the house, it was much if she had an hour's open-air exercise in the week; often the mere exertion of rising and beginning the day was followed by a sick languor which compelled her to lie all the afternoon on the couch. She studied much, reading English and foreign books which required mental exertion. They were not works relating to the 'Social Question'—far other. The volumes she used to study were a burden and a loathing to her as often as her eyes fell upon them.

In her letters from Wanley there was never a word of what was going on in the valley. Week after week she looked eagerly for some hint, yet was relieved when she found none. For it had become her habit to hand over to Mutimer every letter she received. He read them.

Shortly after their return from the seaside, 'Arry's term of imprisonment came to an end. He went to his mother's house, and Richard first saw him there. Punishment had had its



usual effect; 'Arry was obstinately taciturn, conscious of his degradation, inwardly at war with all his kind.

'There's only one thing I can do for you now,' his brother said to him. 'I'll pay your passage to Australia. Then you must shift for yourself.'

'Arry refused the offer.

'Give me the money instead,' was his reply.

Argument was vain; Richard and the old woman passed to entreaty, but with as little result.

'Give me ten pounds and let me go about my business,' 'Arry exclaimed irritably. 'I want no more from you, and you won't get any good out o' me by jawin'.'

The money was of course refused, in the hope that a week or two would change the poor fellow's mind. But two days after he went out and did not return. Nothing was heard of him. Mrs. Mutimer sat late every night, listening for a knock at the door. Sometimes she went and stood on the steps, looking hither and thither in the darkness. But 'Arry came no more to Wilton Square.

Mutimer had been pressing on his scheme for five months. Every night he addressed a meeting somewhere or other in the East End; every Sunday he lectured morning and evening

at his head-quarters in Clerkenwell. Ostensibly he was working on behalf of the Union, but in reality he was forming a party of his own, and would have started a paper could he have commanded the means. The *Tocsin* was savagely hostile, the *Fiery Cross* grew more and more academical, till it was practically an organ of what is called in Germany *Katheder-Sozialismus*. Those who wrote for it were quite distinct from the agitators of the street and of the Socialist halls; men—and women—with a turn for ‘advanced’ speculation, with anxiety for style. At length the name of the paper was changed, and it appeared as the *Beacon*, adorned with a headpiece by the well-known artist, Mr. Boscobel. Mutimer glanced through the pages and flung it aside in scornful disgust.

‘I knew what this was coming to,’ he said to Adela. ‘A deal of good *they*’ll do! You don’t find Socialism in drawing-rooms. I wonder that fellow Westlake has the impudence to call himself a Socialist at all, living in the way he does. Perhaps he thinks he’ll be on the safe side when the Revolution comes. Ha, ha! We shall see.’

The Revolution . . . In the meantime the cry was ‘Democratic Capitalism.’ That was the name Mutimer gave to his scheme! The *Fiery Cross* had only noticed his work in

a brief paragraph, a few words of faint and vague praise. 'Our comrade's noteworthy exertions in the East End. . . . The gain to temperance and self-respecting habits which must surely result. . . .' The *Beacon*, however, dealt with the movement more fully, and on the whole in a friendly spirit.

'Damn their patronage!' cried Mutimer.

You should have seen him addressing a crowd collected by chance in Hackney or Poplar. The slightest encouragement, even one name to inscribe in the book which he carried about with him, was enough to fire his eloquence; nay, it was enough to find himself standing on his chair above the heads of the gathering. His voice had gained in timbre; he grew more and more perfect in his delivery, like a conscientious actor who plays night after night in a part that he enjoys. And it was well that he had this inner support, this *brio* of the born demagogue, for often enough he spoke under circumstances which would have damped the zeal of any other man. The listeners stood with their hands in their pockets, doubting whether to hear him to the end or to take their wonted way to the public-house. One moment their eyes would be fixed upon him, filmy, unintelligent, then they would look at one another with a leer of cunning, or at best a doubtful grin. Socialism, forsooth! They were as ready

for translation to supernal spheres. Yet some of them were attracted: 'percentage,' 'interest,' 'compound interest,' after all, there might be something in this! And perhaps they gave their names and their threepenny bits, engaging to make the deposit regularly on the day and at the place arranged for in Mutimer's elaborate scheme. What is there a man cannot get if he asks for it boldly and persistently enough? . . .

The year had come full circle; it was time that Mutimer received another remittance from his anonymous supporter. He needed it, for he had been laying out money without regard to the future. Not only did he need it for his own support; already he and his committee held sixty pounds of trust money, and before long he might be called upon to fulfil his engagement and contribute a hundred pounds—the promised hundred which had elicited more threepences than all the rest of his eloquence. A week, a month, six weeks, and he had heard nothing. Then there came one day a communication couched in legal terms, signed by a solicitor. It was to the effect that his benefactor—name and address given in full—had just died. The decease was sudden, and though the draft of a will had been discovered, it had no signature, and was consequently inoperative. But—pursued the lawyer—it having been the intention of the deceased to bequeath to Mutimer an

annuity of five hundred pounds for nine years, the administrators were unwilling altogether to neglect their friend's wish, and begged to make an offer of the one year's payment which it seemed was already due. For more than that they could not hold themselves responsible.

Before speaking to Adela, Mutimer made searching inquiries. He went to the Midland town where his benefactor had lived, and was only too well satisfied of the truth of what had been told him. He came back with his final five hundred pounds.

Then he informed his wife of what had befallen. He was not cheerful, but with five hundred pounds in his pocket he could not be altogether depressed. What might not happen in a year? He was becoming prominent; there had been mention of him lately in London journals. Pooh! as if he would ever really want!

'The great thing,' he exclaimed, 'is that I can lay down the hundred pounds! If I'd failed in that it would have been all up. Come, now, why can't you give me a bit of encouragement, Adela? I tell you what it is. There's no place where I'm thought so little of as in my own home, and that's a fact.'

She did not worship him, she made no pretence of it. Her cold, pale beauty had not so

much power over him as formerly, but it still chagrined him keenly as often as he was reminded that he had no high place in his wife's judgment. He knew well enough that it was impossible for her to admire him; he was conscious of the thousand degrading things he had said and done, every one of them stored in her memory. Perhaps not once since that terrible day in the Pentonville lodgings had he looked her straight in the eyes. Yes, her beauty appealed to him less than even a year ago; Adela knew it, and it was the one solace in her living death. Perhaps occasion could again have stung him into jealousy, but Adela was no longer a vital interest in his existence. He lived in external things, his natural life. Passion had been an irregularity in his development. Yet he would gladly have had his wife's sympathy. He neither loved nor hated her, but she was for ever above him, and, however unconsciously, he longed for her regard. Irreproachable, reticent, it might be dying, Adela would no longer affect interests she did not feel. To these present words of his she replied only with a grave, not unkind, look; a look he could not understand, yet which humbled rather than irritated him.

The servant opened the door and announced a visitor—'Mr. Hilary.'

Mutimer seemed struck with a thought as he heard the name.

‘The very man!’ he exclaimed below his breath, with a glance at Adela. ‘Just run off and let us have this room. My luck won’t desert me, see if it does!’

## CHAPTER IX.

MR. WILLIS RODMAN scarcely relished the process which deprived him of his town house and of the greater part of his means, but his exasperation happily did not seek vent for itself in cruelty to his wife. It might very well have done so, would all but certainly, had not Alice appealed to his sense of humour by her zeal in espousing his cause against her brother. That he could turn her round his finger was an old experience, but to see her spring so actively to arms on his behalf, when he was conscious that she had every excuse for detesting him, and even abandoning him, struck him as a highly comical instance of his power over women, a power on which he had always prided himself. He could not even explain it as self-interest in her; numberless things proved the contrary. Alice was still his slave, though he had not given himself the slightest trouble to preserve even her respect. He had shown himself to her freely as he was,



jocosely cynical on everything that women prize, brutal when he chose to give way to his temper, faithless on principle, selfish to the core; perhaps the secret of the fascination he exercised over her was his very ingenuousness, his boldness in defying fortune, his clever grasp of circumstances. She said to him one day, when he had been telling her that as likely as not she might have to take in washing or set up a sewing-machine :

‘I’m not afraid. You can always get money. There’s nothing you can’t do.’

He laughed.

‘That may be true. But how if I disappear some day and leave you to take care of yourself?’

He had often threatened this in his genial way, and it never failed to blanch her cheeks.

‘If you do that,’ she said, ‘I shall kill myself.’

At which he laughed yet more loudly.

In her house at Wimbledon she perished of *ennui*, for she was as lonely as Adela in Holloway. Much lonelier; she had no resources in herself. Rodman was away all day in London, and very often he did not return at night; when the latter was the case, Alice cried miserably in her bed for hours, so that the next morning her face was like that of a wax doll that has suffered ill-usage. She had

an endless supply of novels, and day after day bent over them till her head ached. Poor Princess! She had had her own romance, in its way brilliant and strange enough, but only the rags of it were left. She clung to them, she hoped against hope that they would yet recover their gloss and shimmer. If only he would not so neglect her! All else affected her but little now that she really knew what it meant to see her husband utterly careless, not to be held by any pettings or entreaties. She heard through him of her brother 'Arry's disgrace; it scarcely touched her. Her brother Richard she was never tired of railing against, railed so much, indeed, that it showed she by no means hated him as much as she declared. But nothing would have mattered if only her husband had cared for her.

She had once said to Adela that she disliked children and hoped never to have any. It was now her despair that she remained childless. Perhaps that was why he had lost all affection?

In the summer Rodman once quitted her for nearly three weeks, during which she only heard from him once. He was in Ireland, and, he asserted, on business. The famous 'Irish Dairy Company,' soon to occupy a share of public attention, was getting itself on foot. It was Rodman who promoted the company

and who became its secretary, though the name of that functionary in all printed matter appeared as 'Robert Delancey.' However, I only mention it for the present to explain our friend's absence in Ireland. Alice often worked herself up to a pitch of terror lest her husband had fulfilled his threat and really deserted her. He returned when it suited him to do so and tortured her with a story of a wealthy Irish widow who had fallen desperately in love with him.

'And I've a good mind to marry her,' he added with an air of serious reflection. 'Of course I didn't let her know my real name. I could manage it very nicely, and you would never know anything about it; I should remit you all the money you wanted, you needn't be afraid.'

Alice tried to assume a face of stony indignation, but as usual she ended by breaking down and shedding tears. Then he told her that she was getting plainer than ever, and that it all came of her perpetual 'water-works.'

Alice hit upon a brilliant idea. What if she endeavoured to make him jealous? In spite of her entreaties, he never would take her to town, though he saw that she was perishing for lack of amusement. Suppose she made him believe that she had gone on her own account, and at the invitation of someone whose name

she would not divulge? I believe she found the trick in one of her novels. The poor child went to work most conscientiously. One morning when he came down to breakfast she pretended to have been reading a letter, crushed an old envelope into her pocket on his entering the room, and affected confusion. He observed her.

‘Had a letter?’ he asked.

‘Yes—no. Nothing of any importance.’

He smiled and applied himself to the ham, then left her in his ordinary way, without a word of courtesy, and went to town. She had asked him particularly when he should be back that night. He named the train, which reached Wimbledon a little after ten.

They had only one servant. Alice took the girl into her confidence, said she was going to play a trick, and it must not be spoilt. By ten o’clock at night she was dressed for going out, and when she heard her husband’s latch-key at the front door she slipped out at the back. It was her plan to walk about the roads for half an hour, then to enter and—make the best of the situation.

Rodman, unable to find his wife, summoned the servant.

‘Where is your mistress?’

‘Out, sir.’

He examined the girl shrewdly, with his

eyes and with words. It was perfectly true that women—of a kind—could not resist him. In the end he discovered exactly what had happened. He laughed his wonted laugh of cynical merriment.

‘Go to bed,’ he said to the servant. ‘And if you hear anyone at the door, pay no attention.’

Then he locked up the house, front and back, and, having extinguished all lights except a small lantern by which he could read in the sitting-room without danger of its being discerned from outside, sat down with a sense of amusement. Presently there came a ring at the bell; it was repeated again and again. The month was October, the night decidedly cool. Rodman chuckled to himself; he had a steaming glass of whisky before him and sipped it delicately. The ringing continued for a quarter of an hour, then five minutes passed, and no sound came. Rodman stepped lightly to the front door, listened, heard nothing, unlocked and opened. Alice was standing in the middle of the road, her hands crossed over her breast and holding her shoulders as though she suffered from the cold. She came forward and entered the house without speaking.

In the sitting-room she found the lantern and looked at her husband in surprise. His face was stern.

‘What’s all this?’ he asked sharply.

‘I’ve been to London,’ she answered, her teeth chattering with cold and her voice uncertain from fear.

‘Been to London? And what business have you to go without telling me?’

He spoke savagely. Alice was sinking with dread, but even yet had sufficient resolve to keep up the comedy.

‘I had an invitation. I don’t see why I shouldn’t go. I don’t ask you who you go about with’

The table was laid for supper. Rodman darted to it seized a carving-knife, and in an instant was holding it to her throat. She shrieked and fell upon her knees, her face ghastly with mortal terror. Then Rodman burst out laughing and showed that his anger had been feigned.

She had barely strength to rise, but at length stood before him trembling and sobbing, unable to believe that he had not been in earnest.

‘You needn’t explain the trick,’ he said, with the appearance of great good-humour, ‘but just tell me why you played it. Did you think I should believe you were up to something queer, eh?’

‘You must think what you like,’ she sobbed, utterly humiliated.

He roared with laughter.

‘What a splendid idea! The Princess getting tired of propriety and making appointments in London! Little fool! do you think I should care one straw? Why shouldn’t you amuse yourself?’

Alice looked at him with eyes of wondering misery.

‘You mean that you don’t care enough for me to—to——’

‘Don’t care one farthing’s worth! And to think you went and walked about in the mud and the east wind! Well, if that isn’t the best joke I ever heard! I’ll have a rare laugh over this story with some men I know to-morrow.’

She crept away to her bedroom. He had gone far towards killing the love that had known no rival in her heart.

He bantered her ceaselessly through breakfast next morning, and for the first time she could find no word to reply to him. Her head drooped; she touched nothing on the table. Before going off he asked her what the appointment was for to-day, and advised her not to forget her latch-key. Alice scarcely heard him, she was shame-stricken and wobegone.

Rodman, on the other hand, had never been in better spirits. The ‘Irish Dairy Company’ was attracting purchasers of shares. It was the kind of scheme which easily recommended itself

to a host of the foolish people who are ever ready to risk their money, also to some not quite so foolish. The prospectus could show some respectable names: one or two Irish lords, a member of Parliament, some known capitalists. The profits could not but be considerable, and think of the good to 'the unhappy sister country'—as the circular said. Butter, cheese, eggs of unassailable genuineness, to be sold in England at absurdly low prices, yet still putting the producers on a footing of comfort and proud independence. One of the best ideas that had yet occurred to Mr. Robert Delancey.

He—the said Mr. Delancey, *alias* Mr. Willis Rodman, *alias* certain other names—spent much of his time just now in the society of a Mr. Hilary, a gentleman who, like himself, had seen men and manners in various quarters of the globe, and was at present making a tolerable income by the profession of philanthropy. Mr. Hilary's name appeared among the directors of the company; it gave confidence to many who were familiar with it in connection with not a few enterprises started for the benefit of this or that depressed nationality, this or the other exploited class. He wrote frequently to the newspapers on the most various subjects; he was known to members of Parliament through his persistent endeavours to obtain legislation with regard to certain manu-



factures proved to be gravely deleterious to the health of those employed in them. To-day Mr. Delancey and Mr. Hilary passed some hours together in the latter's chambers. Their talk was of the company.

'So you saw Mutimer about it?' Rodman asked, turning to a detail in which he was specially interested.

'Yes. He is anxious to have shares.'

Mr. Hilary was a man of past middle age, long-bearded, somewhat cadaverous of hue. His head was venerable.

'You were careful not to mention me?'

'I kept your caution in mind.'

Their tone to each other was one of perfect gravity. Mr. Hilary even went out of his way to choose becoming phrases.

'He won't have anything to do with it if he gets to know who R. Delancey is.'

'I was prudent, believe me. I laid before him the aspects of the undertaking which would especially interest him. I made it clear to him that our enterprise is no less one of social than of commercial importance; he entered into our views very heartily. The first time I saw him, I merely invited him to glance over our prospectus; yesterday he was more than willing to join our association—and share our profits.'

'Did he tell you how much he'd got out of those poor devils over there?'

‘A matter of sixty pounds, I gathered. I am not a little astonished at his success.’

‘Oh, he’d talk the devil himself into subscribing to a mission if it suited him to try.’

‘He is clearly very anxious to get the highest interest possible for his money. His ideas on business seemed, I confess, rather vague. I did my best to help him with suggestions.’

‘Of course.’

‘He talked of taking some five hundred pounds’ worth of shares on his own account.’

The men regarded each other. Rodman’s lips curled; Mr. Hilary was as grave as ever.

‘You didn’t balk him?’

‘I commended his discretion.’

Rodman could not check a laugh.

‘I am serious,’ said Mr. Hilary. ‘It may take a little time, but——’

‘Just so. Did he question you at all about what we were doing?’

‘A good deal. He said he should go and look over the Stores in the Strand.’

‘By all means. He’s a clever man if he distinguishes between Irish butter and English butterine—I’m sure I couldn’t. And things really are looking up at the Stores?’

‘Oh, distinctly.’

‘By-the-by, I had rather a nasty letter from Lord Mountorry yesterday. He’s beginning to

ask questions: wants to know when we're going to conclude our contract with that tenant of his—I've forgotten the fellow's name.'

'Well, that must be looked into. There's perhaps no reason why the contract should not be concluded. Little by little we may come to justify our name; who knows? In the meantime, we at all events do a *bonâ-fide* business.'

'Strictly so.'

Rodman had a good deal of business on hand besides that which arose from his connection with Irish dairies. If Alice imagined him strolling at his ease about the fashionable lounges of the town, she was much mistaken. He worked hard and enjoyed his work, on the sole condition that he was engaged in overreaching someone. This flattered his humour.

He could not find leisure to dine till nearly nine o'clock. He had made up his mind not to return to Wimbledon, but to make use of a certain *pied-à-terre* which he had in Pimlico. His day's work ended in Westminster, he dined at a restaurant with a friend. Afterwards billiards were proposed. They entered a house which Rodman did not know, and were passing before the bar to go to the billiard-room, when a man who stood there taking refreshment called out, 'Hollo, Rodman!' To announce a man's name in this way is a decided breach of etiquette in the world to which Rodman

belonged. He looked annoyed, and would have passed on, but his acquaintance, who had perhaps exceeded the limits of modest refreshment, called him again and obliged him to approach the bar. As he did so Rodman happened to glance at the woman who stood ready to fulfil the expected order. The glance was followed by a short but close scrutiny, after which he turned his back and endeavoured by a sign to draw his two acquaintances away. But at the same moment the barmaid addressed him.

‘What is yours, Mr. Rodman?’

He shrugged his shoulders, muttered a strong expression, and turned round again. The woman met his look steadily. She was perhaps thirty, rather tall, with features more refined than her position would have led one to expect. Her figure was good but meagre; her cheeks were very thin, and the expression of her face, not quite amiable at any time, was at present almost fierce. She seemed about to say something further, but restrained herself.

Rodman recovered his good temper.

‘How do, Clara?’ he said, keeping his eye fixed on hers. ‘I’ll have a drop of absinthe, if you please.’

Then he pursued his conversation with the two men. The woman, having served them, disappeared. Rodman kept looking for her. In a few minutes he pretended to recollect an engage-

ment, and succeeded in going off alone. As he issued on to the pavement he found himself confronted by the barmaid, who now wore a hat and cloak.

‘Well?’ he said carelessly.

‘Rodman’s your name, is it?’ was the reply.

‘To my particular friends. Let’s walk on; we can’t chat here very well.’

‘What is to prevent me from calling that policeman and giving you in charge?’ she asked, looking into his face with a strange mixture of curiosity and anger.

‘Nothing, except that you have no charge to make against me. The law isn’t so obliging as all that. Come, we’ll take a walk.’

She moved along by his side.

‘You coward!’ she exclaimed, passionately but with none of the shrieking virulence of women who like to make a scene in the street. ‘You mean, contemptible, cold-blooded man! I suppose you hoped I was starved to death by this time, or in the workhouse, or—what did *you* care where I was! I knew I should find you some day.’

‘I rather supposed you would stay on the other side of the water,’ Rodman remarked, glancing at her. ‘You’re changed a good deal. Now it’s a most extraordinary thing. Not so very long ago I was dreaming about you, and

you were serving at a bar—queer thing, wasn't it?'

They were walking towards Whitehall. When they came at length into an ill-lighted and quiet spot, the woman stopped.

'Where do you live?' she asked.

'Live? Oh, just out here in Pimlico. Like to see my rooms?'

'What do you mean by talking to me like that? Do you make a joke of deserting your wife and child for seven years, leaving them without a penny, going about enjoying yourself, when, for anything you knew, they were begging their bread? You always were heartless—it was the blackest day of my life that I met you; and you ask me if I'd like to see your rooms! What thanks to you that I'm not as vile a creature as there is in London? How was I to support myself and the child? What was I to do when they turned me into the streets of New York because I couldn't pay what you owed them nor the rent of a room to sleep in? You took good care *you* never went hungry. I'd only one thing to hold me up: I was an honest woman, and I made up my mind I'd keep honest, though I had such a man as you for my husband. I've hungered and worked, and I've made a living for myself and my child as best I could. I'm not like you: I've done nothing to disgrace myself. Now I will slave no more. You

won't run away from me this time. Leave me for a single night, and I go to the nearest police-station and tell all I know about you. If I wasn't a fool I'd do it now. But I've hungered and worked for seven years, and now it's time *my husband* did something for me.'

'You always had a head for argument, Clara,' he replied coolly. 'But I can't get over that dream of mine. Really a queer thing, wasn't it? Who'd have thought of you turning barmaid! With your education, I should have thought you could have done something in the teaching line. Never mind. The queerest thing of all is that I'm really half glad to see you. How's Jack?'

The extraordinary conversation went on as they walked towards the street where Clara lived. It was in a poor part of Westminster. Reaching the house, Clara opened the door with a latchkey.

Two women were standing in the passage.

'This is my husband, Mrs. Rook,' Clara said to one of them. 'He's just got back from abroad.'

'Glad to see you, Mr. Williamson,' said the landlady, scrutinizing him with unmistakable suspicion.

The pair ascended the stairs, and Mrs. Williamson—she had always used the name she received in marriage—opened a door which

disclosed a dark bedroom. A voice came from within—the voice of a little lad of eight years old.

‘That you, mother? Why, I’ve only just put myself to bed. What time is it?’

‘Then you ought to have gone to bed long ago,’ replied his mother whilst she was striking a light.

It was a very small room, but decent. The boy was discovered sitting up in bed—a bright-faced little fellow with black hair. Clara closed the door, then turned and looked at her husband. The light made a glistening appearance on her eyes; she had become silent, allowing facts to speak for themselves.

The child stared at the stranger in astonishment.

‘Who are you?’ he asked at length.

Rodman laughed as heartily as if there had been nothing disagreeable in the situation.

‘I have the honour to be your father, sir,’ he replied. ‘You’re a fine boy, Jack—a deuced fine boy.’

The child was speechless. Rodman turned to the mother. Her hands held the rail at the foot of the bed, and as the boy looked up at her for explanation she let her face fall upon them and sobbed.

‘If you’re father come back,’ exclaimed Jack indignantly, ‘why do you make mother cry?’



Rodman was still mirthful.

‘I like you, Jack,’ he said. ‘You’ll make a man some day. Do you mind if I smoke a cigar, Clara?’

To his astonishment, he felt a weakness which had to be resisted; tobacco suggested itself as a resource. When he had struck a light, his wife forced back her tears and seated herself with an unforgiving countenance.

Rodman began to chat pleasantly as he smoked.

Decidedly it was a *contretemps*. It introduced a number of difficulties into his life. If he remained away for a night, he had little doubt that his wife would denounce him; she knew of several little matters which he on the whole preferred to be reticent about. She was not a woman like Alice, to be turned round his finger. It behoved him to be exceedingly cautious.

He had three personalities. As Mr. Willis Rodman his task was comparatively a light one, at all events for the present. He merely informed Alice by letter that he was kept in town by business and would see her in the course of a week. It was very convenient that Alice had no intercourse with her relatives. Secondly, as Mr. Williamson his position was somewhat more difficult. Not only had he to present

himself every night at the rooms he had taken in Brixton, but it was necessary to take precautions lest his abode should be discovered by those who might make awkward use of the knowledge. He had, moreover, to keep Clara in the dark as to his real occupations and prevent her from knowing his resorts in town. Lastly, as Mr. Robert Delancey he had to deal with matters of a very delicate nature indeed, in themselves quite enough to occupy a man's mental energy. But our friend was no ordinary man. If you are not as yet satisfied of that, it will ere long be made abundantly clear to you.

His spirits were as high as ever. When he said—with an ingenious brutality all his own—that he was more than half glad to see his wife, he, for a wonder, told the truth. But perhaps it was little Jack who gave him most pleasure, and did most to reconcile him to the difficulties of his situation. In a day or two he conquered the child's affections so completely that Jack seemed to care little for his mother in comparison; Jack could not know the hardships she had endured for his sake. Rodman—so we will continue to call him for convenience' sake—already began to talk of what he would make the lad, who certainly gave promise of parts. The result of this was that for a week or two our friend became an exemplary family

man. His wife almost dared to believe that her miseries were over. Yet she watched him with lynx eyes.

The 'Irish Dairy Company' flourished. Rodman rubbed his hands with a sinister satisfaction when he inscribed among the shareholders the name of Richard Mutimer, who invested all the money he had collected from the East-Enders, and three hundred pounds of his own—not five hundred, as he had at first thought of doing. Mutimer had the consent of his committee, whom he persuaded without much difficulty—the money was not theirs—that by this means he would increase his capital beyond all expectation. He told Adela what he had done.

'There's not the least risk. They've got the names of several lords! And it isn't a mere commercial undertaking: the first object is to benefit the Irish; so that there can be nothing against my principles in it. They promise a dividend of thirty per cent. What a glorious day it will be when I tell the people what I have made of their money! Now confess that it isn't everyone could have hit on this idea.'

Of course he made no public announcement of his speculation: that would have been to spoil the surprise. But he could not refrain from talking a good deal about the Company to

his friends. He explained with zeal the merit of the scheme; it was dealing directly with the producers, the poor small-farmers who could never get fair treatment. He saw a good deal of Mr. Hilary, who was vastly interested in his East-End work. A severe winter had begun. Threepenny bits came in now but slowly, and Mutimer exerted himself earnestly to relieve the growing want in what he called his 'parishes.' He began in truth to do some really good work, moving heaven and earth to find employment for those long out of it, and even bestowing money of his own. At night he would return to Holloway worn out, and distress Adela with descriptions of the misery he had witnessed.

'I'm not sorry for it,' he once exclaimed. 'I cannot be sorry. Let things get worse and worse; the mending'll be all the nearer. Why don't they march in a body to the West End? I don't mean march in a violent sense, though that'll have to come, I expect. But why don't they make a huge procession and go about the streets in an orderly way—just to let it be seen what their numbers are—just to give the West End a hint? I'll propose that one of these days. It'll be a risky business, but we can't think of that when thousands are half starving. I could lead them, I feel sure I could! It wants someone with authority over them, and

I think I've got that. There's no telling what I may do yet. I say, Adela, how would it sound—"Richard Mutimer, First President of the English Republic?"

And in the meantime Alice sat in her house at Wimbledon, abandoned. The solitude seemed to be driving her mad. Rodman came down very occasionally for a few hours in the day-time, but never passed a night with her. He told her he had a great affair on hand, a very great affair, which was to make their fortunes ten times over. She must be patient; women couldn't understand business. If she resisted his coaxing and grumbled, he always had his threat ready. He would realise his profits and make off, leaving her in the lurch. Weeks became months. In pique at the betrayal of her famous stratagem, Alice had wanted to dismiss her servant, but Rodman objected to this. She was driven by desperation to swallow her pride and make a companion of the girl. But she did not complain to her of her husband—partly out of self-respect, partly because she was afraid to. Indeed it was a terrible time for the poor Princess. She spent the greater part of every day in a state of apathy; for the rest she wept. Many a time she was on the point of writing to Richard, but could not quite bring herself to that. She could not leave the house, for it rained or snowed day

after day ; the sun seemed to have deserted the heavens as completely as joy her life. She grew feeble-minded, tried to amuse herself with childish games, played ' Begger My Neighbour ' with the servant for hours at night. She had fits of hysteria, and terrified her sole companion with senseless laughter, or with alarming screams. Reading she was no longer equal to ; after a few pages she lost her understanding of a story. And her glass—as well as her husband—told her that she suffered daily in her appearance. Her hair was falling ; she one day told the servant that she would soon have to buy a wig. Poor Alice ! And she had not even the resource of railing against the social state. What a pity she had never studied that subject !

So the time went on till February of the new year. Alice's release was at hand.

## CHAPTER X.

'ARRY MUTIMER, not long after he left his mother's house for good, by chance met Rodman in the City. Presuming on old acquaintance, he accosted the man of business with some familiarity; it was a chance of getting much-needed assistance once more. But Rodman was not disposed to renew the association. He looked into 'Arry's face with a blank stare, asked contemptuously, 'Who are you?' and pursued his walk.

'Arry hoped that he might some day have a chance of being even with Mr. Rodman.

As indeed he had. One evening towards the end of February, 'Arry was loafing about Brixton. He knew a certain licensed victualler in those parts, a man who had ere now given him casual employment, and after a day of fasting he trudged southwards to see if his friend would not at all events be good for a glass of beer and a hunch of bread and cheese. Perhaps he might also supply the coppers to pay for a bed in the New Cut. To his great

disappointment, the worthy victualler was away from home; the victualler's wife had no charitable tendencies. 'Arry whined to her, but only got for an answer that times was as 'ard with her as with anyone else. The representative of unemployed labour went his way despondently, hands thrust deep in pockets, head slouching forwards, shoulders high up against the night blast.

He was passing a chemist's shop, when a customer came out. He recognised Rodman. After a moment's uncertainty he made up his mind to follow him, wondering how Rodman came to be in this part of London. Keeping at a cautious distance, he saw him stop at a small house and enter it by aid of a latchkey.

'Why, he lives there!' 'Arry exclaimed to himself. 'What's the meanin' o' this go?'

Rodman, after all, had seriously come down in the world, then. It occurred to 'Arry that he might do worse than pay his sister a visit; Alice could not be hard-hearted enough to refuse him a few coppers. But the call must be made at an hour when Rodman was away. Presumably that would be some time after eight in the morning.

Our unconventional friend walked many miles that night. It was one way of keeping warm, and there was always a possibility of aid from one or other of the acquaintances whom



he sought. The net result of the night's campaign was half-a-pint of 'four-half.' The front of a draper's shop in Kennington tempted him sorely; he passed it many times, eyeing the rolls of calico and flannel exposed just outside the doorway. But either courage failed him or there was no really good opportunity. Midnight found him still without means of retiring to that familiar lodging in the New Cut. At half-past twelve sleet began to fall. He discovered a very dark corner of a very dark slum, curled himself against the wall, and slept for a few hours in defiance of wind and weather.

'Arry was used to this kind of thing. On the whole he deemed it preferable to the life he would have led at his mother's.

By eight o'clock next morning he was back in Brixton, standing just where he could see the house which Rodman had entered, without himself attracting attention. Every rag on his back was soaked; he had not eaten a mouthful for thirty hours. After such a run of bad luck perhaps something was about to turn up.

But it was ten o'clock before Rodman left home. 'Arry had no feeling left in any particle of his body. Still here at length was the opportunity of seeing Alice. He waited till Rodman was out of sight, then went to the door and knocked.

It was Clara who opened the door. Seeing 'Arry, she took him for a beggar, shook her head, and was closing the door against him, when she heard—

'Is Mrs. Rodman in, mum?'

'Mrs.——who?'

'Mrs. Rodman.'

Clara's eyes flashed as they searched his face.

'What do you want with Mrs. Rodman?'

'Want to see her, mum.'

'Do you know her when you see her?'

'Sh' think I do,' replied 'Arry with a grin. But he thought it prudent to refrain from explanation.

'How do you know she lives here?'

''Cause I just see her 'usband go out.'

Clara hesitated a moment, then bade him enter. She introduced him to a parlour on the ground floor. He stood looking uneasily about him. The habits of his life made him at all times suspicious.

'Mrs. Rodman doesn't live here,' Clara began, lowering her voice and making a great effort to steady it.

'Oh, she don't?' replied 'Arry, beginning to discern that something was wrong.

'Can you tell me what you want with her?'

He looked her in the eyes and again grinned.

'Dare say I could if it was made worth my while.'

She took a purse from her pocket and laid half-a-crown on the table. Her hand shook.

'I can't afford more than that. You shall have it if you tell me the truth.'

'Arry took counsel with himself for an instant. Probably there was no more to be got, and he saw from the woman's agitation that he had come upon some mystery. The chance of injuring Rodman was more to him than several half-crowns.

'I won't ask more,' he said, 'if you'll tell me who *you* are. That's fair on both sides, eh?'

'My name is Mrs. Williamson.'

'Oh? And might it 'appen that Mr. Rodman calls himself Mr. Williamson when it suits him?'

'I don't know what you mean,' she replied hurriedly. 'Tell me who it is you call Mrs. Rodman.'

'I don't *call* her so. That's her married name. She's my sister.'

The door opened. Both turned their heads and saw Rodman. He had come back for a letter he had forgotten to take with him to post. At a glance he saw everything, including the half-crown on the table, which 'Arry instantly seized. He walked forward, throwing

a murderous look at Clara as he passed her. Then he said to 'Arry, in a perfectly calm voice—

‘There’s the door.’

‘I see there is,’ the other replied, grinning. ‘Good-mornin’, Mr. Rodman Williamson.’

Husband and wife faced each other as soon as the front door slammed. Clara was a tigress; she could not be terrified as Alice might have been by scowls and savage threats. Rodman knew it, and knew, moreover, that his position was more perilous than any he had been in for a long time.

‘What do you know?’ he asked quietly.

‘Enough to send you to prison, Mr. Rodman. You can’t do *quite* what you like! If there’s law in this country I’ll see you punished!’

He let her rave for a minute or two, and by that time had laid his plans.

‘Will you let me speak? Now I give you a choice. Either you can do as you say, or you can be out of this country, with me and Jack, before to-morrow morning. In a couple of hours I can get more money than you ever set eyes on; I’ll be back here with it’—he looked at his watch—‘by one o’clock. No, that wouldn’t be safe either—that fellow might send someone here by then. I’ll meet you on Westminster Bridge, the north end, at one. Now you’ve a minute to choose; he may have gone

straight away to the police station. Punish me if you like—I don't care a curse. But it seems to me the other thing's got more common sense in it. I haven't seen that woman for a month, and never care to see her again. I don't care over much for you either; but I do care for Jack, and for his sake I'll take you with me, and do my best for you. It's no good looking at me like a wild beast. You've sense enough to make a choice.'

She clasped her hands together and moaned, so dreadful was the struggle in her between passions and temptations and fears. The mother's heart bade her trust him; yet *could* she trust him to go and return?

'You have the cunning of a devil,' she groaned, 'and as little heart! Let you go, when you only want the chance of deserting me again!'

'You'll have to be quick,' he replied, holding his watch in his hand, and smiling at the compliment in spite of his very real anxiety. 'There may be no choice in a minute or two.'

'I'll go with you now; I'll follow you where you go to get the money!'

'No, you won't. Either you trust me or you refuse. You've a free choice, Clara. I tell you plainly I want little Jack, and I'm not going to lose him if I can help it.'

'Have you any other children?'

‘No—never had.’

At least he had not been deceiving her in the matter of Jack. She knew that he had constantly come home at early hours only for the sake of playing with the boy.

‘I’ll go with you. No one shall see that I’m following you.’

‘It’s impossible. I shall have to go post haste in a cab. I’ve half-a-dozen places to go to. Meet me on Westminster Bridge at one. I may be a few minutes later, but certainly not more than half-an-hour.’

He went to the window and looked uneasily up and down the street. Clara pressed her hands upon her head and stared at him like one distracted.

‘Where is she?’ came from her involuntarily.

‘Don’t be a fool, woman!’ he replied, walking to the door. She sprang to hold him. Instead of repulsing her, he folded his arm about her waist and kissed her lips two or three times.

‘I can get thousands of pounds,’ he whispered. ‘We’ll be off before they have a trace. It’s for Jack’s sake, and I’ll be kind to you as well, old woman.’

She had suffered him to go; the kisses made her powerless, reminding her of a long-past dream. A moment after she rushed to the

house door, but only to see him turning the corner of the street. Then she flew to the bedroom. Jack was ill of a cold—she was nursing him in bed. But now she dressed him hurriedly, as if there were scarcely time to get to Westminster by the appointed hour. All was ready before eleven o'clock, but it was now raining, and she durst not wait with the child in the open air for longer than was necessary. But all at once the fear possessed her lest the police might come to the house and she be detained. Ignorant of the law, and convinced from her husband's words that the stranger in rags had some sinister aim, she no sooner conceived the dread than she bundled into a hand-bag such few articles as it would hold and led the child hastily from the house. They walked to a tramway-line and had soon reached Westminster Bridge. But it was not half-past eleven, and the rain descended heavily. She sought a small eating-house not far from the Abbey, and by paying for some coffee and bread-and-butter, which neither she nor Jack could touch, obtained leave to sit in shelter till one o'clock.

At five minutes to the hour she rose and hurried to the north end of the bridge, and stood there, aside from the traffic, shielding little Jack as much as she could with her umbrella, careless that her own clothing was

getting wet through. Big Ben boomed its one stroke. Minute after minute passed, and her body seemed still to quiver from the sound. She was at once feverishly hot and so deadly chill that her teeth clattered together; her eyes throbbed with the intensity of their gaze into the distance. The quarter-past was chimed. Jack kept talking to her, but she could hear nothing. The rain drenched her; the wind was so high that she with difficulty held the umbrella above the child. Half-past, and no sign of her husband. . . .

She durst not go away from this spot. Her eyes were blind with tears. A policeman spoke to her; she could only chatter meaningless sounds between her palsied lips. Jack coughed incessantly, begged to be taken home. 'I'm so cold, mother, so cold!' Only a few minutes more—she said. He began to cry, though a brave little soul. . . .

Four o'clock struck. . . .

From Brixton our unconventional friend betook himself straight to Holloway. Having, as he felt sure, the means of making things decidedly uncomfortable for Mr. Rodman Williamson, it struck him that the easiest way would be to declare at once to his brother Richard all he knew and expected; Dick would



not be slow in bestirring himself to make Rodman smart. 'Arry was without false shame; he had no hesitation in facing his brother. But Mr. Mutimer, he was told, was not at home. Then he would see Mrs. Mutimer. But the servant was indisposed to admit him, or even to trouble her mistress. 'Arry had to request her to say that 'Mr. 'Enery Mutimer' desired to see the lady of the house. He chuckled to see the astonishment produced by his words. Thus he got admittance to Adela.

She was shocked at the sight of him, could find no words, yet gave him her hand. He told her he wished to see his brother on very particular business. But Richard would not be back before eight o'clock in the evening, and it was impossible to say where he could be found. 'Arry would not tell Adela what brought him, only assured her that it had nothing to do with his own affairs. He would call again in the evening. Adela felt inhuman in allowing him to go out into the rain, but she could not risk giving displeasure to her husband by inviting 'Arry to stay.

He came again at half-past eight. Mutimer had been home nearly an hour and was expecting him. 'Arry lost no time in coming to the point.

'He's married that other woman, I could

see that much. Go and see for yourself. She give me 'alf-a-crown to tell all about him. I'm only afraid he's got off by this time.'

'Why didn't you go and give information to the police at once?' Mutimer cried, in exasperation.

'Arry might have replied that he had a delicacy in waiting upon those gentlemen. But his brother did not stay for an answer. Rushing from the room, he equipped himself instantly with hat, coat, and umbrella.

'Show me the way to that house. Come along, there's no time to lose. Adela!' he called, 'I have to go out; can't say when I shall be back. Don't sit up if I'm late.'

A hansom bore the brothers southwards as fast as hansom could go.

They found Clara in the house, a haggard, frenzied woman. Already she had been to the police, but they were not inclined to hurry matters; she had no satisfactory evidence to give them. To Mutimer, when he had explained his position, she told everything—of her marriage in London nine years ago, her going with her husband to America, his desertion of her. Richard took her at once to the police-station. They would have to attend at the court next morning to swear an information.

By ten o'clock Mutimer was at Waterloo, taking train for Wimbledon. At Rodman's

house he found darkness, but a little ringing brought Alice herself to the door. She thought it was her husband, and, on recognising Richard, all but dropped with fear; only some ill news could explain his coming thus. With difficulty he induced her to go into a room out of the hall. She was in her dressing-gown, her long beautiful hair in disorder, her pretty face white and distorted.

‘What is it, Dick? what is it, Dick?’ she kept repeating mechanically, with inarticulate moanings between. She had forgotten her enmity against her brother and spoke to him as in the old days. He, too, was all kindness.

‘Try and keep quiet a little, Alice. I want to talk to you. Yes, it’s about your husband, my poor girl; but there’s nothing to be frightened at. He’s gone away, that’s all. I want you to come to London with me.’

She had no more control over herself than a terrified child; her words and cries were so incoherent that Mutimer feared lest she had lost her senses. She was, in truth, on the borders of idiocy. It was more than half-an-hour before, with the servant’s assistance, he could allay her hysterical anguish. Then she altogether refused to accompany him. If she did so she would miss her husband; he would not go without coming to see her. Richard was reminded by the servant that it was too late to

go by train. He decided to remain in the house through the night.

He had not ventured to tell her all the truth, nor did her state encourage him to do so in the morning. But he then succeeded in persuading her to come with him; Rodman, he assured her, must already be out of England, for he had committed a criminal offence and knew that the police were after him. Alice was got to the station more dead than alive; they were at home in Holloway by half-past ten. Richard then left her in Adela's hands and sped once more to Brixton.

He got home again at two. As he entered Adela came down the stairs to meet him.

'How is she?' he asked anxiously.

'The same. The doctor was here an hour ago. We must keep her as quiet as possible. But she can't rest for a moment.'

She added—

'Three gentlemen have called to see you. They would leave no name, and, to tell the truth, were rather rude. They seemed to doubt my word when I said you were not in.'

At his request she attempted to describe these callers. Mutimer recognised them as members of his committee.

'Rude to you? You must have mistaken. What did they come here for? I shall in any case see them to-night.'

They returned to the subject of Alice's illness.

'I've half a mind to tell her the truth,' Mutimer said. 'Surely she'd put the black-guard out of her head after that.'

'No, no; you mustn't tell her!' Adela interposed. 'I am sure it would be very unwise.'

Alice was growing worse; in an hour or two delirium began to declare itself. She had resisted all efforts to put her to bed; at most she would lie on a couch. Whilst Richard and his wife were debating what should be done, it was announced to them that the three gentlemen had called again. Mutimer went off angrily to see them.

He was engaged for half-an-hour. Then Adela heard the visitors depart; one of them was speaking loudly and with irritation. She waited for a moment at the head of the stairs, expecting that Mutimer would come out to her. As he did not, she went into the sitting-room.

Mutimer stood before the fireplace, his eyes on the ground, his face discoloured with vehement emotion.

'What has happened?' she asked.

He looked up and beckoned to her to approach.

## CHAPTER XI.

ADELA had never seen him so smitten with grave trouble. She knew him in brutal anger and in surly ill-temper ; but his present mood had nothing of either. He seemed to stagger beneath a blow which had all but crushed him and left him full of dread. He began to address her in a voice very unlike his own—thick, uncertain ; he used short sentences, often incomplete.

‘ Those men are on the committee. One of them got a letter this morning—anonymous. It said they were to be on their guard against me. Said the Company’s a swindle—that I knew it—that I’ve got money out of the people on false pretences. And Hilary’s gone—gone off—taking all he could lay hands on. The letter says so—I don’t know. It says I’m thick with the secretary—a man I never even saw. That he’s a well-known swindler—Delancey his name is. And these fellows believe it—demand that

I shall prove I'm innocent. What proof can I give? They think I kept out of the way on purpose this morning.'

He ceased speaking, and Adela stood mute, looking him in the face. She was appalled on his account. She did not love him; too often his presence caused her loathing. But of late she had been surprised into thinking more highly of some of his qualities than it had hitherto been possible for her to do. She could never forget that he toiled first and foremost for his own advancement to a very cheap reputation; he would not allow her to lose sight of it had she wished. But during the present winter she had discerned in him a genuine zeal to help the suffering, a fervour in kindly works of which she had not believed him capable. Very slowly the conviction had come to her, but in the end she could not resist it. One evening, in telling her of the hideous misery he had been amongst, his voice failed and she saw moisture in his eyes. Was his character changing? Had she wronged him in attaching too much importance to a fault which was merely on the surface? Oh, but there were too many indisputable charges against him. Yet a man's moral nature may sometimes be strengthened by experience of the evil he has wrought. All this rushed through her mind as she now stood gazing at him.

'But how can they credit an anonymous

letter?' she said. 'How can they believe the worst of you before making inquiries?'

'They have been to the office of the Company. Everything is upside down. They say Hilary isn't to be found.'

'Who can have written such a letter?'

'How do I know? I have enemies enough, no doubt. Who hasn't that makes himself a leader?'

There was the wrong note again. It discouraged her; she was silent.

'Look here, Adela,' he said, 'do you believe this?'

'Believe it!'

'Do you think I'm capable of doing a thing like that—scraping together by pennies the money of the poorest of the poor just to use it for my own purposes—could I do that?'

'You know I do not believe it.'

'But you don't speak as if you were certain. There's something—— But how am I to prove I'm innocent? How can I make people believe I wasn't in the plot? They've only my word—who'll think that enough? Anyone can tell a lie and stick to it, if there's no positive proof against him. How am I to make *you* believe that I was taken in?'

'But I tell you that a doubt of your innocence does not enter my mind. If it were necessary, I would stand up in public before all



who accused you and declare that they were wrong. I do not need your assurance. I recognise that it would be impossible for you to commit such a crime.'

'Well, it does me good to hear you say that,' he replied, with light of hope in his eyes. 'I wanted to feel sure of that. You might have thought that'—he sank his voice—'that because I could think of destroying that will——'

'Don't speak of that!' she interrupted, with a gesture of pain. 'I say that I believe you. It is enough. Don't speak about me any more. Think of what has to be done.'

'I have promised to be in Clerkenwell at eight o'clock. There'll be a meeting. I shall do my best to show that I am innocent. You'll look after Alice? It's awful to have to leave her whilst she's like that.'

'Trust me. I will not leave her side for a moment. The doctor will be here again to-night.'

A thought struck him.

'Send out the girl for an evening paper. There may be something in it.'

The paper was obtained. One of the first headings his eye fell upon was: 'Rumoured Collapse of a Public Company: Disappearance of the Secretary.' He showed it to Adela, and they read together. She saw that the finger with which he followed the lines quivered like

a leaf. It was announced in a brief paragraph that the Secretary of the Irish Dairy Company was missing; that he seemed to have gone off with considerable sums. Moreover, that there were rumours in the City of a startling kind, relative to the character of the Company itself. The name of the secretary was Mr. Robert Delancey, but that was now believed to be a mere *alias*. The police were actively at work.

‘It’ll be the ruin of me!’ Mutimer gasped. ‘I can never prove that I knew nothing. You see, nothing’s said about Hilary. It’s that fellow Delancey who has run.’

‘You must find Mr. Hilary,’ said Adela urgently. ‘Where does he live?’

‘I have no idea. I only had the office address. Perhaps it isn’t even his real name. It’ll be my ruin.’

Adela was astonished to see him so broken down. He let himself sink upon a chair; his head and hands fell.

‘But I can’t understand why you should despair so!’ she exclaimed. ‘You will speak to the meeting to-night. If the money is lost you will restore it. If you have been imprudent, that is no crime.’

‘It is—it is—when I had money of that kind entrusted to me! They won’t hear me. They have condemned me already. What use

is it to talk to them? They'll say everything comes to smash in my hands.'

She spoke to him with such words of strengthening as one of his comrades might have used. She did not feel the tenderness of a wife, and had no power to assume it. But her voice was brave and true. She had made his interest, his reputation, her own. By degrees he recovered from the blow, and let her words give him heart.

'You're right,' he said, 'I'm behaving like a fool; I couldn't go on different if I was really guilty. Who wrote that letter? I never saw the writing before, as far as I know. I wanted to keep it, but they wouldn't let me—trust them! What blackguards they are! They're jealous of me. They know they can't speak like I do, that they haven't the same influence I have. So they're ready to believe the first lie that's brought against me. Let them look to themselves to-night! I'll give them a piece of my mind—see if I don't! What's to-day? Friday. On Sunday I'll have the biggest meeting ever gathered in the East End. If they shout out against me, I'll tell them to their faces that they're mean-spirited curs. They haven't the courage to rise and get by force what they'll never have by asking for it, and when a man does his best to help them they throw mud at him!'

‘But they won’t do so,’ Adela urged. ‘Don’t be unjust. Wait and see. They will shout *for*, not *against* you.’

‘Why didn’t you keep ’Arry here?’ he asked suddenly.

‘He refused to stay. I gave him money.’

‘You should have forced him to stay! How can I have a brother of my own living a life like that? You did wrong to give him money. He’ll only use it to make a beast of himself. I must find him again; I can’t let him to go to ruin.’

’Arry had come back to Holloway the previous night to inform Adela that her husband might not return till morning. As she said, it had been impossible to detain him. He was too far gone in unconventionality to spend a night under a decent roof. Home-sickness for the gutter possessed him.

In the meantime Alice had become quieter. It was half-past six; Mutimer had to be at the meeting-place in Clerkenwell by eight. Adela sat by Alice whilst the servant hurriedly prepared a meal; then the girl took her place, and she went down to her husband. They were in the middle of their meal when they heard the front-door slam. Mutimer started up.

‘Who’s that? Who’s gone out?’

Adela ran to the foot of the stairs and called the servant’s name softly. It was a minute before the girl appeared.

‘ Who has just gone out, Mary ? ’

‘ Gone out ? No one, mum ! ’

‘ Is Mrs Rodman lying still ? ’

The girl went to see. She had left Alice for a few moments previously. She appeared again at the head of the stairs with a face of alarm.

‘ Mrs. Rodman isn’t there, mum ! ’

Mutimer flew up the staircase. Alice was nowhere to be found. It could not be doubted that she had fled in a delirious state. Richard rushed into the street, but it was very dark, and rain was falling. There was no trace of the fugitive. He came back to the door, where Adela stood ; he put out his hand and held her arm as if she needed support.

‘ Give me my hat ! She’ll die in the street, in the rain ! I’ll go one way ; the girl must go the other. My hat ! ’

‘ I will go one way myself,’ said Adela hurriedly. ‘ You must take an umbrella : it pours. Mary ! my waterproof ! ’

They ran in opposite directions. It was a quiet by-street, with no shops to cast light upon the pavement. Adela encountered a constable before she had gone very far, and begged for his assistance. He promised to be on the lookout, but advised her to go on a short distance to the police-station and leave a description of the missing woman. She did so ; then, finding

the search hopeless in this quarter, turned homewards. Mutimer was still absent, but he appeared in five minutes, as unsuccessful as herself. She told him of her visit to the station.

‘I must keep going about,’ he said. ‘She can’t be far off; her strength, surely, wouldn’t take her far.’

Adela felt for him profoundly; for once he had not a thought of himself, his distress was absorbing. He was on the point of leaving the house again, when she remembered the meeting at which he was expected. She spoke of it.

‘What do I care?’ he replied, waving his arm. ‘Let them think what they like. I must find Alice.’

Adela saw in a moment all that his absence would involve. He could of course explain subsequently, but in the meantime vast harm would have been done. It was impossible to neglect the meeting altogether. She ran after him and stopped him on the pavement.

‘I will go to this meeting for you,’ she said. ‘A cab will take me there and bring me back. I will let them know what keeps you away.’

He looked at her with astonishment.

‘You! How can you go? Among those men?’

‘Surely I have nothing to fear from them? Have you lost all your faith suddenly? You cannot go, but someone must. I will speak to

them so that they cannot but believe me. You continue the search ; I will go.'

They stood together in the pouring rain. Mutimer caught her hand.

'I never knew what a wife could be till now,' he exclaimed hoarsely. 'And I never knew *you!*'

'Find me a cab and give the man the address. I will be ready in an instant.'

Her cheeks were on fire ; her nerves quivered with excitement. She had made the proposal almost involuntarily ; only his thanks gave her some understanding of what she was about to do. But she did not shrink ; a man's—better still, a woman's—noblest courage throbbed in her. If need were, she too could stand forward in a worthy cause and speak the truth undauntedly.

The cab was bearing her away. She looked at her watch in the moment of passing a street-lamp and just saw that it was eight o'clock. The meeting would be full by this ; they would already be drawing ill conclusions from Mutimer's absence. Faster, faster ! Every moment lost increased the force of prejudice against him. She could scarcely have felt more zeal on behalf of the man whom her soul loved. In the fever of her brain she was conscious of a wish that even now that love could be her husband's. Ah no, no ! But serve him she could,

and loyally. The lights flew by in the streets of Islington ; the driver was making the utmost speed he durst. A check among thronging vehicles anguished her. But it was past, and here at length came the pause.

A crowd of perhaps a hundred men was gathered about the ill-lighted entrance to what had formerly been a low-class dancing-saloon. Adela saw them come thronging about the cab, heard their cries of discontent and of surprise when she showed herself.

‘Wait for me!’ she called to the driver, and straightway walked to the door. The men made way for her. On the threshold she turned.

‘I wish to see some member of the committee. I am Mrs. Mutimer.’

There was a coarse laugh from some fellows, but others cried, ‘Shut up! she’s a lady.’ One stepped forward and announced himself as a committee-man. He followed her into the passage.

‘My husband cannot come,’ she said. ‘Will you please show me where I can speak to the meeting and tell them the reason of his absence?’

Much amazed, the committee-man led her into the hall. It was white-washed, furnished with plain benches, lit with a few gas-jets. There was scarcely room to move for the crowd. Every man seemed to be talking at



the pitch of his voice. The effect was an angry roar. Adela's guide with difficulty made a passage for her to the platform, for it took some time before the crowd realised what was going on. At length she stood in a place whence she could survey the assembly. On the wall behind her hung a great sheet of paper on which were inscribed the names of all who had deposited money with Mutimer. Adela glanced at it and understood. Instead of being agitated, she possessed an extraordinary lucidity of mind, a calmness of nerve which she afterwards remembered as something miraculous.

The committee-man roared for silence, then in a few words explained Mrs. Mutimer's wish to make 'a speech.' To Adela's ears there seemed something of malice in this expression; she did not like, either, the laugh which it elicited. But quiet was speedily restored by a few men of sturdy lungs. She stepped to the front of the platform.

The scene was a singular one. Adela had thrown off her waterproof in the cab; she stood in her lady-like costume of home, her hat only showing that she had come from a distance. For years her cheeks had been very pale; in this moment her whole face was white as marble. Her delicate beauty made strange contrast with the faces on each side and in front of her—faces of rude intelligence, faces of

fathomless stupidity, faces degraded into something less than human. But all were listening, all straining towards her. There were a few whispers of honest admiration, a few of vile jest. She began to speak.

‘I have come here because my husband cannot come. It is most unfortunate that he cannot, for he tells me that someone has been throwing doubt upon his honesty. He would be here, but that a terrible misfortune has befallen him. His sister was lying ill in our house. A little more than an hour ago she was by chance left alone and, being delirious—out of her mind—escaped from the house. My husband is now searching for her everywhere; she may be dying somewhere in the streets. That is the explanation I have come to give you. But I will say a word more. I do not know who has spoken ill of my husband; I do not know his reasons for doing so. This, however, I know, that Richard Mutimer has done you no wrong, and that he is incapable of the horrible thing of which he is accused. You must believe it; you wrong yourselves if you refuse to. To-morrow, no doubt, he will come and speak for himself. Till then I beg you to take the worthy part and credit good rather than evil.’

She ceased, and, turning to the committee-man, who still stood near her, requested him to

guide her from the room. As she moved down from the platform the crowd recovered itself from the spell of her voice. The majority cheered, but there were not a few dissentient howls. Adela had ears for nothing; a path opened before her, and she walked along it with bowed head. Her heart was now beating violently; she felt that she must walk quickly or perchance her strength would fail her before she reached the door. As she disappeared there again arose the mingled uproar of cheers and groans; it came to her like the bellow of a pursuing monster as she fled along the passage. And in truth Demos was on her track. A few kept up with her; the rest jammed themselves in the door-way, hustled each other, fought. The dozen who came out to the pavement altogether helped her into the cab, then gave a hearty cheer as she drove away.

The voice of Demos, not malevolent at the last, but to Adela none the less something to be fled from, something which excited thoughts of horrible possibilities, in its very good-humour and its praise of her a sound of fear.

## CHAPTER XII.

HIS search being vain, Mutimer hastened from one police-station to another, leaving descriptions of his sister at each. When he came home again Adela had just arrived. She was suffering too much from the reaction which followed upon her excitement to give him more than the briefest account of what she had heard and said ; but Mutimer cared little for details. He drew an easy-chair near to the fire and begged her to rest. As she lay back for a moment with closed eyes, he took her faint hand and put it to his lips. He had never done so before ; when she glanced at him he averted his face in embarrassment.

He would have persuaded her to go to bed, but she declared that sleep was impossible ; she had much rather sit up with him till news came of Alice, as it surely must do in the course of the night. For Mutimer there was no resting ; he circled continually about the neighbouring streets, returning to the house every quarter of

an hour, always to find Adela in the same position. Her heart would not fall to its normal beat, and the vision of those harsh faces would not pass from her mind.

At two o'clock they heard that Alice was found. She had been discovered several miles from home, lying unconscious in the street, and was now in a hospital. Mutimer set off at once; he returned with the report that she was between life and death. It was impossible to remove her.

Adela slept a little between six and eight; her husband took even shorter rest. When she came down to the sitting-room, he was reading the morning paper. As she entered he uttered a cry of astonishment and rage.

'Look here!' he exclaimed to her. 'Read that!'

He pointed to an account of the Irish Dairy Company frauds, in which it was stated that the secretary, known as Delancey, appeared also to have borne the name of Rodman.

They gazed at each other.

'Then it was Rodman wrote that letter!' Mutimer cried. 'I'll swear to it. He did it to injure me at the last moment. Why haven't they got him yet? The police are useless. But they've got Hilary, I see—yes, they've got Hilary. He was caught at Dover. Ha, ha! He denies everything—says he didn't even know

of the secretary's decamping. The lying scoundrel! Says he was going to Paris on private business. But they've got him! And see here again: 'The same Rodman is at present wanted by the police on a charge of bigamy.' Wanted! If they weren't incompetent fools they'd have had him already. Ten to one he's out of England.'

It was a day of tumult for Mutimer. At the hospital he found no encouragement, but he could only leave Alice in the hands of the doctors. From the hospital he went to his mother's house; he had not yet had time to let her know of anything. But his main business lay in Clerkenwell and in various parts of the East End, wherever he could see his fellow-agitators. In hot haste he wrote an announcement of a meeting on Clerkenwell Green for Sunday afternoon, and had thousands of copies printed on slips; by evening these were scattered throughout his 'parishes.' He found that the calumny affecting him was already widely known; several members of his committee met him with black looks. Here and there an ironical question was put to him about his sister's health. With the knowledge that Alice might be dying or dead, he could scarcely find words of reply. His mood changed from fear and indignation to a grim fury; within a few hours he made many resolute

enemies by his reckless vehemence and vituperation.

The evening papers brought him a piece of intelligence which would have rejoiced him but for something with which it was coupled. Delancey, *alias* Rodman, *alias* Williamson, was arrested; he had been caught in Hamburg. The telegram added that he talked freely and had implicated a number of persons—among them a certain Socialist agitator, name not given. As Mutimer read this he fell for a moment into blank despair. He returned at once to Holloway, all but resolved to throw up the game—to abandon the effort to defend himself, and wait for what might result from the judicial investigations. Adela resisted this to the uttermost. She understood that such appearance of fear would be fatal to him. With a knowledge of Demos which owed much to her last night's experience, she urged to him that behind his back calumny would thrive unchecked, would grow in a day to proportions altogether irresistible. She succeeded in restoring his courage, though at the same time there revived in Mutimer the savage spirit which could only result in harm to himself.

‘This is how they repay a man who works for them!’ he cried repeatedly. ‘The ungrateful brutes! Let me once clear myself, and I’ll throw it up, bid them find someone else to fight

their battles for them. It's always been the same: history shows it. What have I got for myself out of it all, I'd like to know? Haven't I given them every penny I had? Let them do their worst! Let them bark and bray till they are hoarse!

He would have kept away from Clerkenwell that evening, but even this Adela would not let him do. She insisted that he must be seen and heard, that the force of innocence would prevail even with his enemies. The couple of hours he passed with her were spent in ceaseless encouragement on her side, in violent tirades on his. He paced the room like a caged lion, at one moment execrating Rodman, the next railing against the mob to whose interests he had devoted himself. Now and then his voice softened, and he spoke of Alice.

'The scoundrel set even her against me! If she lives, perhaps she'll believe I'm guilty; how can my word stand against her husband's? Why, he isn't her husband at all! It's a good thing if she dies—the best thing that could happen. What will become of her? What are we to call her? She's neither married nor single. Can we keep it from her, do you think? No, that won't do; she must be free to marry an honest man. You'll try and make friends with her, Adela—if ever you've the chance? She'll have to live with us, of course; unless



she'd rather live with mother. We mustn't tell her for a long time, till she's strong enough to bear it.'

He with difficulty ate a few mouthfuls and went off to Clerkenwell. In the erstwhile dancing-saloon it was a night of tempest. Mutimer had never before addressed an unfriendly audience. After the first few interruptions he lost his temper, and with it his cause, as far as these present hearers were concerned. When he left them, it was amid the mutterings of a storm which was not quite—only not quite—ready to burst in fury.

'Who knows you won't take yer 'ook before to-morrow?' cried a voice as he neared the door.

'Wait and see!' Mutimer shouted in reply, with a savage laugh. 'I've a word or two to say yet to blackguards like you.'

He could count on some twenty pairs of fists in the room, if it came to that point; but he was allowed to depart unmolested.

On the way home he called at the hospital. There was no change in Alice's condition.

The next day he remained at home till it was time to start for Clerkenwell Green. He was all but worn out, and there was nothing of any use to be done before the meeting assembled. Adela went for him to the hospital and brought back still the same report. He ate fairly well

of his midday dinner, seeming somewhat calmer. Adela, foreseeing his main danger, begged him to address the people without anger, assured him that a dignified self-possession would go much farther than any amount of blustering. He was induced to promise that he would follow her advice.

He purposed walking to the Green; the exercise would perhaps keep his nerves in order. When it was time to start, he took Adela's hand, and for a second time kissed it. She made an effort over herself and held her lips to him. The 'good-bye' was exchanged, with a word of strengthening from Adela; but still he did not go. He was endeavouring to speak.

'I don't think I've thanked you half enough,' he said at length, 'for what you did on Friday night.'

'Yes, more than enough,' was the reply.

'You make little of it, but it's a thing very few women would have done. And it was hard for you, because you're a lady.'

'No less a woman,' murmured Adela, her head bowed.

'And a good woman—I believe with all my heart. I want to ask you to forgive me—for things I once said to you. I was a brute. Perhaps if I'd been brought up in the same kind of way that you were—that's the

difference between us, you see. But try if you can to forget it. I'll never think anything but good of you as long as I live.'

She could not reply, for a great sob was choking her. She pressed his hand; the tears broke from her eyes as she turned away.

It being Sunday afternoon, visitors were admitted to the hospital in which Alice lay. Mutimer had allowed himself time to pass five minutes by his sister's bedside on the way to Clerkenwell. Alice was still unconscious; she lay motionless, but her lips muttered unintelligible words. He bent over her and spoke, but she did not regard him. It was perhaps the keenest pain Mutimer had ever known to look into those eyes and meet no answering intelligence. By close listening he believed he heard her utter the name of her husband. It was useless to stay; he kissed her and left the ward.

On his arrival at Clerkenwell Green—a large triangular space which merits the name of Green as much as the Strand—he found a considerable gathering already assembled about the cart from which he was to speak. The inner circle consisted of his friends—some fifty who remained staunch in their faith. Prominent among them was the man Redgrave, he who had presented the address when Mutimer took leave of his New Wanley workpeople. He had

come to London at the same time as his leader, and had done much to recommend Mutimer's scheme in the East End. His muscular height made those about him look puny. He was red in the face with the excitement of abusing Mutimer's enemies, and looked as if nothing would please him better than to second words with arguments more cogent. He and those about him hailed the agitator's appearance with three ringing cheers. A little later came a supporter whom Richard had not expected to see—Mr. Westlake. Only this morning intelligence of what was going on had reached his ears. At once he had scouted the accusations as incredible; he deemed it a duty to present himself on Mutimer's side. Outside this small cluster was an indefinable mob, a portion of it bitterly hostile, a part indifferent; among the latter a large element of mere drifting blackguardism, the raff of a city, anticipating with pleasure an uproar which would give them unwonted opportunities of violence and pillage. These gentlemen would with equal zeal declare for Mutimer or his opponents, as the fortune of the day directed them.

The core of the hostile party consisted of those who followed the banner of Comrade Roodhouse, the ralliers to the *Tocsin*. For them it was a great occasion. The previous

evening had seen a clamorous assembly in the room behind the Hoxton coffee-shop. Comrade Roodhouse professed to have full details of the scandal which had just come to light. According to him, there was no doubt whatever that Mutimer had known from the first the character of the bogus Company, and had wittingly used the money of the East-Enders to aid in floating a concern which would benefit himself and a few others. Roodhouse disclosed the identity of Mr. Robert Delancey, and explained the relations existing between Rodman and Mutimer, ignoring the fact that a lawsuit had of late turned their friendship to mutual animosity. It was an opportunity not to be missed for paying back the hard things Mutimer had constantly said of the *Tocsin* party. Comrade Roodhouse was busy in the crowd, sowing calumnies and fermenting wrath. In the crowd were our old acquaintances Messrs. Cowes and Cullen, each haranguing as many as could be got to form a circle and listen, indulging themselves in measureless vituperation, crying shame on traitors to the noble cause. Here, too, was Daniel Dabbs, mainly interested in the occasion as an admirable provocative of thirst. He was much disposed to believe Mutimer guilty, but understood that it was none of his business to openly take part with either side. He stood well on the limits of the throng; it was not

impossible that the debate might end in the cracking of crowns, in which case Mr. Dabbs, as a respectable licensed victualler whose weekly profits had long since made him smile at the follies of his youth, would certainly incur no needless risk to his own valuable scalp.

The throng thickened; it was impossible that the speakers should be audible to the whole assembly. Hastily it was decided to arrange two centres. Whilst Mutimer was speaking at the lower end of the Green, Redgrave would lift up his voice in the opposite part, and make it understood that Mutimer would repeat his address there as soon as he had satisfied the hearers below. The meeting was announced for three o'clock, but it was half an hour later before Mutimer stood up on the cart and extended his hand in appeal for silence. It at first seemed as if he could not succeed in making his voice heard at all. A cluster of Roodhouse's followers, under the pretence of demanding quiet, made incessant tumult. But ultimately the majority, those who were merely curious, and such of the angry East-Enders as really wanted to hear what Mutimer had to say for himself, imposed silence. Richard began his speech.

He had kept Adela's warning in mind, and determined to be calmly dignified in his refutation.

of the charges brought against him. For five minutes he impressed his hearers. He had never spoken better. In the beginning he briefly referred to the facts of his life, spoke of the use he had made of wealth when he possessed it, demanded if it was likely that he should join with swindlers to rob the very class to which he himself was proud to belong, and for which he had toiled unceasingly. He spoke of Rodman, and denied that he had ever known of this man's connection with the Company—a man who was his worst enemy. He it was, this Rodman, who doubtless had written the letter which first directed suspicion in the wrong quarter; it was an act such as Rodman would be capable of, for the sake of gratifying his enmity. And how had that enmity arisen? He told the story of the lawsuit; showed how, in that matter, he had stood up for common honesty, though at the time Rodman was his friend. Then he passed to the subject of his stewardship. Why had he put that trust money into a concern without sufficient investigation? He could make but one straightforward answer: he had believed that the Company was sound, and he bought shares because the dividends promised to be large, and it was his first desire to do the very best he could for those who had laid their hard-earned savings in his hands.

For some minutes he had had increasing difficulty in holding his voice above the noise of interruptions, hostile or friendly. It now became impossible for him to proceed. A man who was lifted on to the shoulders of two others began to make a counter-speech, roaring so that those around could not but attend to him. He declared himself one of those whom Mutimer had robbed; all his savings for seven months were gone; he was now out of work, and his family would soon be starving. Richard's blood boiled as he heard these words.

'You lie!' he bellowed in return, 'I know you. You are the fellow who said last night that I should run away, and never come at all to this meeting. I called you a blackguard then, and I call you a liar now. You have put in my hand six threepences, and no more. The money you might have saved you constantly got drunk upon. Your money is waiting for you: you have only to come and apply for it. And I say the same to all the rest. I am ready to pay all the money back, and pay it too with interest.'

'Of course you are!' vociferated the other, 'You can't steal it, so you offer to give it back. We know that game.'

It was the commencement of utter confusion. A hundred voices were trying to make themselves heard. The great crowd swayed this



way and that. Mutimer looked on a tempest of savage faces—a sight which might have daunted any man in his position. Fists were shaken at him, curses were roared at him from every direction. It was clear that the feeling of the mob was hopelessly against him; his explanations were ridiculed. A second man was reared on others' shoulders; but instead of speaking from the place where he was, he demanded to be borne forward and helped to a standing on the cart. This was effected after a brief struggle with Mutimer's supporters. Then all at once there was a cessation of the hubbub that the new speaker might be heard.

'Look at this man!' he cried, pointing at Mutimer, who had drawn as far aside as the cart would let him. 'He's been a-tellin' you what he did when somebody died an' left him a fortune. There's just one thing he's forgot, an' shall I tell you what that is? When he was a workin' man like ourselves, mates, he was a-going to marry a pore girl, a workin' girl. When he gets his money, what does he do? Why, he pitches her over, if you please, an' marries a fine lady, as took him because he was rich—that's the way *ladies* always chooses their husbands, y'understand.'

He was interrupted by a terrific yell, but by dint of vigorous pantomime secured a hearing again.

‘But wait a bit, maties ; I haven’t done yet. He pitches over the pore girl, but he does worse afterwards. He sets a tale a-goin’ as she’d disgraced herself, as she wasn’t fit to be a honest man’s wife. An’ it was all a damned lie, as lots of us knows. Now what d’ye think o’ that ! This is a friend o’ the People, this is ! This is the man as ’as your interests at ’art, mates ! If he’ll do a thing like that, won’t he rob you of your savin’s?’

As soon as he knew what the man was about to speak of, Mutimer felt the blood rush back upon his heart. It was as when a criminal hears delivered against him a damning item of evidence. He knew that he was pale, that every feature declared his consciousness of guilt. In vain he tried to face the mob and smile contemptuously. His eyes fell ; he stood without the power of speech.

The yell was repeated, and prolonged, owing to another cause than the accusation just heard. When the accuser was borne forwards to the cart, a rumour spread among those more remote that an attack was being made on Mutimer and his friends. The rumour reached that part of the Green where Redgrave was then haranguing. At once the listeners faced about in the direction of the supposed conflict. Redgrave himself leaped down, and called upon all supporters of Mutimer to follow him. It

was the crash between two crowds which led to the prolonging of the yell.

The meeting was over, the riot had begun.

Picture them, the indignant champions of honesty, the avengers of virtue defamed! Demos was roused, was tired of listening to mere articulate speech; it was time for a good wild-beast roar, for a taste of bloodshed. Scarcely a face in all the mob but distorted itself to express as much savagery as can be got out of the human countenance. Mutimer, seeing what had come, sprang down from the cart. He was at once carried yards away in an irresistible rush. Impossible for him and his friends to endeavour to hold their ground: they were too vastly outnumbered; the most they could do was to hold together and use every opportunity of retreat, standing in the meanwhile on the defensive. There was no adequate body of police on the Green; the riot would take its course unimpeded by the hired servants of the capitalist State. Redgrave little by little fought his way to within sight of Mutimer; he brought with him a small but determined contingent. On all sides was the thud of blows, the indignant shouting of the few who desired to preserve order mingled with the clamour of those who combated. Demos was having his way; civilisation was blotted out, and club law proclaimed.

Mutimer lost his hat in jumping from the cart ; in five minutes his waistcoat and shirt were rent open, whether by friends in guarding him, or by foes in assailing, it was impossible to say. But his bodyguard held together with wonderful firmness, only now and then an enemy got near enough to dash a fist in his face. If he fell into the hands of the mob he was done for ; Mutimer knew that, and was ready to fight for his life. But the direction taken by the main current of the crowd favoured him. In about twenty minutes he was swept away from the Green, and into a street. There were now fewer foes about him ; he saw an opportunity, and together with Redgrave burst away. There was no shame in taking to flight where the odds against him were so overwhelming. But pursuers were close behind him ; their cry gave a lead to the chase. He looked for some by-way as he rushed along the pavement. But an unexpected refuge offered itself. He was passing a little group of women, when a voice from among them cried loudly—‘ In here ! In here ! ’ He saw that a house-door was open, saw a hand beckon wildly, and at once sprang for the retreat. A woman entered immediately behind him and slammed the door, but he did not see that a stick which the foremost of his pursuers had flung at him came with a terrible blow full upon his preserver’s face.

For a moment he could only lean against the wall of the passage, recovering his breath. Where he stood it was almost dark, for the evening was drawing in. The woman who had rescued him was standing near, but he could not distinguish her face. He heard the mob assembling in the narrow street, their shouts, their trampling, and speedily there began a great noise at the door. A beating with sticks and fists, a thundering at the knocker.

‘Are you the landlady?’ Mutimer asked, turning to his silent companion.

‘No,’ was the reply. ‘She is outside, I must put up the chain. They might get her latchkey from her.’

At the first syllable he started; the voice was so familiar to him. The words were spoken with an entire absence of womanish consternation; the voice trembled a little, but for all that there was calm courage in its sound. When she had made the door secure and turned again towards him, he looked into her face as closely as he could.

‘Is it Emma?’

‘Yes.’

Both were silent. Mutimer forgot all about his danger: that at this moment he should meet Emma Vine, that it should be she who saved him, impressed him with awe which was stronger than all the multitude of sensa-

tions just now battling within him. For it was her name that had roused the rabble finally against him. For his wrong to her he knew that he would have suffered justly; yet her hand it was that barred the door against his brutal pursuers. A sudden weakness shook his limbs; he had again to lean upon the wall for support, and, scarcely conscious of what he did, he sobbed three or four times.

‘Are you hurt?’ Emma asked.

‘No, I’m not hurt, no.’

Two children had come down the stairs, and were clinging to Emma, crying with fright. For the noise at the door was growing terrific.

‘Who is there in the house?’ Mutimer asked.

‘No one, I think. The landlady and two other women who live here are outside. My sister is away somewhere.’

‘Can I get off by the back?’

‘No. There’s a little yard, but the walls are far too high.’

‘They’ll break the door through. If they do, the devils are as likely to kill you as me. I must go upstairs to a window and speak to them. I may do something yet. Sooner than put you in danger I’ll go out and let them do their worst. Listen to them! That’s the People, that is! I deserve killing, fool that I am, if only for the lying good I’ve said of them.’

Let me go up into your room, if it has a window in the front.'

He led up the stairs, and Emma showed him the door of her room—the same in which she had received the visit of Daniel Dabbs. He looked about it, saw the poverty of it. Then he looked at Emma.

'Good God! Who has hit you?'

There was a great cut on her cheek, the blood was running down upon her dress.

'Somebody threw a stick,' she answered, trying to smile. 'I don't feel it; I'll tie a handkerchief on it.'

Again a fit of sobbing seized him; he felt as weak as a child.

'The cowardly roughs! Give me the handkerchief—I'll tie it. Emma!'

'Think of your own safety,' she replied hurriedly. 'I tell you I don't feel any pain. Do you think you can get them to listen to you?'

'I'll try. There's nothing else for it. You stand at the back of the room; they may throw something at me.'

'Oh, then, don't open the window! They can't break the door. Some help will come.'

'They *will* break the door! You'd be as safe among wild beasts as among those fellows if they get into the house.'

He threw up the sash, though Emma would not go from his side. In the street below was

a multitude which made but one ravening monster; all its eyes were directed to the upper storeys of this house. Mutimer looked to the right and to the left. In the latter quarter he saw the signs of a struggle. Straining his eyes through the dusk, he perceived a mounted police-officer forcing his way through the throng; on either side were visible the helmets of constables. He drew a deep sigh of relief, for the efforts of the mob against the house door could scarcely succeed unless they used more formidable weapons for assault, and that would now be all but impossible.

He drew his head back into the room and looked at Emma with a laugh of satisfaction.

‘The police are making way! There’s nothing to fear now.’

‘Come away from the window, then,’ Emma urged. ‘It is useless to show yourself.’

‘Let them see me, the blackguards! They’re so tight packed they haven’t a hand among them to aim anything.’

As he spoke, he again leaned forward from the window-sill, and stretched his arms towards the approaching rescuers. That same instant a heavy fragment of stone, hurled with deadly force and precision, struck him upon the temple. The violence of the blow flung him back into the room; he dropped to his knees, threw out a hand as if to save himself, then



sank face foremost upon the floor. Not a sound had escaped his lips.

Emma, with a low cry of horror, bent to him and put her arm about his body. Raising his head, she saw that, though his eyes were staring, they had no power of sight; on his lips were flecks of blood. She laid her cheeks to his lips, but could discern no breath; she tore apart the clothing from his breast, but her hand could not find his heart. Then she rushed for a pillow, placed it beneath his head, and began to bathe his face. Not all the great love which leaped like flame in her bosom could call the dead to life.

The yells which had greeted Mutimer's appearance at the window were followed by a steady roar, mingled with scornful laughter at his speedy retreat; only a few saw or suspected that he had been gravely hit by the missile. Then the tumult began to change its character; attention was drawn from the house to the advancing police, behind whom came a band of Mutimer's adherents, led by Redgrave. The latter were cheering; the hostile rabble met their cheers with defiant challenges. The police had now almost more than they could do to prevent a furious collision between the two bodies; but their numbers kept increasing, as detachments arrived one after another, and at length the house itself was firmly guarded,

whilst the rioters on both sides were being put to flight. It was not a long street; the police cleared it completely and allowed no one to enter at either end.

It was all but dark when at length the door of Emma's room was opened and six or seven women appeared, searching for Mutimer. The landlady was foremost: she carried a lamp. It showed the dead man at full length on the floor, and Emma kneeling beside him, holding his hand. Near her were the two children, crying miserably. Emma appeared to have lost her voice; when the light flashed upon her eyes she covered them with one hand, with the other pointed downwards. The women broke into cries of fright and lamentation. They clustered around the prostrate form, examined it, demanded explanations. One at length sped down to the street and shortly returned with two policemen. A messenger was despatched for a doctor.

Emma did not move; she was not weeping, but paid no attention to any words addressed to her. The room was thronged with curious neighbours, there was a hubbub of talk. When at length the medical man arrived, he cleared the chamber of all except Emma. After a brief examination of the body he said to her:

‘You are his wife?’

She, still kneeling, looked up into his face with pained astonishment.

‘His wife? Oh no! I am a stranger.’

The doctor showed surprise.

‘He was killed in your presence?’

‘He is dead—really dead?’ she asked under her breath. And, as she spoke, she laid her hand upon his arm.

‘He must have been killed instantaneously. Did the stone fall in the room? Was it a stone?’

No one had searched for the missile. The doctor discovered it not far away. Whilst he was weighing it in his hand there came a knock at the door. It was Mr. Westlake who entered. He came and looked at the dead man, then, introducing himself, spoke a few words with the doctor. Assured that there was no shadow of hope, he withdrew, having looked closely at Emma, who now stood a little apart, her hands held together before her.

The doctor departed a few moments later. He had examined the wound on the girl’s face, and found that it was not serious. As he was going, Emma said to him :

‘Will you tell them to keep away—all the people in the house?’

‘This is your own room?’

‘I live here with my sister.’

‘I will ask them to respect your wish. The body must stay here for the present, though.’

‘Oh yes, yes, I know.’

‘Is your sister at home?’

‘She will be soon. Please tell them not to come here.’

She was alone again with the dead. It cost her great efforts of mind to convince herself that Mutimer really had breathed his last; it seemed to her but a moment since she heard him speak, heard him laugh; was not a trace of the laugh even now discernible on his countenance? How was it possible for life to vanish in this way? She constantly touched him, spoke to him. It was incredible that he should not be able to hear her.

Her love for him was immeasurable. Bitterness she had long since overcome, and she had thought that love, too, was gone with it. She had deceived herself. Her heart, incredible as it may seem, had even known a kind of hope—how else could she have borne the life which fate laid upon her?—the hope that is one with love, that asks nothing of the reason, nor yields to reason’s contumely? He had been smitten dead at the moment that she loved him dearest.

Her sister Kate came in. She had been spending the day with friends in another part of London. When just within the door she stopped and looked at the body nervously.

‘Emma!’ she said. ‘Why don’t you come downstairs? Mrs. Lake’ll let us have her back

room, and tea's waiting for you. I wonder how you *can* stay here.'

'I can't come. I want to be alone, Kate. Tell them not to come up.'

'But you can't stay here all night, child!'

'I can't talk. I wan't to be alone. Perhaps I'll come down before long.'

Kate withdrew and went to gossip with the people who were incessantly coming and going in the lower part of the house. The opening and shutting of the front door, the sound of voices, the hurrying feet upon the staircase, were audible enough to Emma. She heard, too, the crowds that kept passing along the street, their shouts, their laughter, the voices of the policemen bidding them move on. It was all a nightmare, from which she strove to awake.

At length she was able to weep. Gazing constantly at the dead face, she linked it at last with some far-off memory of tenderness, and that brought her tears. She held the cold hand against her heart and eased herself with passionate sobbing, with low wails, with loving utterance of his name. 'Thus it happened that she did not hear when someone knocked lightly at the door and entered. A shadow across the still features told her of another's presence. Starting back, she saw a lady from whose pale, beautiful face a veil had just been

raised. The stranger, who was regarding her with tenderly compassionate eyes, said :

‘ I am Mrs. Mutimer.’

Emma rose to her feet and drew a little apart. Her face fell.

‘ They told me downstairs,’ Adela pursued, ‘ that I should find Miss Vine in the room. Is your name Emma Vine ? ’

Emma asked herself whether this lady, his wife, could know anything of her story. It seemed so, from the tone of the question. She only replied :

‘ Yes, it is.’

Then she again ventured to look up at the woman whose beauty had made her life barren. There were no signs of tears on Adela’s face ; to Emma she seemed cold, though so grave and gentle. Adela gazed for a while at the dead man. She, too, felt as though it were all a dream. The spectacle of Emma’s passionate grief had kept her emotion within her heart, perhaps had weakened it.

‘ You have yourself been hurt,’ she said, turning again to the other.

Emma only shook her head. She suffered terribly from Adela’s presence.

‘ I will go,’ she said in a whisper.

‘ This is your room, I think ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ May I stay here ? ’

‘Of course—you must.’

Emma was moving towards the door.

‘You wish to go?’ Adela said, uttering the words involuntarily.

‘Yes, I must.’

Adela, left alone, stood gazing at the dead face. She did not kneel by her husband, as Emma had done, but a terrible anguish came upon her as she gazed; she buried her face in her hands. Her feeling was more of horror at the crime that had been committed than of individual grief. Yet grief she knew. The last words her husband had spoken to her were good and worthy; in her memory they overcame all else. That parting when he left home had seemed to her like the beginning of a new life for him. Could not his faults be atoned for otherwise than by this ghastly end? She had no need to direct her thoughts to the good that was in him. Even as she had taken his part against his traducers, so she now was stirred in spirit against his murderers. She felt a solemn gladness in remembering that she had stood before that meeting in the Clerkenwell room and served him as far as it was in a woman’s power to do. All her long sufferings were forgotten; this supreme calamity of death outweighed them all. His enemies had murdered him; would they not continue to assail his name? She resolved that his memory

should be her care. That had nothing to do with love; simple justice demanded it. Justice and gratitude for the last words he had spoken to her.

She had as yet scarcely noticed the room in which she was. At length she surveyed it; its poverty brought tears to her eyes. There had been a fire, but the last spark was dead. She began to feel cold.

Soon there was the sound of someone ascending the stairs, and Emma, after knocking, again entered. She carried a tray with tea-things, which she placed upon the table. Then, having glanced at the fireplace, she took from a cupboard wood and paper and was beginning to make a fire when Adela stopped her, saying:

‘You must not do that for me. I will light the fire myself, if you will let me.’

Emma looked up in surprise.

‘It is kind of you to bring me the tea,’ Adela continued. ‘But let me do the rest.’

‘If you wish to—yes,’ the other replied, without understanding the thought which prompted Adela. She carefully held herself from glancing towards the dead man, and moved away.

Adela approached her.

‘Have you a room for the night?’

‘Yes, thank you.’



‘ Will you—will you take my hand before you leave me?’

She held it forth; Emma, with eyes turned to the ground, gave her own.

‘ Look at me,’ Adela said, under her breath.

Their eyes met, and at last Emma understood. In that grave, noble gaze was far more than sympathy and tenderness; it was a look that besought pardon.

‘ May I come to you in the night to see if you need anything?’ Emma asked.

‘ I shall need nothing. Come only if you can’t sleep.’

Adela lit the fire and began her night’s watching

## CHAPTER XIII.

A DEEP breath of country air. It is spring-time, and the valley of Wanley is bursting into green and flowery life, peacefully glad as if the foot of Demos had never come that way. Incredible that the fume of furnaces ever desecrated that fleece-sown sky of tenderest blue, that hammers clanged and engines roared where now the thrush utters his song so joyously. Hubert Eldon has been as good as his word. In all the valley no trace is left of what was called New Wanley. Once more we can climb to the top of Stanbury Hill and enjoy the sense of remoteness and security when we see that dark patch on the horizon, the cloud that hangs over Belwick.

Hubert and the vicar of Wanley stood there together one morning in late April, more than a year after the death of Richard Muttimer. Generally there was a strong breeze on this point, but to-day the west was breathing its gentlest, warm upon the cheek.

‘Well, it has gone,’ Hubert said. ‘May will have free playing-ground.’

‘In one sense,’ replied the vicar, ‘I fear it will never be gone. Its influence on the life of the people in Wanley and in some of the farms about has been graver than you imagine. I find discontent where it was formerly unknown. The typical case is that lad of Bolton’s. They wanted him sadly at home; by this time he would have been helping his unfortunate father. Instead of that he’s the revolutionary oracle of Belwick pothouses, and appears on an average once a fortnight before the magistrates for being drunk and disorderly.’

‘Yes, the march of progress has been hastened a little, doubtless,’ said Hubert. ‘I have to content myself with the grass and the trees. Well, I have done all I could, now other people must enjoy the results. Ah, look! there is a van of the Edgeworths’ furniture coming to the Manor. They are happy people! Something like an ideal married couple, and with nothing to do but to wander about the valley and enjoy themselves.’

‘I am rather surprised you gave them so long a lease,’ remarked Mr. Wyvern.

‘Why not? I shall never live here again. As long as I had work to do it was all right; but to continue to live in that house was impossible. And in twenty years it would be no less impossible. I should fall into a monomania, and one of a very loathsome kind.’

Mr. Wyvern pondered. They walked on a few paces before Hubert again spoke.

‘There was a letter from her in the *Belwick Chronicle* yesterday morning. Something on the placard in Agworth station caused me to buy a copy. The Tory paper, it seems, had a leader a day or two ago on Socialism, and took occasion to sneer at Mutimer, not by name, but in an unmistakable way—the old scandal of course. She wrote a letter to the editor, and he courteously paid no attention to it. So she wrote to the *Chronicle*. They print her in large type, and devote a leader to the subject—party capital, of course.’

He ceased on a bitter tone, then, before his companion could reply, added violently :

‘It is hideous to see her name in such places!’

‘Let us speak freely of this,’ returned Mr. Wyvern. ‘You seem to me to be very unjust. Your personal feeling makes you less acute in judging than I should have expected. Surely her behaviour is very admirable.’

‘Oh, I am not unjust in that sense. I have never refused to believe in his innocence technically.’

‘Excuse me, that has nothing to do with the matter. All we have to look at is this. She is herself convinced of his innocence, and therefore makes it her supreme duty to defend

his memory. It appears to me that she acts altogether nobly. In spite of all the evidence that was brought on his side, the dastardly spirit of politics has persisted in making Mutimer a sort of historical character, a type of the hypocritical demagogue, to be cited whenever occasion offers. Would it be possible to attach a more evil significance to a man's name than that which Mutimer's bears, and will continue to bear, among certain sections of writing and speechifying vermin? It is a miserable destiny. If every man who achieves notoriety paid for his faults in this way, what sort of reputations would history consist of? I won't say that it isn't a good thing, speaking generally, but in the individual case it is terribly hard. Would you have his widow keep silence? That would be the easier thing to do, be sure of it—for *her*, a thousand times the easier. I regard her as the one entirely noble woman it has been my lot to know. And if you thought calmly you could not speak of her with such impatience.'

Hubert kept silence for a moment.

'It is all true. Of course it only means that I am savagely jealous. But I cannot—upon my life I cannot—understand her having given her love to such a man as that!'

Mr. Wyvern seemed to regard the landscape. There was a sad smile on his countenance.

‘Let there be an end of it,’ Hubert resumed. ‘I didn’t mean to say anything to you about the letter. Now, we’ll talk of other things. Well, I am going to have a summer among the German galleries; perhaps I shall find peace there. You have let your son know that I am coming?’

The vicar nodded. They continued their walk along the top of the hill. Presently Mr. Wyvern stopped and faced his companion.

‘Are you serious in what you said just now? I mean about her love for Mutimer?’

‘Serious? Of course I am. Why should you ask such a question?’

‘Because I find it difficult to distinguish between the things a young man says in jealous pique and the real belief he entertains when he is not throwing savage words about. You have convinced yourself that she loved her husband in the true sense of the word?’

‘The conviction was forced upon me. Why did she marry him at all? What led her to give herself, heart and soul, to Socialism, she who under ordinary circumstances would have shrunk from that and all other *isms*? Why should she make it a special entreaty to me to pursue her husband’s work? The zeal for his memory is nothing unanticipated; it issues naturally from her former state of mind.’

‘Your vehemence,’ replied the vicar, smiling, ‘is sufficient proof that you don’t think it impossible for all these questions to be answered in another sense. I can’t pretend to have read the facts of her life infallibly, but suppose I venture a hint or two, just to give you matter for thought. Why she married him I cannot wholly explain to myself, but remember that she took that step very shortly after being brought to believe that you, my good friend, were utterly unworthy of any true woman’s devotion. Remember, too, her brother’s influence, and—well, her mother’s. Now, on the evening before she accepted Mutimer, she called at the Vicarage alone. Unfortunately I was away—was walking with you, in fact. What she desired to say to me I can only conjecture ; but it is not impossible that she was driven by the common impulse which sends young girls to their pastor when they are in grievous trouble and without other friends.’

‘Why did you never tell me of that?’ cried Hubert.

‘Because it would have been useless, and, to tell you the truth, I felt I was in an awkward position, not far from acting indiscreetly. I did go to see her the next morning, but only saw her mother, and heard of the engagement. Adela never spoke to me of her visit.’

‘But she may have come for quite other reasons. Her subsequent behaviour remains.’

‘Certainly. Here again I may be altogether wrong, but it seems to me that to a woman of her character there was only one course open. Having become his wife, it behoved her to be loyal, and especially—remember this—it behoved her to put her position beyond doubt in the eyes of others, in the eyes of one, it may be, beyond all. Does that throw no light on your meeting with her in the wood, of which you make so much?’

Hubert’s countenance shone, but only for an instant.

‘Ingenious,’ he replied, good-humouredly.

‘Possibly no more,’ Mr. Wyvern rejoined. ‘Take it as a fanciful sketch of how a woman’s life *might* be ordered. Such a life would not lack its dignity.’

Neither spoke for a while.

‘You will call on Mrs. Westlake as you pass through London?’ Mr. Wyvern next inquired.

‘Mrs. Westlake?’ the other repeated absently. ‘Yes, I dare say I shall see her.’

‘Do, by all means.’

They began to descend the hill.

The Walthams no longer lived in Wanley. A year ago the necessities of Alfred Waltham’s affairs had led to a change; he and his wife



and their two children, together with Mrs. Waltham the dowager, removed to what the auctioneers call a commodious residence on the outskirts of Belwick. Alfred remarked that it was as well not to be so far from civilisation ; he pointed out, too, that it was time for him to have an eye to civic dignities, if only a place on the Board of Guardians to begin with. Our friend was not quite so uncompromising in his political and social opinions as formerly. His wife observed that he ceased to subscribe to Socialist papers, and took in a daily of orthodox Liberal tendencies—that is to say, an organ of capitalism. Letty rejoiced at the change, but knew her husband far too well to make any remark upon it.

To their house, about three months after her husband's death, came Adela. The intermediate time she had passed with Stella. All were very glad to have her at Belwick—Letty, in particular, who, though a matron with two bouncing boys, still sat at Adela's feet and deemed her the model of womanhood. Adela was not so sad as they had feared to find her. She kept a great deal to her own room, but was always engaged in study, and seemed to find peace in that way. She was silent in her habits, scarcely ever joining in general conversation ; but when Letty could steal an hour from household duties and go to Adela's room

she was always sure of hearing wise and tender words in which her heart delighted. Her pride in Adela was boundless. On the day when the latter first attired herself in modified mourning, Letty, walking with her in the garden, could not refrain from saying how Adela's dress became her.

'You are more beautiful every day, dear,' she added, in spite of a tremor which almost checked her in uttering a compliment which her sister might think too frivolous.

But Adela blushed, one would have thought it was with pleasure. Sadness, however, followed, and Letty wondered whether the beautiful face was destined to wear its pallor always.

On this same spring morning, when Hubert Eldon was taking leave of Wanley, Mrs. Waltham and Letty were talking of a visit Adela was about to pay to Stella in London. They spoke also of a visitor of their own, or, perhaps, rather of Adela's, who had been in the house for a fortnight and would return to London on the morrow. This was Alice Mutimer—no longer to be called Mrs. Rodman. Alice had lived with her mother in Wilton Square since her recovery from the illness which for a long time had kept her in ignorance of the double calamity fallen upon her. It was Adela who at length told her that she

had no husband, and that her brother Richard was dead. Neither disclosure affected her gravely. The months of mental desolation followed by physical collapse seemed to have exhausted her powers of suffering. For several days she kept to herself and cried a good deal, but she exhibited no bitter grief. It soon became evident that she thought but little of the man who had so grossly wronged her; he was quite gone from her heart. Even when she was summoned to give evidence against him in court, she did it without much reluctance, yet also without revengeful feeling; her state was one of enfeebled vitality, she was like a child in all the concerns of life. Rodman went into penal servitude, but it did not distress her, and she never again uttered his name.

Adela thought it would be a kindness to invite her to Belwick, and Alice at once accepted the invitation. Yet she was not at her ease in the house. She appeared to have forgiven Adela, overcome by the latter's goodness, but her nature was not of the kind to grow in liberal feeling. Mrs. Waltham the elder she avoided as much as possible. Perhaps Letty best succeeded in conciliating her, for Letty was homely and had the children to help her.

'I wish I had a child,' Alice said one day when she sat alone with Letty, and assisted in

nursery duties. But at once her cheeks coloured. 'I suppose you're ashamed of me for saying that. I'm not even a married woman.'

Letty replied, as she well knew how to, very gently and with comfort.

'I wonder where she goes to when she sets off by herself,' said Mrs. Waltham this morning. 'She seems to object to walk with any of us.'

'She always comes back in better spirits,' said Letty. 'I think the change is doing her good.'

'But she won't be sorry to leave us, my dear, I can see that. To be sure it was like Adela to think of having her here, but I scarcely think it would be advisable for the visit to be repeated. She is not at home with us. And how can it be expected? It's in her blood, of course; she belongs so distinctly to an inferior class.'

'I am so very sorry for her,' Letty replied. 'What dreadful things she has gone through!'

'Dreadful, indeed, my dear; but after all such things don't happen to ladies. We must remember that. It isn't as if you or Adela had suffered in that way. That, of course, would be shocking beyond all words. I can't think that persons of her class have quite the same feelings.'

‘Oh, mother!’ Letty protested. And she added, less seriously, ‘You mustn’t let Alfred hear you say such a thing as that.’

‘I’m glad to say,’ replied Mrs. Waltham, ‘that Alfred has grown much more sensible in his views of late.’

Adela entered the room. Letty was not wrong in saying that she grew more beautiful. Life had few joys for her, save intellectual, but you saw on her countenance the light of freedom. In her manner there was an unconscious dignity which made her position in the house one of recognised superiority; even her mother seldom ventured to chat without reserve in her presence. Alfred drew up in the midst of a tirade if she but seemed about to speak. Yet it was happiness to live with her; where she moved there breathed an air of purity and sweetness.

She asked if Alice had returned from her walk. Receiving a reply in the negative, she went out into the garden.

‘Adela looks happy to-day,’ said Letty. ‘That article in the paper has pleased her very much.’

‘I really hope she won’t do such a thing again,’ remarked Mrs. Waltham with dignified disapproval. ‘It seems very unlady-like to write letters to the newspapers.’

‘But it was brave of her.’

‘To be sure, we must not judge her as we should ordinary people. Still, I am not sure that she is always right. I shall never allow that she did right in paying back that money to those wretches in London. I am sure she wanted it far more than they did. The blood-thirsty creatures!’

Letty shuddered, but would not abandon defence of Adela.

‘Still it was very honourable of her, mother. She understands those things better than we can.’

‘Perhaps so, my dear,’ said Mrs. Waltham, meaning that her own opinion was not likely to be inferior in justice to that of anyone else.

Adela had been in the garden for a few minutes when she saw Alice coming towards her. The poor Princess had a bright look, as if some joyful news had just come to her. Adela met her with a friendly smile.

‘There is someone you used to know,’ Alice said, speaking with embarrassment, and pointing towards the road. ‘You remember Mr. Keene? I met him. He says he wrote that in the *Chronicle*. He would like to speak to you if you’ll let him.’

‘I shall be glad to,’ Adela replied, with a look of curiosity.

They walked to the garden gate. Mr.

Keene was just outside ; Alice beckoned to him to enter. His appearance was a great improvement on the old days ; he had grown a beard, and in his eye you saw the responsible editor. Altogether he seemed to have gained in moral solidity. None the less, his manner of approaching Adela, hat in hand, awoke reminiscences of the footlights.

‘It is a great pleasure to me to see you, Mrs. Mutimer. I trust that my few comments on your admirable letter were of a nature to afford you satisfaction.’

‘Thank you very much, Mr. Keene,’ Adela replied. ‘You wrote very kindly.’

‘I am amply rewarded,’ he said, bowing low. ‘And now that I have had my desire, permit me to hasten away. My duty calls me into the town.’

He again bowed low to Adela, smiled a farewell to Alice, and departed.

The two walked together in the garden. Adela turned to her companion.

‘I think you knew Mr. Keene a long time ago?’

‘Yes, a long time. He once asked me to marry him.’

Adela replied only with a look.

‘And he’s asked me again this morning,’ Alice pursued, breaking off a leaf from an elder bush.

‘And you——?’

‘I didn’t refuse him this time,’ Alice replied with confidence.

‘I am very glad, very glad. He has been faithful to you so long that I am sure he will make you happy.’

Alice no longer concealed her joy. It was almost exultation. Natural enough under the circumstances, poor, disinherited Princess! Once more she felt able to face people; once more she would have a name. She began to talk eagerly.

‘Of course I shall just go back to tell mother, but we are going to be married in three weeks. He has already decided upon a house; we went to see it this morning. I didn’t like to tell you, but I met him for the first time a week ago—quite by chance.’

‘I’m afraid your mother will be lonely,’ Adela said.

‘Not she! She’d far rather live alone than go anywhere else. And now I shall be able to send her money. It isn’t fair for you to have to find everything.’

‘I have wanted to ask you,’ Adela said presently, ‘do you ever hear of Harry?’

Alice shook her head.

‘The less we hear the better,’ she replied. ‘He’s gone to the bad, and there’s no help for it.’



It was true; unfortunate victim of prosperity.

Next morning Adela and Alice travelled to town together. The former did not go to Wilton Square. On the occasion of Richard's death she had met Mrs. Mutimer, but the interview had been an extremely difficult one, in spite of the old woman's endeavour to be courteous. Adela felt herself to be an object of insuperable prejudice. Once again she was bidden sound the depth of the gulf which lies between the educated and the uneducated. The old woman would not give her hand, but made an old-fashioned curtsy, which Adela felt to be half ironical. In speaking of her son she was hard. Pride would not allow her to exhibit the least symptom of the anguish which wrung her heart. She refused to accept any share of the income which was continued to her son's widow under the Wanley will. Alice, however, had felt no scruple in taking the half which Adela offered her, and by paying her mother for board and lodgings she supplemented the income derived from letting as much of the house as possible.

Once more under the roof of her dearest friend, Adela was less preoccupied with the sad past which afflicted her mind with the stress of a duty ever harder to perform. After an hour passed with Stella she could breathe

freely the atmosphere of beauty and love. Elsewhere she too often suffered from a sense of self-reproach; between her and the book in which she tried to lose herself there would come importunate visions of woe, of starved faces, of fierce eyes. The comfort she enjoyed, the affection and respect with which she was surrounded, were often burdensome to her conscience. In Stella's presence all that vanished; listening to Stella's voice she could lay firm hold on the truth that there is a work in the cause of humanity other than that which goes on so clamorously in lecture-halls and at street corners, other than that which is silently performed by faithful hearts and hands in dens of misery and amid the horrors of the lazaretto; the work of those whose soul is taken captive of loveliness, who pursue the spiritual ideal apart from the world's tumult, and, ever ready to minister in gentle offices, know that they serve best when nearest home. She was far from spiritual arrogance; her natural mood was a profound humility; she deemed herself rather below than above the active toilers, whose sweat was sacred; but life had declared that such toil was not for her, and from Stella she derived the support which enabled her to pursue her path in peace—a path not one with Stella's. Before that high-throned poet-soul Adela bent in humble reverence. Between

Stella and those toilers, however noble and devoted, there could be no question of comparison. She was of those elect whose part it is to inspire faith and hope, of those highest but for whom the world would fall into apathy or lose itself among subordinate motives. Stella never spoke of herself; Adela could not know whether she had ever stood at the severance of ways and made deliberate choice. Probably not, for on her brow was visible to all eyes the seal of election; how could she ever have doubted the leading of that spirit that used her lips for utterance?

On the morning after her arrival in London Adela took a long journey by herself to the far East End. Going by omnibus it seemed to her that she was never to reach that street off Bow Road which she had occasion to visit. But at last the conductor bade her descend, and gave her a brief direction. The thoroughfare she sought was poor but not squalid; she saw with pleasure that the house of which she had the number in mind was, if anything, cleaner and more homelike in appearance than its neighbours. A woman replied to her knock.

She asked if Miss Vine was at home.

‘Yes, mum; she’s at ’ome. Shall I tell her, or will you go up?’

‘I will go up, thank you. Which room is it?’

‘Second floor front you’ll find her.’

Adela ascended. Standing at the door she heard the hum of a sewing-machine. It made her heart sink, so clearly did it speak of incessant monotonous labour.

She knocked loudly. The machine did not stop, but she was bidden to enter.

Emma was at work, one of her sister’s children sitting by her, writing on a slate. She had expected the appearance of the landlady; seeing who the visitor was, she let her hands fall abruptly; an expression of pain passed over her features.

Adela went up to her and kissed her forehead, then exchanged a few words with the child. Emma placed a chair for her, but without speaking. The room was much like the other in which the sisters had lived, save that it had a brighter outlook. There were the two beds and the table covered with work.

‘Do you find it better here?’ Adela began by asking.

‘Yes, it is better,’ Emma replied quietly. ‘We manage to get a good deal of work, and it isn’t badly paid.’

The voice was not uncheerful; it had that serenity which comes of duties honestly performed and a life tolerably free from sordid anxiety. More than that could not be said of Emma’s existence. But, such as it was, it

*Superior, nearly a hospital, in the extreme*

depended entirely upon her own effort. Adela, on the evening when she first met her in the room where Mutimer lay dead, had read clearly in Emma's character; she knew that, though it was one of her strongest desires to lighten the burden of this so sorely tried woman, direct aid was not to be dreamt of. She had taken counsel with Stella, Stella with her husband. After much vain seeking they discovered an opportunity of work in this part of the East End. Mr. Westlake made it known to Emma; she acknowledged that it would be better than the over-swarmed neighbourhood in which she was living, and took the advice gratefully. She had hopes, too, that Kate might be got away from her evil companions. And indeed the change had not been without its effect on Mrs. Clay; she worked more steadily, and gave more attention to her children.

'She's just gone with the eldest to the hospital,' Emma replied to a question of Adela's. 'He's got something the matter with his eyes. And this one isn't at all well. He ought to be at school, only he's had such a dreadful cough we're afraid to send him out just yet. They're neither of them strong, I'm afraid.'

'And you—isn't your health better since you have lived here?' Adela asked.

'I think so. But I never ail much as long as I have plenty of work to do.'

‘I am staying with a friend in London,’ Adela said after a pause. ‘I thought I might come to see you. I hoped you would still be in the same house.’

‘Yes, we are very comfortable, very,’ Emma replied. ‘I hope we shan’t need to move for a long time; I’m sure we couldn’t do better.’

She added, without raising her eyes:

‘Thank you for coming.’

Adela knew that constraint between them was inevitable; it was enough that Emma spoke with good-will.

‘If ever you should have to move,’ she said, ‘will you let me know where you go? I have written on this paper the address of my mother’s house; I live with her. Will you show me so much friendship?’

Emma glanced at her, and saw a look which recalled to her something she had seen in those eyes before.

‘I will write and tell you if we do move,’ she said.

Adela went away with a heart not altogether sad; it was rather as though she had been hearing solemn music, which stirred her soul even while it touched upon the source of tears.

It was only on certain days that Stella sat to receive during visitors’ hours. To-day was not one of them; consequently when Hubert

Eldon called, about half-past four, the servant came up to the drawing-room to ask if Mrs. Westlake would be at home to him. Adela was in the room; at the mention of the name she rose.

‘I must write a letter before dinner,’ she said. ‘I will go and get it done whilst you are engaged.’

‘Won’t you stay? Do stay!’

‘I had much rather not. I don’t feel able to talk with anyone just now.’

She left the room without meeting Stella’s look. The latter said she would receive Mr. Eldon.

Adela went to the exquisitely furnished little boudoir, which was now always called *her* room, and sat down with the resolve to write to her mother on the subjects she had in mind. But her strength of will proved unequal to the task; after writing a word or two with shaking hand she laid down her pen and rested her face upon her hands. A minute or two ago she had been untroubled by a thought which concerned herself; now her blood was hot, and all her being moved at the impulse of a passionate desire. She had never known such a rebellion of her life. In her ears there rang the word ‘Free! free!’ She was free, and the man whom she loved with the love of years, with the first love of maidenhood and

the confirmed love of maturity, was but a few yards from her—it might be, had even come here on purpose to meet her.

Oh, why was he not poor! Had he but been some struggling artist, scarce able to support the woman of his choice, how would she have stood before him and let him read the tenderness on her face! Hubert's wealth was doubly hateful.

She started from her chair, with difficulty suppressing a cry. Someone had knocked at her door. Perhaps he was already gone; she could not say how long she had sat here. It was Stella.

‘Mr. Eldon wishes to speak to you, dear.’

She caught her friend's hands and almost crushed it between her own.

‘I can't see him! Stella, I dare not see him!’

‘But he says it is purely a matter of business he wishes to speak of,’ said Stella with a pained voice.

Adela sank her head in anguish of shame. Stella put an arm about her, fearing she would fall. But in an instant pride had sprung up; Adela freed herself, now deadly pale.

‘I will go.’

She moved mechanically, spoke mechanically the conventional words when she found that somehow she was in his presence.



‘I hope I do not disturb you,’ Hubert said with equal self-control. ‘I was about to address a letter to you before I left England. I did not know that you were here. It is better, perhaps, to do my business by word of mouth, if you will allow me.’

He was very courteous, but she could not distinguish a note in his voice that meant more than courtesy. She prayed him to be seated, and herself took a place on an ottoman. She was able very calmly to regard his face. He leaned forward with his hands together and spoke with his eyes on her.

‘It is with regard to the legacy which is due to you under Mr. Mutimer’s will. You will remember that, as trustee, I have it in my power to make over to you the capital sum which produces the annuity, if there should be reason for doing so. I am about to leave England, perhaps for some few years; I have let the Manor to some friends of mine on a twenty years’ lease. I think I should like to transfer the money to you before I go. It is simpler, better. Will you let me do that, Mrs. Mutimer?’

His words chilled her. His voice seemed harder as he proceeded; it had the ring of metal, of hard cash counted down.

What was his object? He wished to have done with her, to utterly abolish all relations

between them. It might well be that he was about to marry, and someone abroad, someone who would not care to live in an English country house. Why otherwise should he have let the Manor for so long a period? She felt as she had done long ago, when she heard of that other foreign woman. Cold as ice; not a spark of love in all her being.

She replied :

‘Thank you. If you are willing to make that change, perhaps it will be best.’

Hubert, his eyes still on her, imagined he saw pleasure in her face. She might have a project for the use of the money, some Socialist scheme, something perhaps to preserve the memory of her husband. He rose.

‘In that case I will have a deed prepared at once, and you shall be informed when it is ready for signature.’

He said to himself that she could not forgive his refusal of her request that day in the wood.

They shook hands, Adela saying :

‘You are still busy with art?’

‘In my dilettante way,’ he replied smiling.

Adela returned to her room, and there remained till the hour of dinner. At the meal she was her ordinary self. Afterwards Mr. Westlake asked her to read in proof an article about to appear in the *Beacon*; she did so,

and commented upon it with a clear mind. In the course of the evening she told her friends of the arrangement between Mr. Eldon and herself.

Two days later she had to call at the solicitor's office to sign the deed of release. Incidentally she learnt that Hubert was leaving England the same evening.

Had she been at home, these days would have been spent in solitude. For the first time she suffered in Stella's company. All allusion to Hubert was avoided between them. Sometimes she could hardly play her part ; sickness of the soul wasted her.

It was morning ; he was now on the Continent, perhaps already talking with someone he loved.

She was <sup>so</sup>shamed to have so deceived herself ; she had feared him, because she believed he loved her, and that by sympathy he might see into her heart. Had it been so, he could not have gone from her in this way. Forgetting her own pride, her own power of dissimulation, she did not believe it possible for him so to disguise tenderness. She would listen to no argument of hope, but crushed her heart with perverse cruelty.

The annual payment of money had been a link between him and her ; when she signed the deed releasing him, the cold sweat stood on her forehead.

She would reason. Of what excellence was he possessed that her life should so abandon itself at his feet? In what had he proved himself generous or capable of the virtues that subdue? Such reasoning led to self-mockery. She was no longer the girl who questioned her heart as to the significance of the vows required in the marriage service; in looking back upon those struggles she could have wept for pity. Love would submit to no analysis; it was of her life; as easy to account for the power of thought. Her soul was bare to her and all its needs. There was no refuge in ascetic resolve, in the self-deceit of spiritual enthusiasm. She could say to herself: You are free to love him; then love and be satisfied. Could she, when a-hungred, look on food, and bid her hunger be appeased by the act of sight?

Thus long she had held up, but despair was closing in upon her, and an anguish worse than death. She must leave this house and go where she might surrender herself to misery. There was no friend whose comfort could be other than torment and bitter vanity; such woe as hers only time and weariness could aid.

She was rising with the firm purpose of taking leave of Stella when a servant came to her door, announcing that Mr. Eldon desired to see her.

She was incredulous, required the servant to repeat the name. Mr. Eldon was in the drawing-room and desired to see her.

There must have been some error, some oversight in the legal business. Oh, it was inhuman to torture her in this way! Careless of what her countenance might indicate, she hastened to the drawing-room. She could feign no longer. Let him think what he would, so that he spoke briefly and released her.

But as soon as she entered the room she knew that he had not come to talk of business. He was pale and agitated. As he did not speak at once she said :

‘I thought you were gone. I thought you left England last night.’

‘I meant to do so, but found it impossible. I could not go till I had seen you once more.’

‘What more have you to say to me?’

She knew that she was speaking recklessly, without a thought for dignity. Her question sounded as if it had been extorted from her by pain.

‘That if I go away from you now and finally, I go without a hope to support my life. You are everything to me. You are offended ; you shrink from me. It is what I expected. Years ago, when I loved you without knowing what my love really meant, I flung away every chance in a moment of boyish madness. When

I should have consecrated every thought to the hope of winning you, I made myself contemptible in your eyes—worse, I made you loathe me. When it was too late I understood what I had done. Then I loved you as a man loves the one woman whom he supremely reverences, as I love you, and, I believe, shall always love you. I could not go without saying this to you. I am happier in speaking the words than I ever remember to have been in my life before.'

Adela's bosom heaved, but excess of joy seemed to give her power to deal lightly with the gift that was offered her.

'Why did you not say this the last time?' she asked. One would have said, from her tone, that it was a question of the merest curiosity. She did not realise the words that passed her lips.

'Because the distance between us seemed too great. I began to speak of that money in the thought that it might lead me on. It had the opposite effect. You showed me how cold you could be. It is natural enough. Perhaps your sympathies are too entirely remote; and yet not long ago you talked with me as if your interests could be much the same as mine. I can understand that you suppress that side of your nature. You think me useless in the world. And indeed my life has but one pur-

pose, which is a vain one. I can do nothing but feed my love for you. You have convictions and purposes; you feel that they are opposed to mine. All that is of the intellect; I only live in my passion. We are different and apart.'

'Why do you say that, as if you were glad of it?'

'Glad? I speak the words that come to my tongue. I say aloud to you what I have been repeating again and again to myself. It is mere despair.'

She drew one step nearer to him.

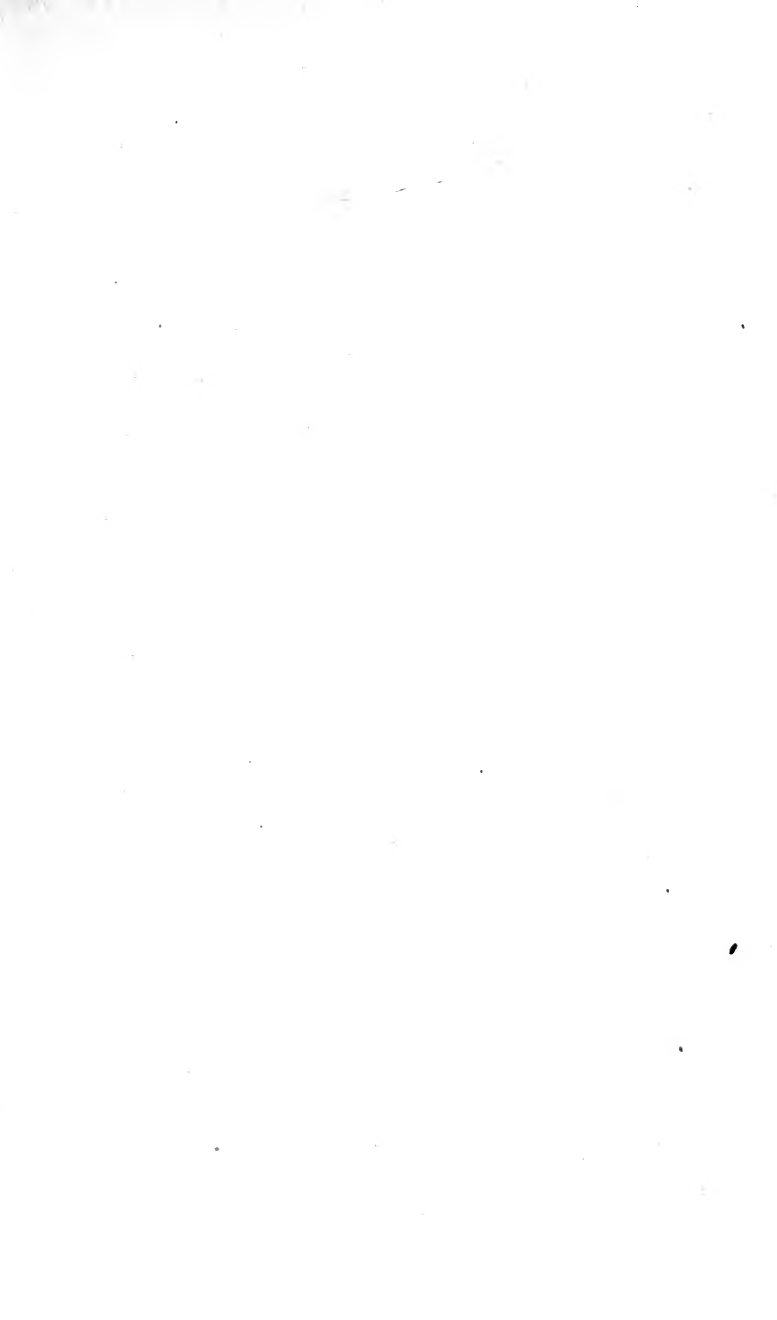
'You disregard those differences which you say are only of the intellect, and still love me. Can I not do the same? There *was* a distance between us, and my ends were other than yours. That is the past; the present is mine to make myself what you would have me. I have no law but your desire—so much I love you.'

How easily said after all! And when he searched her face with eyes on fire with their joy, when he drew her to his heart in passionate triumph, the untruth of years fell from her like a veil, and she had achieved her womanhood.

THE END.







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