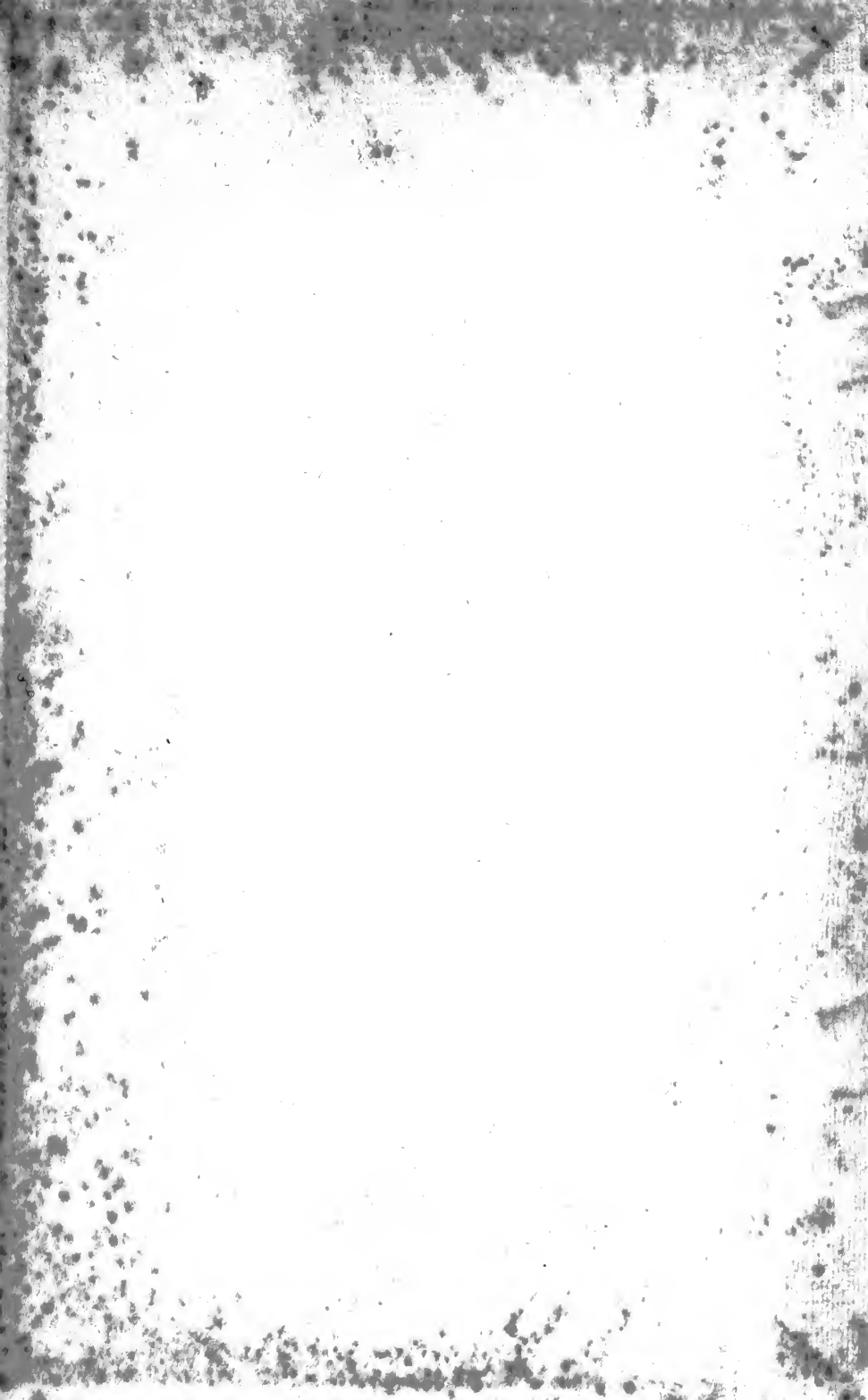
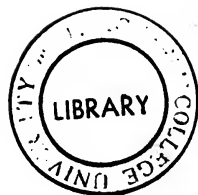


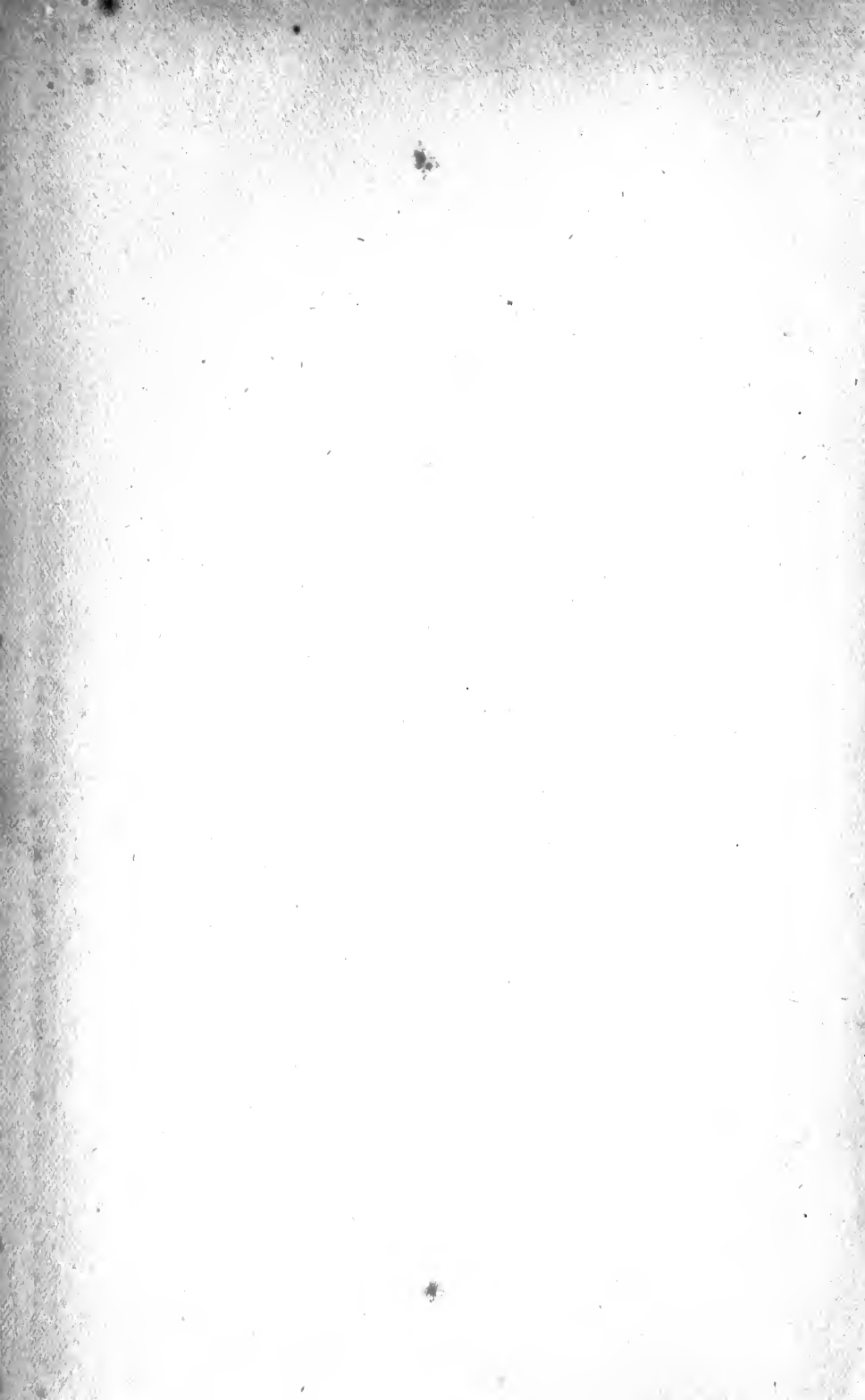
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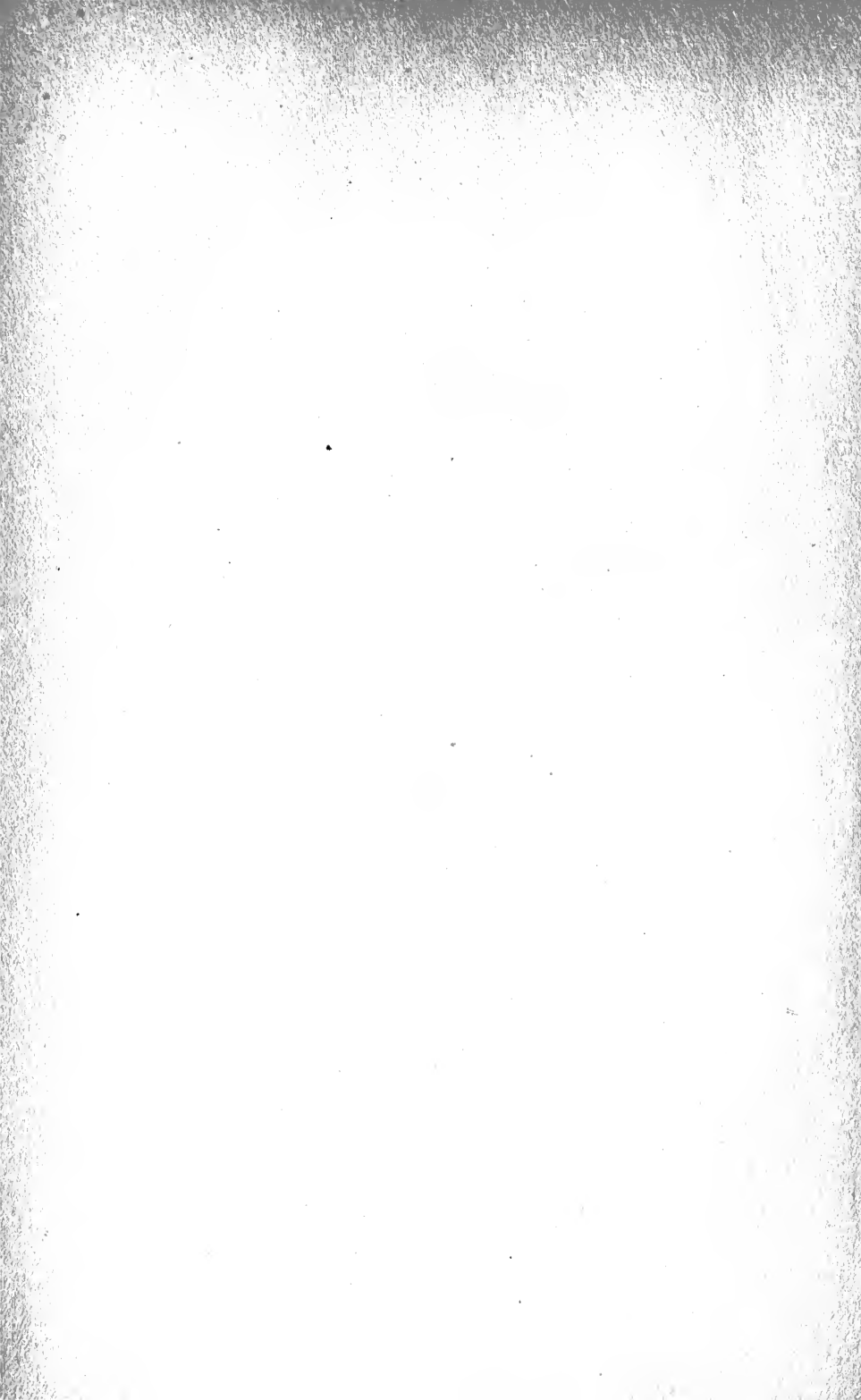
II

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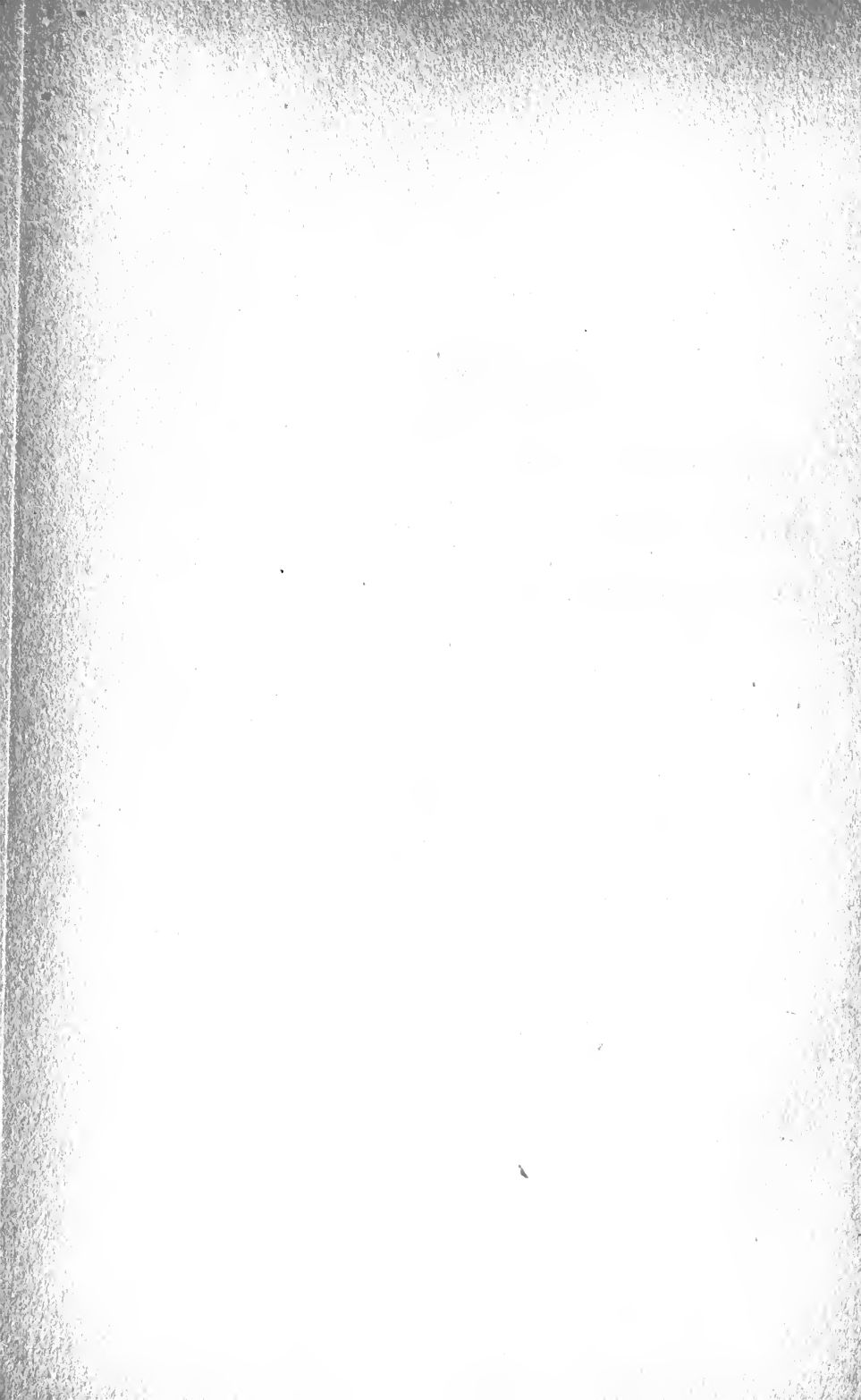


**EVAN
HARRINGTON**

A NOVEL

VOLUME

II



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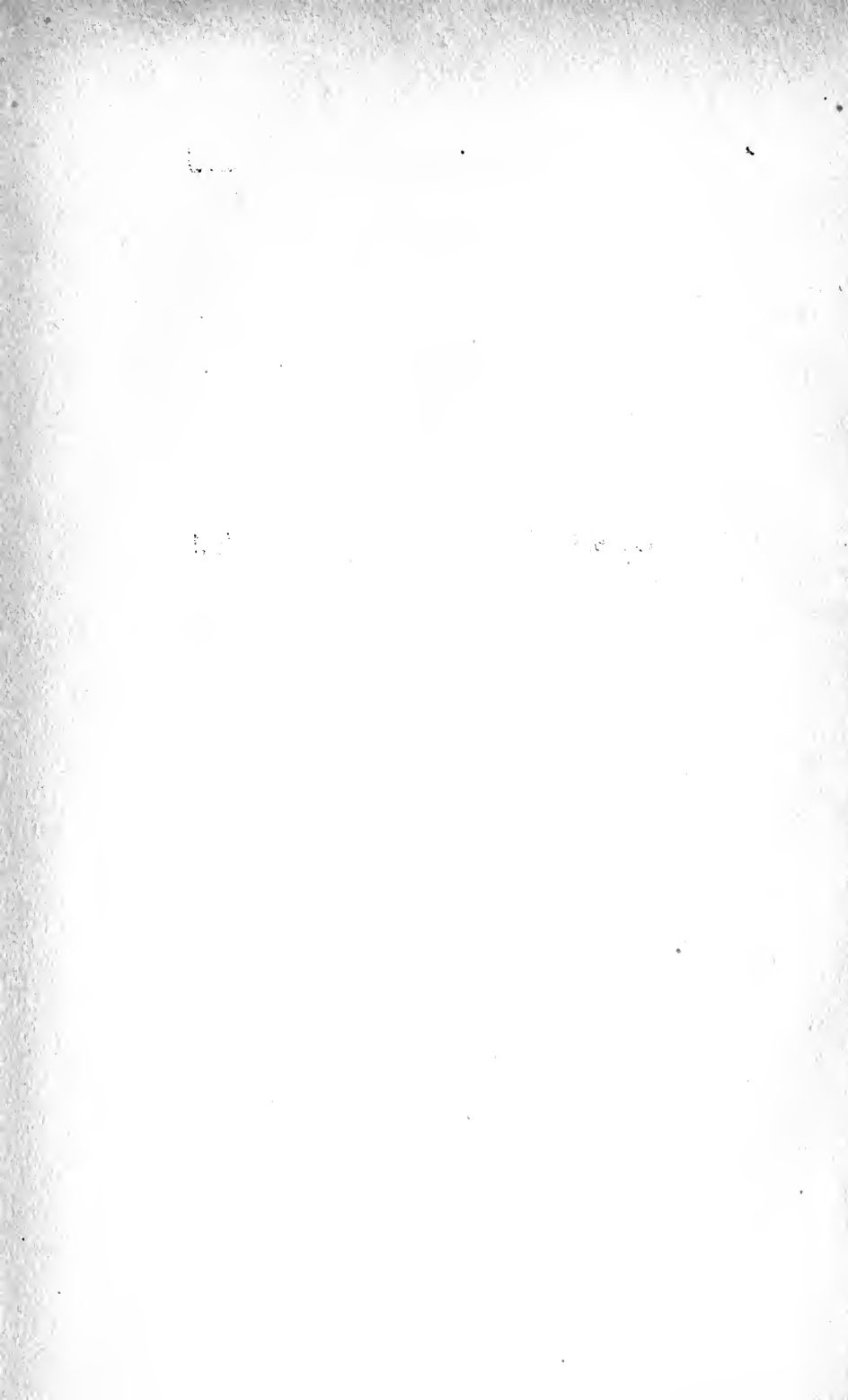
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CHAPTER XXIII

Treats of a Handkerchief

Running through Beckley Park, clear from the chalk, a little stream gave light and freshness to its pasturage. Near where it entered, a bathing-house of white marble had been built, under which the water flowed, and the dive could be taken to a paved depth, and you swam out over a pebbly bottom into sunlight, screened by the thick-weeded banks, loose-strife and willow-herb, and mint, nodding over you, and in the later season long-plumed yellow grasses. Here at sunrise the young men washed their limbs, and here since her return home English Rose loved to walk by night. She had often spoken of the little happy stream to Evan in Portugal, and when he came to Beckley Court, she arranged that he should sleep in a bed-room overlooking it. The view was sweet and pleasant to him, for all the babbling of the water was of Rose, and winding in and out, to East, to North, it wound to embowered hopes in the lover's mind, to tender dreams; and often at dawn, when dressing, his restless heart embarked on it, and sailed into havens, the phantom joys of which coloured his life for him all the day. But most he loved to look across it when the light fell. The palest solitary gleam along its course spoke to him rich promise. The faint blue beam of a star chained

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all his longings, charmed his sorrows to sleep. Rose like a fairy had breathed her spirit here, and it was a delight to the silly luxurious youth to lie down, and fix some image of a flower bending to the stream on his brain, and in the cradle of fancies that grew round it, slide down the tide of sleep.

From the image of a flower bending to the stream, like his own soul to the bosom of Rose, Evan built sweet fables. It was she that exalted him, that led him through glittering chapters of adventure. In his dream of deeds achieved for her sake, you may be sure the young man behaved worthily, though he was modest when she praised him, and his limbs trembled when the land whispered of his great reward to come. The longer he stayed at Beckley the more he lived in this world within world, and if now and then the harsh outer life smote him, a look or a word from Rose encompassed him again, and he became sensible only of a distant pain.

At first his hope sprang wildly to possess her, to believe, that after he had done deeds that would have sent ordinary men in the condition of shattered hulks to the hospital, she might be his. Then blow upon blow was struck, and he prayed to be near her till he died: no more. Then she, herself, struck him to the ground, and sitting in his chamber, sick and weary, on the evening of his mishap, Evan's sole desire was to obtain the handkerchief he had risked his neck for. To have that, and hold it to his heart, and feel it as a part of her, seemed much.

Over a length of the stream the red round harvest-moon was rising, and the weakened youth was this evening at the mercy of the charm that encircled him.

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The water curved, and dimpled, and flowed flat, and the whole body of it rushed into the spaces of sad splendour. The clustered trees stood like temples of darkness; their shadows lengthened supernaturally; and a pale gloom crept between them on the sward. He had been thinking for some time that Rose would knock at his door, and give him her voice, at least; but she did not come; and when he had gazed out on the stream till his eyes ached, he felt that he must go and walk by it. Those little flashes of the hurrying tide spoke to him of a secret rapture and of a joy-seeking impulse; the pouring onward of all the blood of life to one illumined heart, mournful from excess of love.

Pardon me, I beg. Enamoured young men have these notions. Ordinarily Evan had sufficient common sense and was as prosaic as mankind could wish him; but he has had a terrible fall in the morning, and a young woman rages in his brain. Better, indeed, and 'more manly,' were he to strike and raise huge bosses on his forehead, groan, and so have done with it. We must let him go his own way.

At the door he was met by the Countess. She came into the room without a word or a kiss, and when she did speak, the total absence of any euphuism gave token of repressed excitement yet more than her angry eyes and eager step. Evan had grown accustomed to her moods, and if one moment she was the halcyon, and another the petrel, it no longer disturbed him, seeing that he was a stranger to the influences by which she was affected. The Countess rated him severely for not seeking repose and inviting sympathy. She told him that the Jocelyns had one and all com-

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bined in an infamous plot to destroy the race of Harrington, and that Caroline had already succumbed to their assaults; that the Jocelyns would repent it, and sooner than they thought for; and that the only friend the Harringtons had in the house was Miss Bonner, whom Providence would liberally reward.

Then the Countess changed to a dramatic posture, and whispered aloud, 'Hush: she is here. She is so anxious. Be generous, my brother, and let her see you!'

'She?' said Evan faintly. 'May she come, Louisa?' He hoped for Rose.

'I have consented to mask it,' returned the Countess. 'Oh, what do I not sacrifice for you!'

She turned from him, and to Evan's chagrin introduced Juliana Bonner.

'Five minutes, remember!' said the Countess. 'I must not hear of more.' And then Evan found himself alone with Miss Bonner, and very uneasy. This young lady had restless brilliant eyes, and a contraction about the forehead which gave one the idea of a creature suffering perpetual headache. She said nothing, and when their eyes met she dropped hers in a manner that made silence too expressive. Feeling which, Evan began:

'May I tell you that I think it is I who ought to be nursing you, not you me?'

Miss Bonner replied by lifting her eyes and dropping them as before, murmuring subsequently, 'Would you do so?'

'Most certainly, if you did me the honour to select me.'

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The fingers of the young lady commenced twisting and intertwining on her lap. Suddenly she laughed:

‘It would not do at all. You won’t be dismissed from your present service till you’re unfit for any other.’

‘What do you mean?’ said Evan, thinking more of the unmusical laugh than of the words.

He received no explanation, and the irksome silence caused him to look through the window, as an escape for his mind, at least. The waters streamed on endlessly into the golden arms awaiting them. The low moon burnt through the foliage. In the distance, over a reach of the flood, one tall aspen shook against the lighted sky.

‘Are you in pain?’ Miss Bonner asked, and broke his reverie.

‘No; I am going away, and perhaps I sigh involuntarily.’

‘You like these grounds?’

‘I have never been so happy in any place.’

‘With those cruel young men about you?’

Evan now laughed. ‘We don’t call young men cruel, Miss Bonner.’

‘But were they not? To take advantage of what Rose told them—it was base!’

She had said more than she intended, possibly, for she coloured under his inquiring look, and added: ‘I wish I could say the same as you of Beckley. Do you know, I am called Rose’s thorn?’

‘Not by Miss Jocelyn herself, certainly!’

‘How eager you are to defend her. But am I not—tell me—do I not look like a thorn in company with her?’

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‘There is but the difference that ill health would make.’

‘Ill health? Oh, yes! And Rose is so much better born.’

‘To that, I am sure, she does not give a thought.’

‘Not Rose? Oh!’

An exclamation, properly lengthened, convinces the feelings more satisfactorily than much logic. Though Evan claimed only the handkerchief he had won, his heart sank at the sound. Miss Bonner watched him, and springing forward, said sharply:

‘May I tell you something?’

‘You may tell me what you please.’

‘Then, whether I offend you or not, you had better leave this.’

‘I am going,’ said Evan. ‘I am only waiting to introduce your tutor to you.’

She kept her eyes on him, and in her voice as well there was a depth, as she returned:

‘Mr. Laxley, Mr. Forth, and Harry, are going to Lymport to-morrow.’

Evan was looking at a figure, whose shadow was thrown towards the house from the margin of the stream.

He stood up, and taking the hand of Miss Bonner, said:

‘I thank you. I may, perhaps, start with them. At any rate, you have done me a great service, which I shall not forget.’

The figure by the stream he knew to be that of Rose. He released Miss Bonner’s trembling moist hand, and as he continued standing, she moved to the door, after once following the line of his eyes into the moonlight.

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Outside the door a noise was audible. Andrew had come to sit with his dear boy, and the Countess had met and engaged and driven him to the other end of the passage, where he hung remonstrating with her.

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‘Why, Van,’ he said, as Evan came up to him, ‘I thought you were in a profound sleep. Louisa said——’

‘Silly Andrew!’ interposed the Countess, ‘do you not observe he is sleep-walking now?’ and she left them with a light laugh to go to Juliana, whom she found in tears. The Countess was quite aware of the efficacy of a little bit of burlesque lying to cover her retreat from any petty exposure.

Evan soon got free from Andrew. He was under the dim stars, walking to the great fire in the East. The cool air refreshed him. He was simply going to ask for his own, before he went, and had no cause to fear what would be thought by any one. A handkerchief! A man might fairly win that, and carry it out of a very noble family, without having to blush for himself.

I cannot say whether he inherited his feeling for rank from Mel, his father, or that the Countess had succeeded in instilling it, but Evan never took Republican ground in opposition to those who insulted him, and never lashed his ‘manhood’ to assert itself, nor compared the fineness of his instincts with the behaviour of titled gentlemen. Rather he seemed to admit the distinction between his birth and that of a gentleman, admitting it to his own soul, as it were, and struggled simply as men struggle against a destiny. The news Miss Bonner had given him

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sufficed to break a spell which could not have endured another week; and Andrew, besides, had told him of Caroline's illness. He walked to meet Rose, honestly intending to ask for his own, and wish her good-bye.

Rose saw him approach, and knew him in the distance. She was sitting on a lower branch of the aspen, that shot out almost from the root, and stretched over the intervolving rays of light on the tremulous water. She could not move to meet him. She was not the Rose whom we have hitherto known. Love may spring in the bosom of a young girl, like Hesper in the evening sky, a gray speck in a field of gray, and not be seen or known, till surely as the circle advances the faint planet gathers fire, and, coming nearer earth, dilates, and will and must be seen and known. When Evan lay like a dead man on the ground, Rose turned upon herself as the author of his death, and then she felt this presence within her, and her heart all day had talked to her of it, and was throbbing now, and would not be quieted. She could only lift her eyes and give him her hand; she could not speak. She thought him cold, and he was: cold enough to think that she and her cousin were not unlike in their manner, though not deep enough to reflect that it was from the same cause.

She was the first to find her wits: but not before she spoke did she feel, and start to feel, how long had been the silence, and that her hand was still in his.

'Why did you come out, Evan? It was not right.'

'I came to speak to you. I shall leave early to-morrow, and may not see you alone.'

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‘You are going——?’

She checked her voice, and left the thrill of it wavering in him.

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‘Yes, Rose, I am going; I should have gone before.’

‘Evan!’ she grasped his hand, and then timidly retained it. ‘You have not forgiven me? I see now. I did not think of any risk to you. I only wanted you to beat. I wanted you to be first and best. If you knew how I thank God for saving you! What my punishment would have been!’

Till her eyes were full she kept them on him, too deep in emotion to be conscious of it.

He could gaze on her tears coldly.

‘I should be happy to take the leap any day for the prize you offered. I have come for that.’

‘For what, Evan?’ But while she was speaking the colour mounted in her cheeks, and she went on rapidly: ‘Did you think it unkind of me not to come to nurse you. I must tell you, to defend myself. It was the Countess, Evan. She is offended with me—very justly, I dare say. She would not let me come. What could I do? I had no claim to come.’

Rose was not aware of the import of her speech. Evan, though he felt more in it, and had some secret nerves set tingling and dancing, was not to be moved from his demand.

‘Do you intend to withhold it, Rose?’

‘Withhold what, Evan? Anything that you wish for is yours.’

‘The handkerchief. Is not that mine?’

Rose faltered a word. Why did he ask for it? Because he asked for nothing else, and wanted no other thing save that.

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Why did she hesitate? Because it was so poor a gift, and so unworthy of him.

And why did he insist? Because in honour she was bound to surrender it.

And why did she hesitate still? Let her answer.

‘Oh, Evan! I would give you anything but that; and if you are going away, I should beg so much to keep it.’

He must have been in a singular state not to see her heart in the refusal, as was she not to see his in the request. But Love is blindest just when the bandage is being removed from his forehead.

‘Then you will not give it me, Rose? Do you think I shall go about boasting “This is Miss Jocelyn’s handkerchief, and I, poor as I am, have won it?”’

The taunt struck aslant in Rose’s breast with a peculiar sting. She stood up.

‘I will give it you, Evan.’

Turning from him she drew it forth, and handed it to him hurriedly.

It was warm. It was stained with his blood. He guessed where it had been nestling, and now, as if by revelation, he saw that large sole star in the bosom of his darling, and was blinded by it and lost his senses.

‘Rose! beloved!’

Like the flower of his nightly phantasy bending over the stream, he looked and saw in her sweet face the living wonders that encircled his image; she murmuring: ‘No, you must hate me.’

‘I love you, Rose, and dare to say it—and it’s unpardonable. Can you forgive me?’

She raised her face to him.

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‘Forgive you for loving me?’ she said.

Holy to them grew the stillness: the ripple suffused in golden moonlight: the dark edges of the leaves against superlative brightness. Not a chirp was heard, nor anything save the cool and endless carol of the happy waters, whose voices are the spirits of silence. Nature seemed consenting that their hands should be joined, their eyes intermingling. And when Evan, with a lover’s craving, wished her lips to say what her eyes said so well, Rose drew his fingers up, and, with an arch smile and a blush, kissed them. The simple act set his heart thumping, and from the look of love, she saw an expression of pain pass through him. Her fealty—her guileless, fearless truth—which the kissing of his hand brought vividly before him, conjured its contrast as well in this that was hidden from her, or but half suspected. Did she know—know and love him still? He thought it might be: but that fell dead on her asking:

‘Shall I speak to Mama to-night?’

A load of lead crushed him.

‘Rose!’ he said; but could get no farther.

Innocently, or with well-masked design, Rose branched off into little sweet words about his bruised shoulder, touching it softly, as if she knew the virtue that was in her touch, and accusing her selfish self as she caressed it: ‘Dearest Evan! you must have been sure I thought no one like you. Why did you not tell me before? I can hardly believe it now! Do you know,’ she hurried on, ‘they think me cold and heartless,—am I? I must be, to have made you run such risk; but yet I’m sure I could not have survived you.’

Dropping her voice, Rose quoted Ruth. As Evan

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listened, the words were like food from heaven poured into his spirit.

'To-morrow,' he kept saying to himself, 'to-morrow I will tell her all. Let her think well of me a few short hours.'

But the passing minutes locked them closer; each had a new link—in a word, or a speechless breath, or a touch: and to break the marriage of their eyes there must be infinite baseness on one side, or on the other disloyalty to love.

The moon was a silver ball, high up through the aspen-leaves. Evan kissed the hand of Rose, and led her back to the house. He had appeased his conscience by restraining his wild desire to kiss her lips.

In the hall they parted. Rose whispered, 'Till death!' giving him her hands.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Countess makes herself felt

There is a peculiar reptile whose stroke is said to deprive men of motion. On the day after the great Mel had stalked the dinner-table of Beckley Court, several of the guests were sensible of the effect of this creature's mysterious touch, without knowing what it was that paralyzed them. Drummond Forth had fully planned to go to Lymport. He had special reasons for making investigations with regard to the great Mel. Harry, who was fond of Drummond, offered to accompany him, and Laxley, for the sake of a diversion, fell into the scheme. Mr. George Uploft

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was also to be of the party, and promised them fun. But when the time came to start, not one could be induced to move: Laxley was pressingly engaged by Rose: Harry showed the rope the Countess held him by; Mr. George made a singular face, and seriously advised Drummond to give up the project.

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'Don't rub that woman the wrong way,' he said, in a private colloquy they had. 'By Jingo, she's a Tartar. She was as a gal, and she isn't changed, Lou Harrington. Fancy now: she knew me, and she faced me out, and made me think her a stranger! 'Gad, I'm glad I didn't speak to the others. Lord's sake, keep it quiet. Don't rouse that woman, now, if you want to keep a whole skin.'

Drummond laughed at his extreme earnestness in cautioning him, and appeared to enjoy his dread of the Countess. Mr. George would not tell how he had been induced to change his mind. He repeated his advice with a very emphatic shrug of the shoulder.

'You seem afraid of her,' said Drummond.

'I am. I ain't ashamed to confess it. She's a regular viper, my boy!' said Mr. George. 'She and I once were pretty thick—least said soonest mended, you know. I offended her. Wasn't quite up to her mark—a tailor's daughter, you know. 'Gad, if she didn't set an Irish Dragoon Captain on me!—I went about in danger of my life. The fellow began to twist his damned black moustaches the moment he clapped eyes on me—bullied me till, upon my soul, I was almost ready to fight him! Oh, she was a little tripping Tartar of a bantam hen then. She's grown since she's been countessed, and does it peacocky. Now, I give you fair warning, you know. She's more than any man's match.'

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'I dare say I shall think the same when she has beaten me,' quoth cynical Drummond, and immediately went and gave orders for his horse to be saddled, thinking that he would tread on the head of the viper.

But shortly before the hour of his departure, Mrs. Evremonde summoned him to her, and showed him a slip of paper, on which was written, in an uncouth small hand:

'Madam: a friend warns you that your husband is coming here. Deep interest in your welfare is the cause of an anonymous communication. The writer wishes only to warn you in time.'

Mrs. Evremonde told Drummond that she had received it from one of the servants when leaving the breakfast-room. Beyond the fact that a man on horseback had handed it to a little boy, who had delivered it over to the footman, Drummond could learn nothing. Of course, all thought of the journey to Lymport was abandoned. If but to excogitate a motive for the origin of the document, Drummond was forced to remain; and now he had it, and now he lost it again; and as he was wandering about in his maze, the Countess met him with a 'Good-morning, Mr. Forth. Have I impeded your expedition by taking my friend Mr. Harry to cavalier me to-day?'

Drummond smilingly assured her that she had not in any way disarranged his projects, and passed with so absorbed a brow that the Countess could afford to turn her head and inspect him, without fear that he would surprise her in the act. Knocking the pearly

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edge of her fan on her teeth, she eyed him under her joined black lashes, and deliberately read his thoughts in the mere shape of his back and shoulders. She read him through and through, and was unconscious of the effective attitude she stood in for the space of two full minutes, and even then it required one of our unhappy sex to recall her. This was Harry Jocelyn.

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‘My friend,’ she said to him, with a melancholy smile, ‘my one friend here!’

Harry went through the form of kissing her hand, which he had been taught, and practised cunningly as the first step of the ladder.

‘I say, you looked so handsome, standing as you did just now,’ he remarked; and she could see how far beneath her that effective attitude had precipitated the youth.

‘Ah!’ she sighed, walking on, with the step of majesty in exile.

‘What the deuce is the matter with everybody to-day?’ cried Harry. ‘I’m hanged if I can make it out. There’s the Carrington, as you call her, I met her with such a pair of eyes, and old George looking as if he’d been licked, at her heels; and there’s Drummond and his lady fair moping about the lawn, and my mother positively getting excited—there’s a miracle! and Juley’s sharpening her nails for somebody, and if Ferdinand don’t look out, your brother’ll be walking off with Rosey—that’s my opinion.’

‘Indeed,’ said the Countess. ‘You really think so?’

‘Well, they come it pretty strong together.’

‘And what constitutes the “come it strong,” Mr. Harry?’

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‘Hold of hands, you know,’ the young gentleman indicated.

‘Alas, then! must not we be more discreet?’

‘Oh! but it’s different. With young people one knows what that means.’

‘Deus!’ exclaimed the Countess, tossing her head wearily, and Harry perceived his slip, and down he went again.

What wonder that a youth in such training should consent to fetch and carry, to listen and relate, to play the spy and know no more of his office than that it gave him astonishing thrills of satisfaction, and now and then a secret sweet reward?

The Countess had sealed Miss Carrington’s mouth by one of her most dexterous strokes. On leaving the dinner-table over-night, and seeing that Caroline’s attack would preclude their instant retreat, the gallant Countess turned at bay. A word aside to Mr. George Uploft, and then the Countess took a chair by Miss Carrington. She did all the conversation, and supplied all the smiles to it, and when a lady has to do that she is justified in striking, and striking hard, for to abandon the pretence of sweetness is a gross insult from one woman to another.

The Countess then led circuitously, but with all the ease in the world, to the story of a Portuguese lady, of a marvellous beauty, and who was deeply enamoured of the Chevalier Miguel de Rasadio, and engaged to be married to him: but, alas for her! in the insolence of her happiness she wantonly made an enemy in the person of a most unoffending lady, and she repented it. While sketching the admirable Chevalier, the Countess drew a telling portrait of Mr. George Uploft, and grati-

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fied her humour and her wrath at once by strong truth to nature in the description and animated encomiums on the individual. The Portuguese lady, too, a little resembled Miss Carrington, in spite of her marvellous beauty. And it was odd that Miss Carrington should give a sudden start and a horrified glance at the Countess just when the Countess was pathetically relating the proceeding taken by the revengeful lady on the beautiful betrothed of the Chevalier Miguel de Rasadio: which proceeding was nothing other than to bring to the Chevalier's knowledge that his beauty had a defect concealed by her apparel, and that the specks in his fruit were not one, or two, but, Oh! And the dreadful sequel to the story the Countess could not tell: preferring ingeniously to throw a tragic veil over it. Miss Carrington went early to bed that night.

The courage that mounteth with occasion was eminently the attribute of the Countess de Saldar. After that dreadful dinner she (since the weaknesses of great generals should not be altogether ignored), did pray for flight and total obscurity, but Caroline could not be left in her hysteric state, and now that she really perceived that Evan was progressing and on the point of sealing his chance, the devoted lady resolved to hold her ground. Besides, there was the pic-nic. The Countess had one dress she had not yet appeared in, and it was for the pic-nic she kept it. That small motives are at the bottom of many illustrious actions is a modern discovery; but I shall not adopt the modern principle of magnifying the small motive till it overshadows my noble heroine. I remember that the small motive is only to be seen by being borne into the range of my vision by a powerful microscope;

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and if I do more than see—if I carry on my reflections by the aid of the glass, I arrive at conclusions that must be false. Men who dwarf human nature do this. The gods are juster. The Countess, though she wished to remain for the pic-nic, and felt warm in anticipation of the homage to her new dress, was still a gallant general and a devoted sister, and if she said to herself, ‘Come what may, I will stay for that pic-nic, and they shall not brow-beat me out of it,’ it is that trifling pleasures are noisiest about the heart of human nature: not that they govern us absolutely. There is mob-rule in minds as in communities, but the Countess had her appetites in excellent drill. This pic-nic surrendered, represented to her defeat in all its ignominy. The largest longest-headed of schemes ask occasionally for something substantial and immediate. So the Countess stipulated with Providence for the pic-nic. It was a point to be passed: ‘Thorough flood, thorough fire.’

In vain poor Andrew Cogglesby, to whom the dinner had been torture, and who was beginning to see the position they stood in at Beckley, begged to be allowed to take them away, or to go alone. The Countess laughed him into submission. As a consequence of her audacious spirits she grew more charming and more natural, and the humour that she possessed, but which, like her other faculties, was usually subordinate to her plans, gave spontaneous bursts throughout the day, and delighted her courtiers. Nor did the men at all dislike the difference of her manner with them, and with the ladies. I may observe that a woman who shows a marked depression in the presence of her own sex will be thought very superior by ours; that

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is, supposing she is clever and agreeable. Manhood distinguishes what flatters it. A lady approaches. 'We must be proper,' says the Countess, and her hearty laugh dies with suddenness and is succeeded by the maturest gravity. And the Countess can look a profound merriment with perfect sedateness when there appears to be an equivocal in company. Finely secret are her glances, as if under every eye-lash there lurked the shade of a meaning. What she meant was not so clear. All this was going on, and Lady Jocelyn was simply amused, and sat as at a play.

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'She seems to have stepped out of a book of French memoirs,' said her ladyship. 'La vie galante et dévote—voilà la Comtesse.'

In contradistinction to the other ladies, she did not detest the Countess because she could not like her.

'Where's the harm in her?' she asked. 'She doesn't damage the men, that I can see. And a person you can laugh at and with, is inexhaustible.'

'And how long is she to stay here?' Mrs. Shorne inquired. Mrs. Melville remarking: 'Her visit appears to be inexhaustible.'

'I suppose she'll stay till the Election business is over,' said Lady Jocelyn.

The Countess had just driven with Melville to Fallowfield in Caroline's black lace shawl.

'Upwards of four weeks longer!' Mrs. Melville interjected.

Lady Jocelyn chuckled.

Miss Carrington was present. She had been formerly sharp in her condemnation of the Countess—her affectedness, her euphuism, and her vulgarity. Now

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she did not say a word, though she might have done it with impunity.

‘I suppose, Emily, you see what Rose is about?’ said Mrs. Melville. ‘I should not have thought it advisable to have that young man here, myself. I think I let you know that.’

‘One young man’s as good as another,’ responded her ladyship. ‘I’ve my doubts of the one that’s much better. I fancy Rose is as good a judge by this time as you or I.’

Mrs. Melville made an effort or two to open Lady Jocelyn’s eyes, and then relapsed into the confident serenity inspired by evil prognostications.

‘But there really does seem some infatuation about these people!’ exclaimed Mrs. Shorne, turning to Miss Current. ‘Can you understand it? The Duke, my dear! Things seem to be going on in the house, that really—and so openly.’

‘That’s one virtue,’ said Miss Current, with her imperturbable metallic voice, and face like a cold clear northern sky. ‘Things done in secret throw on the outsiders the onus of raising a scandal.’

‘You don’t believe, then?’ suggested Mrs. Shorne.

Miss Current replied: ‘I always wait for a thing to happen first.’

‘But haven’t you seen, my dear?’

‘I never see anything, my dear.’

‘Then you must be blind, my dear.’

‘On the contrary, that’s how I keep my sight, my dear.’

‘I don’t understand you,’ said Mrs. Shorne.

‘It’s a part of the science of optics, and requires study,’ said Miss Current.

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Neither with the worldly nor the unworldly woman could the ladies do anything. But they were soon to have their triumph.

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A delicious morning had followed the lovely night. The stream flowed under Evan's eyes, like something in a lower sphere, now. His passion took him up, as if a genie had lifted him into mid-air, and showed him the world on a palm of a hand; and yet, as he dressed by the window, little chinks in the garden wall, and nectarines under their shiny leaves, and the white walks of the garden, were stamped on his hot brain accurately and lastingly. Ruth upon the lips of Rose: that voice of living constancy made music to him everywhere. 'Thy God shall be my God.' He had heard it all through the night. He had not yet broken the tender charm sufficiently to think that he must tell her the sacrifice she would have to make. When partly he did, the first excuse he clutched at was, that he had not even kissed her on the forehead. Surely he had been splendidly chivalrous? Just as surely he would have brought on himself the scorn of the chivalrous or of the commonly balanced if he had been otherwise. The grandeur of this or of any of his proceedings, then, was forfeited, as it must needs be when we are in the false position: we can have no glory though martyred. The youth felt it, even to the seeing of why it was; and he resolved, in justice to the dear girl, that he would break loose from his fetters, as we call our weakness. Behold, Rose met him descending the stairs, and, taking his hand, sang, unabashed, by the tell-tale colour coming over her face, a stave of a little Portuguese air that they had both been fond of in Portugal; and he, listening to it,

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and looking in her eyes, saw that his feelings in the old time had been hers. Instantly the old time gave him its breath, the present drew back.

Rose, now that she had given her heart out, had no idea of concealment. She would have denied nothing to her aunts: she was ready to confide it to her mother. Was she not proud of the man she loved? When Evan's hand touched hers she retained it, and smiled up at him frankly, as it were to make him glad in her gladness. If before others his eyes brought the blood to her cheeks, she would perhaps drop her eye-lids an instant, and then glance quickly level again to reassure him. And who would have thought that this boisterous, boyish creature had such depths of eye! Cold, did they call her? Let others think her cold. The tender knowledge of her—the throbbing secret they held in common sang at his heart. Rose made no confidante, but she attempted no mystery. Evan should have risen to the height of the noble girl. But the dearer and sweeter her bearing became, the more conscious he was of the dead weight he was dragging: in truth her behaviour stamped his false position to hard print the more he admired her for it, and he had shrinkings from the feminine part it imposed on him to play.

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An Irish retriever-pup of the Shannon breed, Pat by name, was undergoing tuition on the sward close by the kennels, Rose's hunting-whip being passed through his collar to restrain erratic propensities. The particular point of instruction which now made poor Pat hang out his tongue, and agitate his crisp brown curls, was the performance of the 'down-charge'; a ceremony demanding implicit obedience from the animal in the midst of volatile gambadoes, and a simulation of profound repose when his desire to be up and bounding was mighty. Pat's Irish eyes were watching Rose, as he lay with his head couched between his fore-paws in the required attitude. He had but half learnt his lesson, and something in his half-humorous, half-melancholy look talked to Rose more eloquently than her friend Ferdinand at her elbow. Laxley was her assistant dog-breaker. Rose would not abandon her friends because she had accepted a lover. On the contrary, Rose was very kind to Ferdinand, and perhaps felt bound to be so to-day. To-day, also, her face was lighted; a readiness to colour, and an expression of deeper knowledge, which she now had, made the girl dangerous to friends. This was not Rose's fault: but there is no doubt among the faculty that love is a contagious disease, and we ought not to come within miles of the creatures in whom it lodges.

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Pat's tail kept hinting to his mistress that a change would afford him satisfaction. After a time she withdrew her wistful gaze from him, and listened entirely to Ferdinand: and it struck her that he spoke particularly well to-day, though she did not see so much in his eyes as in Pat's. The subject concerned his departure, and he asked Rose if she should be sorry. Rose, to make him sure of it, threw a music into her voice dangerous to friends. For she had given heart and soul to Evan, and had a sense, therefore, of being irredeemably in debt to her old associates, and wished to be doubly kind to them.

Pat took advantage of the diversion to stand up quietly and have a shake. He then began to kiss his mistress's hand, to show that all was right on both sides; and followed this with a playful pretence, at a bite, that there might be no subsequent misunderstanding, and then a bark and a whine. As no attention was paid to this amount of plain-speaking, Pat made a bolt. He got no farther than the length of the whip, and all he gained was to bring on himself the terrible word of drill once more. But Pat had tasted liberty. Irish rebellion against constituted authority was exhibited. Pat would not: his ears tossed over his head, and he jumped to right and left, and looked the raggedest rapparee that ever his ancestry trotted after. Rose laughed at his fruitless efforts to get free; but Ferdinand meditatively appeared to catch a sentiment in them.

'Down-charge, sir, will you? Ah, Pat! Pat! You'll have to obey me, my boy. Now, down-charge!'

While Rose addressed the language of reason to Pat,

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Ferdinand slipped in a soft word or two. Presently she saw him on one knee.

‘Pat won’t, and I will,’ said he.

‘But Pat shall, and you had better not,’ said she. ‘Besides, my dear Ferdinand,’ she added, laughing, ‘you don’t know how to do it.’

‘Do you want me prostrate on all fours, Rose?’

‘No. I hope not. Do get up, Ferdinand. You’ll be seen from the windows.’

Instead of quitting his posture, he caught her hand, and scared her with a declaration.

‘Of all men, you to be on your knees! and to me, Ferdinand!’ she cried in discomfort.

‘Why shouldn’t I, Rose?’ was this youth’s answer.

He had got the idea that foreign cavalier manners would take with her; but it was not so easy to make his speech correspond with his posture, and he lost his opportunity, which was pretty. However, he spoke plain English. The interview ended by Rose releasing Pat from drill, and running off in a hurry. Where was Evan? She must have his consent to speak to her mother, and prevent a recurrence of these silly scenes.

Evan was with Caroline, his sister.

It was contrary to the double injunction of the Countess that Caroline should receive Evan during her absence, or that he should disturb the dear invalid with a visit. These two were, not unlike both in organization and character, and they had not sat together long before they found each other out. Now, to further Evan’s love-suit, the Countess had induced Caroline to continue yet awhile in the Purgatory Beckley Court had become to her; but Evan, in speaking

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of Rose, expressed a determination to leave her, and Caroline caught at it.

‘Can you?—will you? Oh, dear Van! have you the courage? I—look at me—you know the home I go to, and—and I think of it here as a place to be happy in. What have our marriages done for us? Better that we had married simple stupid men who earn their bread, and would not have been ashamed of us! And, my dearest, it is not only that. None can tell what our temptations are. Louisa has strength, but I feel I have none; and though, dear, for your true interest, I would indeed sacrifice myself—I would, Van! I would!—it is not good for you to stay,—I know it is not. For you have Papa’s sense of honour—and oh! if you should learn to despise me, my dear brother!’

She kissed him; her nerves were agitated by strong mental excitement. He attributed it to her recent attack of illness, but could not help asking, while he caressed her:

‘What’s that? Despise you?’

It may have been that Caroline felt then, that to speak of something was to forfeit something. A light glimmered across the dewy blue of her beautiful eyes. Desire to breathe it to him, and have his loving aid: the fear of forfeiting it, evil as it was to her, and at the bottom of all, that doubt we choose to encourage of the harm in a pleasant sin unaccomplished; these might be read in the rich dim gleam that swept like sunlight over sea-water between breaks of cloud.

‘Dear Van! do you love her so much?’

Caroline knew too well that she was shutting her own theme with iron clasps when she once touched on Evan’s.

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Love her? Love Rose? It became an endless carol with Evan. Caroline sighed for him from her heart.

‘You know—you understand me; don’t you?’ he said, after a breathless excursion of his fancy.

‘I believe you love her, dear. I think I have never loved any one but my one brother.’

His love for Rose he could pour out to Caroline; when it came to Rose’s love for him his blood thickened, and his tongue felt guilty. He must speak to her, he said,—tell her all.

‘Yes, tell her all,’ echoed Caroline. ‘Do, do tell her. Trust a woman utterly if she loves you, dear. Go to her instantly.’

‘Could you bear it?’ said Evan. He began to think it was for the sake of his sisters that he had hesitated.

‘Bear it? bear anything rather than perpetual imposture. What have I not borne? Tell her, and then, if she is cold to you, let us go. Let us go. I shall be glad to. Ah, Van! I love you so.’ Caroline’s voice deepened. ‘I love you so, my dear. You won’t let your new love drive me out? Shall you always love me?’

Of that she might be sure, whatever happened.

‘Should you love me, Van, if evil befel me?’

Thrice as well, he swore to her.

‘But if I—if I, Van—— Oh! my life is intolerable! Supposing I should ever disgrace you in any way, and not turn out all you fancied me. I am very weak and unhappy.’

Evan kissed her confidently, with a warm smile. He said a few words of the great faith he had in her: words that were bitter comfort to Caroline. This brother who might save her, to him she dared not

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speak. Did she wish to be saved? She only knew that to wound Evan's sense of honour and the high and chivalrous veneration for her sex and pride in himself and those of his blood, would be wicked and unpardonable, and that no earthly pleasure could drown it. Thinking this, with her hands joined in pale dejection, Caroline sat silent, and Evan left her to lay bare his heart to Rose. On his way to find Rose he was stopped by the announcement of the arrival of Mr. Raikes, who thrust a bundle of notes into his hand, and after speaking loudly of 'his curricule,' retired on important business, as he said, with a mysterious air. 'I'm beaten in many things, but not in the article *Luck*,' he remarked; 'you will hear of me, though hardly as a tutor in this academy.'

Scanning the bundle of notes, without a reflection beyond the thought that money was in his hand; and wondering at the apparition of the curricule, Evan was joined by Harry Jocelyn, and Harry linked his arm in Evan's and plunged with extraordinary spontaneity and candour into the state of his money affairs. What the deuce he was to do for money he did not know. From the impressive manner in which he put it, it appeared to be one of Nature's great problems that the whole human race were bound to set their heads together to solve. A hundred pounds—Harry wanted no more, and he could not get it. His uncles? they were as poor as rats; and all the spare money they could club was going for Mel's Election expenses. A hundred and fifty was what Harry really wanted; but he could do with a hundred. Ferdinand, who had plenty, would not even lend him fifty. Ferdinand had

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dared to hint at a debt already unsettled, and he called himself a gentleman!

'You wouldn't speak of money-matters now, would you, Harrington?'

'I dislike the subject, I confess,' said Evan.

'And so do I.' Harry jumped at the perfect similarity between them. 'You can't think how it bothers one to have to talk about it. You and I are tremendously alike.'

Evan might naturally suppose that a subject Harry detested, he would not continue, but for a whole hour Harry turned it over and over with grim glances at Jewry.

'You see,' he wound up, 'I'm in a fix. I want to help that poor girl, and one or two things——'

'It's for that you want it?' cried Evan, brightening to him. 'Accept it from me.'

It is a thing familiar to the experience of money-borrowers, that your 'last chance' is the man who is to accommodate you; but we are always astonished, nevertheless; and Harry was, when notes to the amount of the largest sum named by him were placed in his hand by one whom he looked upon as the last to lend.

'*What* a trump you are, Harrington!' was all he could say; and then he was for hurrying Evan into the house, to find pen and paper, and write down a memorandum of the loan: but Evan insisted upon sparing him the trouble, though Harry, with the admirable scruples of an inveterate borrower, begged hard to be allowed to bind himself legally to repay the money.

'Pon my soul, Harrington, you make me remember I once doubted whether you were one of us—rather

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your own fault, you know,' said Harry. 'Bury that, won't you?'

'Till your doubts recur,' Evan observed; and Harry burst out, 'Gad, if you weren't such a melancholy beggar, you'd be the jolliest fellow I know! There, go after Rosey. Dashed if I don't think you're a-head of Ferdinand, long chawks. Your style does for girls. *I like women.*'

With a chuckle and a wink, Harry swung off. Evan had now to reflect that he had just thrown away part of the price of his bondage to Tailordom; the mention of Rose filled his mind. Where was she? Both were seeking one another. Rose was in the cypress walk. He saw the starlike figure up the length of it, between the swelling tall dark pillars, and was hurrying to her, resolute not to let one minute of deception blacken further the soul that loved so true a soul. She saw him, and stood smiling, when the Countess issued, shadow-like, from a side path, and declared that she must claim her brother for a few instants. Would her sweet Rose pardon her? Rose bowed coolly. The hearts of the lovers were chilled, not that they perceived any malice in the Countess, but their keen instincts felt an evil fate.

The Countess had but to tell Evan that she had met the insolvent in apples, and recognized him under his change of fortune, and had no doubt that at least he would amuse the company. Then she asked her brother the superfluous question, whether he loved her, which Evan answered satisfactorily enough, as he thought; but practical ladies require proofs.

'Quick,' said Evan, seeing Rose vanish, 'what do you want? I'll do anything.'

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'Anything? Ah, but this will be disagreeable to you.'

'Name it at once. I promise beforehand.'

The Countess wanted Evan to ask Andrew to be the very best brother-in-law in the world, and win, unknown to himself, her cheerful thanks, by lending Evan to lend to her the sum of one hundred pounds, as she was in absolute distress for money.

'Really, Louisa, this is a thing you might ask him yourself,' Evan remonstrated.

'It would not become me to do so, dear,' said the Countess demurely; and inasmuch as she had already drawn on Andrew in her own person pretty largely, her views of propriety were correct in this instance.

Evan had to consent before he could be released. He ran to the end of the walk through the portal, into the park. Rose was not to be seen. She had gone in to dress for dinner. The opportunity might recur, but would his courage come with it? His courage had sunk on a sudden; or it may have been that it was worse for this young man to ask for a loan of money, than to tell his beloved that he was basely born, vile, and unworthy, and had snared her into loving him; for when he and Andrew were together, money was not alluded to. Andrew, however, betrayed remarkable discomposure. He said plainly that he wanted to leave Beckley Court, and wondered why he didn't leave, and whether he was on his head or his feet, and how he had been such a fool as to come.

'Do you mean that for me?' said sensitive Evan.

'Oh, you! You're a young buck,' returned Andrew evasively. 'We common-place business men—we're

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out of our element; and there's poor Carry can't sit down to their dinners without an upset. I thank God I'm a Radical, Van; one man's the same as another to me, how he's born, as long as he's honest and agreeable. But a chap like that George Uploft to look down on anybody! 'Gad, I've a good mind to bring in a Bill for the Abolition of the Squirearchy.'

Ultimately, Andrew somehow contrived to stick a hint or two about the terrible dinner in Evan's quivering flesh. He did it as delicately as possible, half begging pardon, and perspiring profusely. Evan grasped his hand, and thanked him. Caroline's illness was now explained to him.

'I'll take Caroline with me to-morrow,' he said. 'Louisa wishes to stay—there's a pic-nic. Will you look to her, and bring her with you?'

'My dear Van,' replied Andrew, 'stop with Louisa? Now, in confidence, it's as bad as a couple of wives; no disrespect to my excellent good Harry at home; but Louisa—I don't know how it is—but Louisa,—you lose your head, you're in a whirl, you're an automaton, a teetotum! I haven't a notion of what I've been doing or saying since I came here. My belief is, I've been lying right and left. I shall be found out to a certainty. Oh! if she's made her mind up for the pic-nic, somebody must stop. I can only tell you, Van, it's one perpetual vapour-bath to me. There'll be room for two in my trousers when I get back. I shall have to get the tailor to take them in a full half.'

Here occurred an opening for one of those acrid pleasantries which console us when there is horrid warfare within.

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'You must give me the work,' said Evan, partly pleased with his hated self for being able to jest on the subject, as a piece of preliminary self-conquest.

'Aha!' went Andrew, as if the joke were too good to be dwelt on; 'Hem'; and by way of diverting from it cleverly and naturally, he remarked that the weather was fine. This made Evan allude to his letter written from Lymport, upon which Andrew said: 'tush! pish! humbug! nonsense! won't hear a word. Don't know anything about it. Van, you're going to be a brewer. I say you are. You're afraid you can't? I tell you, sir, I've got a bet on it. You're not going to make me lose, are you—eh? I have, and a stiff bet, too. You must and shall, so there's an end. Only we can't make arrangements *just* yet, my boy. Old Tom—very good old fellow—but, you know—must get old Tom out of the way, first. Now go and dress for dinner. And Lord preserve us from the Great Mel to-day!' Andrew mumbled as he turned away.

Evan could not reach his chamber without being waylaid by the Countess. Had he remembered the sister who sacrificed so much for him? 'There, there!' cried Evan, and her hand closed on the delicious golden whispers of bank-notes. And 'Oh, generous Andrew! dear good Evan!' were the exclamations of the gratified lady.

There remained nearly another hundred. Evan laid out the notes, and eyed them while dressing. They seemed to say to him, 'We have you now.' He was clutched by a beneficent or a most malignant magician. The former seemed due to him, considering the cloud on his fortunes. This enigma might mean, that by submitting to a temporary humiliation, for a trial of

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him—in fact, by his acknowledgement of the fact, loathed though it was,—he won a secret overlooker's esteem, gained a powerful ally. Here was the proof, he held the proof. He had read Arabian Tales and could believe in marvels; especially could he believe in the friendliness of a magical thing that astounded without hurting him.

He sat down in his room at night and wrote a fairly manful letter to Rose; and it is to be said of the wretch he then saw himself, that he pardoned her from turning from so vile a pretender. He heard a step in the passage. It was Polly Wheedle. Polly had put her young mistress to bed, and was retiring to her own slumbers. He made her take the letter and promise to deliver it immediately. Would not to-morrow morning do, she asked, as Miss Rose was very sleepy. He seemed to hesitate—he was picturing how Rose looked when very sleepy. Why should he surrender this darling? And subtler question—why should he make her unhappy? Why disturb her at all in her sweet sleep?

'Well,' said Evan. 'To-morrow will do.—No, take it to-night, for God's sake!' he cried, as one who bursts the spell of an opiate. 'Go at once.' The temptation had almost overcome him.

Polly thought his proceedings queer. And what could the letter contain? A declaration, of course. She walked slowly along the passage, meditating on love, and remotely on its slave, Mr. Nicholas Frim. Nicholas had never written her a letter; but she was determined that he should, some day. She wondered what love-letters were like? Like valentines without the Cupids. Practical valentines, one might say. Not

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vapoury and wild, but hot and to the point. Delightful things! No harm in peeping at a love-letter, if you do it with the eye of a friend.

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Polly spelt just a word when a door opened at her elbow. She dropped her candle, and curtsied to the Countess's voice. The Countess desired her to enter, and all in a tremble Polly crept in. Her air of guilt made the Countess thrill. She had merely called her in to extract daily gossip. The corner of the letter sticking up under Polly's neck attracted her strangely, and beginning with the familiar, 'Well, child,' she talked of things interesting to Polly, and then exhibited the pic-nic dress. It was a lovely half-mourning; airy sorrows, gauzy griefs, you might imagine to constitute the wearer. White delicately striped, exquisitely trimmed, and of a stuff to make the feminine mouth water!

Could Polly refuse to try it on, when the flattering proposal met her ears? Blushing, shame-faced, adoring the lady who made her look adorable, Polly tried it on, and the Countess complimented her, and made a doll of her, and turned her this way and that way, and intoxicated her.

'A rich husband, Polly, child! and you are a lady ready made.'

Infamous poison to poor Polly; but as the thunder destroys small insects, exalted schemers are to be excused for riding down their few thousands. Moreover, the Countess really looked upon domestics as being only half-souls.

Dressed in her own attire again, Polly felt in her pockets, and at her bosom, and sang out: 'Oh, my! Oh, where! Oh!'

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The letter was lost. The letter could not be found. The Countess grew extremely fatigued, and had to dismiss Polly, in spite of her eager petitions to be allowed to search under the carpets and inside the bed.

In the morning came Evan's great trial. There stood Rose. She turned to him, and her eyes were happy and unclouded.

'You are not changed?' he said.

'Changed? what could change me?'

The God of true hearts bless her! He could hardly believe it.

'You are the Rose I knew yesterday?'

'Yes, Evan. But you—you look as if you had not slept.'

'You will not leave me this morning, before I go, Rose? Oh, my darling! this that you do for me is the work of an angel—nothing less! I have been a coward. And my beloved! to feel vile is agony to me—it makes me feel unworthy of the hand I press. Now all is clear between us. I go: I am forgiven.'

Rose repeated his last words, and then added hurriedly: 'All *is* clear between us? Shall I speak to Mama this morning? Dear Evan! it will be right that I should.'

For the moment he could not understand why, but supposing a scrupulous honesty in her, said: 'Yes, tell Lady Jocelyn all.'

'And then, Evan, you will never need to go.'

They separated. The deep-toned sentence sang in Evan's heart. Rose and her mother were of one stamp. And Rose might speak for her mother. To take the hands of such a pair and be lifted out of

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the slough, he thought no shame: and all through the hours of the morning the image of two angels stooping to touch a leper, pressed on his brain like a reality, and went divinely through his blood.

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Toward mid-day Rose beckoned to him, and led him out across the lawn into the park, and along the borders of the stream.

‘Evan,’ she said, ‘shall I really speak to Mama?’

‘You have not yet?’ he answered.

‘No. I have been with Juliana and with Drummond. Look at this, Evan.’ She showed a small black speck in the palm of her hand, which turned out, on your viewing it closely, to be a brand of the letter L. ‘Mama did that when I was a little girl, because I told lies. I never could distinguish between truth and falsehood; and Mama set that mark on me, and I have never told a lie since. She forgives anything but that. She will be our friend; she will never forsake us, Evan, if we do not deceive her. Oh, Evan! it never is of any use. But deceive her, and she cannot forgive you. It is not in her nature.’

Evan paused before he replied: ‘You have only to tell her what I have told you. You know everything.’

Rose gave him a flying look of pain: ‘Everything, Evan? What do I know?’

‘Ah, Rose! do you compel me to repeat it?’

Bewildered, Rose thought: ‘Have I slept and forgotten it?’

He saw the persistent grieved interrogation of her eyebrows.

‘Well!’ she sighed resignedly: ‘I am yours; you know that, Evan.’

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But he was a lover, and quarrelled with her sigh.

‘It may well make you sad now, Rose.’

‘Sad? no, that does not make me sad. No; but my hands are tied. I cannot defend you or justify myself, and induce Mama to stand by us. Oh, Evan! you love me! why can you not open your heart to me entirely, and trust me?’

‘More?’ cried Evan: ‘Can I trust you more?’ He spoke of the letter: Rose caught his hand.

‘I never had it, Evan. You wrote it last night? and all was written in it? I never saw it—but I know all.’

Their eyes fronted. The gates of Rose’s were wide open, and he saw no hurtful beasts or lurking snakes in the happy garden within, but Love, like a fixed star.

‘Then you know why I must leave, Rose.’

‘Leave? Leave *me*? On the contrary, you must stay by me, and support me. Why, Evan, we have to fight a battle.’

Much as he worshipped her, this intrepid directness of soul startled him—almost humbled him. And her eyes shone with a firm cheerful light, as she exclaimed: ‘It makes me so happy to think you were the first to mention this. You meant to be, and that’s the same thing. I heard it this morning: you wrote it last night. It’s you I love, Evan. Your birth, and what you were obliged to do—that’s nothing. Of course I’m sorry for it, dear. But I’m more sorry for the pain I must have sometimes put you to. It happened through my mother’s father being a merchant; and that side of the family the men and women are quite sordid and unendurable; and that’s how it came that I spoke of dis-

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liking tradesmen. I little thought I should ever love one sprung from that class.'

She turned to him tenderly.

'And in spite of what my birth is, you love me, Rose?'

'There's no spite in it, Evan. I do.'

Hard for him, while his heart was melting to caress her, the thought that he had snared this bird of heaven in a net! Rose gave him no time for reflection, or the moony imagining of their raptures lovers love to dwell upon.

'You gave the letter to Polly, of course?'

'Yes.'

'Oh, naughty Polly! I must punish you,' Rose apostrophized her. 'You might have divided us for ever. Well, we shall have to fight a battle, you understand that. Will you stand by me?'

Would he not risk his soul for her?

'Very well, Evan. Then—but don't be sensitive. Oh, how sensitive you are! I see it all now. This is what we shall have to do. We shall have to speak to Mama to-day—this morning. Drummond has told me he is going to speak to her, and we must be first. That's decided. I begged a couple of hours. You must not be offended with Drummond. He does it out of pure affection for us, and I can see he's right—or, at least, not quite wrong. He ought, I think, to know that he cannot change me. Very well, we shall win Mama by what we do. My mother has ten times my wits, and yet I manage her like a feather. I have only to be honest and straightforward. Then Mama will gain over Papa. Papa, of course, won't like it. He's quiet and easy, but he likes blood, but

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he also likes peace better; and I think he loves Rosey—as well as somebody—almost? Look, dear, there is our seat where we—where you would rob me of my handkerchief. I can't talk any more.'

Rose had suddenly fallen from her prattle, soft and short-breathed.

'Then, dear,' she went on, 'we shall have to fight the family. Aunt Shorne will be terrible. My poor uncles! I pity them. But they will come round. They always have thought what I did was right, and why should they change their minds now? I shall tell them that at their time of life a change of any kind is very unwise and bad for them. Then there is Grandmama Bonner. She can hurt us really, if she pleases. Oh, my dear Evan! if you had only been a curate! Why isn't your name Parsley? Then my Grandmama the Countess of Elburne. Well, we have a Countess on our side, haven't we? And that reminds me, Evan, if we're to be happy and succeed, you must promise one thing: you will not tell the Countess, your sister. Don't confide this to her. Will you promise?'

Evan assured her he was not in the habit of pouring secrets into any bosom, the Countess's as little as another's.

'Very well, then, Evan, it's unpleasant while it lasts, but we shall gain the day. Uncle Melville will give you an appointment, and then?'

'Yes, Rose,' he said, 'I will do this, though I don't think you can know what I shall have to endure—not in confessing what I am, but in feeling that I have brought you to my level.'

'Does it not raise me?' she cried.

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He shook his head.

‘But in reality, Evan—apart from mere appearances—in reality it does! it does!’

‘Men will not think so, Rose, nor can I. Oh, my Rose! how different you make me. Up to this hour I have been so weak! torn two ways! You give me double strength.’

Then these lovers talked of distant days—compared their feelings on this and that occasion, with mutual wonder and delight. Then the old hours lived anew. And—did you really think that, Evan? And—Oh, Rose! was that your dream? And the meaning of that by-gone look: was it what they fancied? And such and such a tone of voice; would it bear the wished interpretation? Thus does Love avenge himself on the unsatisfactory Past and call out its essence.

Could Evan do less than adore her? She knew all, and she loved him. Since he was too shy to allude more than once to his letter, it was natural that he should not ask her how she came to know, and how much the ‘all’ that she knew comprised. In his letter he had told all; the condition of his parents, and his own. Honestly, now, what with his dazzled state of mind, his deep inward happiness, and love’s endless delusions, he abstained from touching the subject further. Honestly, therefore, as far as a lover can be honest.

So they toyed, and then Rose, setting her fingers loose, whispered: ‘Are you ready?’ And Evan nodded; and Rose, to make him think light of the matter in hand, laughed: ‘Pluck not quite up yet?’

‘Quite, my Rose!’ said Evan, and they walked to

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the house, not quite knowing what they were going to do.

On the steps they met Drummond with Mrs. Evremonde. Little imagining how heart and heart the two had grown, and that Evan would understand him, Drummond called to Rose playfully: 'Time's up.'

'Is it?' Rose answered, and to Mrs. Evremonde: 'Give Drummond a walk. Poor Drummond is going silly.'

Evan looked into his eyes calmly as he passed.

'Where are you going, Rose?' said Mrs. Evremonde.

'Going to give my maid Polly a whipping for losing a letter she ought to have delivered to me last night,' said Rose, in a loud voice, looking at Drummond. 'And then going to Mama. Pleasure first—duty after. Isn't that the proverb, Drummond?'

She kissed her fingers rather scornfully to her old friend.

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The last person thought of by her children at this period was Mrs. Mel: nor had she been thinking much of them till a letter from Mr. Goren arrived one day, which caused her to pass them seriously in review. Always an early bird, and with maxims of her own on the subject of rising and getting the worm, she was standing in a small perch in the corner of the shop, dictating accounts to Mrs. Fiske, who was copy-

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ing hurriedly, that she might earn sweet intervals for gossip, when Dandy limped up and delivered the letter. Mrs. Fiske worked hard while her aunt was occupied in reading it, for a great deal of fresh talk follows the advent of the post, and may be reckoned on. Without looking up, however, she could tell presently that the letter had been read through. Such being the case, and no conversation coming of it, her curiosity was violent. Her aunt's face, too, was an index of something extraordinary. That inflexible woman, instead of alluding to the letter in any way, folded it up, and renewed her dictation. It became a contest between them which should show her human nature first. Mrs. Mel had to repress what she knew; Mrs. Fiske to control the passion for intelligence. The close neighbourhood of one anxious to receive, and one capable of giving, waxed too much for both.

'I think, Anne, you are stupid this morning,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Well, I am, aunt,' said Mrs. Fiske, pretending not to see which was the first to unbend, 'I don't know what it is. The figures seem all dazzled like. I shall really be glad when Evan comes to take his proper place.'

'Ah!' went Mrs. Mel, and Mrs. Fiske heard her muttering. Then she cried out: 'Are Harriet and Caroline as great liars as Louisa?'

Mrs. Fiske grimaced. 'That would be difficult, would it not, aunt?'

'And I have been telling everybody that my son is in town learning his business, when he's idling at a country house, and trying to play his father over again! Upon my word, what with liars and fools, if you go

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to sleep a minute you have a month's work on your back.'

'What is it, aunt?' Mrs. Fiske feebly inquired.

'A gentleman, I suppose! He wouldn't take an order if it was offered. Upon my word, when tailors think of winning heiresses it's time we went back to Adam and Eve.'

'Do you mean Evan, aunt?' interposed Mrs. Fiske, who probably did not see the turns in her aunt's mind.

'There—read for yourself,' said Mrs. Mel, and left her with the letter.

Mrs. Fiske read that Mr. Goren had been astonished at Evan's non-appearance, and at his total silence; which he did not consider altogether gentlemanly behaviour, and certainly not such as his father would have practised. Mr. Goren regretted his absence the more as he would have found him useful in a remarkable invention he was about to patent, being a peculiar red cross upon shirts—a fortune to the patentee; but as Mr. Goren had no natural heirs of his body, he did not care for that. What affected him painfully was the news of Evan's doings at a noble house, Beckley Court, to wit, where, according to the report of a rich young gentleman friend, Mr. Raikes (for whose custom Mr. Goren was bound to thank Evan), the youth who should have been learning the science of Tailoring, had actually passed himself off as a lord, or the son of one, or something of the kind, and had got engaged to a wealthy heiress, and would, no doubt, marry her if not found out. Where the chances of detection were so numerous, Mr. Goren saw much to condemn in the idea of such a marriage. But 'like father like son,' said Mr. Goren. He thanked the Lord that an honest

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tradesman was not looked down upon in this country; and, in fact, gave Mrs. Mel a few quiet digs to waken her remorse in having missed the man that he was.

When Mrs. Fiske met her aunt again she returned her the letter, and simply remarked: 'Louisa.'

Mrs. Mel nodded. She understood the implication.

The General who had schemed so successfully to gain Evan time at Beckley Court, in his own despite and against a hundred obstructions, had now another enemy in the field, and one who, if she could not undo her work, could punish her. By the afternoon coach, Mrs. Mel, accompanied by Dandy her squire, was journeying to Fallowfield, bent upon things. The faithful squire was kept by her side rather as a security for others than for his particular services. Dandy's arms were crossed, and his countenance was gloomy. He had been promised a holiday that afternoon to give his mistress, Sally, Kilne's cook, an airing, and Dandy knew in his soul that Sally, when she once made up her mind to an excursion, would go, and would not go alone, and that her very force of will endangered her constancy. He had begged humbly to be allowed to stay, but Mrs. Mel could not trust him. She ought to have told him so, perhaps. Explanations were not approved of by this well-intended despot, and however beneficial her resolves might turn out for all parties, it was natural that in the interim the children of her rule should revolt, and Dandy, picturing his Sally flaunting on the arm of some accursed low marine, haply, kicked against Mrs. Mel's sovereignty, though all that he did was to shoot out his fist from time to time, and grunt through his set teeth: 'Iron!' to express the character of her awful rule.

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Mrs. Mel alighted at the Dolphin, the landlady of which was a Mrs. Hawkshaw, a rival of Mrs. Sockley of the Green Dragon. She was welcomed by Mrs. Hawkshaw with considerable respect. The great Mel had sometimes slept at the Dolphin.

‘Ah, that black!’ she sighed, indicating Mrs. Mel’s dress and the story it told.

‘I can’t give you his room, my dear Mrs. Harrington, —wishing I could! I’m sorry to say it’s occupied, for all I ought to be glad, I dare say, for he’s an old gentleman who does you a good turn, if you study him. But there! I’d rather have had poor dear Mr. Harrington in my best bed than old or young—Princes or nobodies, I would—he was that grand and pleasant.’

Mrs. Mel had her tea in Mrs. Hawkshaw’s parlour, and was entertained about her husband up to the hour of supper, when a short step and a querulous voice were heard in the passage, and an old gentleman appeared before them.

‘Who’s to carry up my trunk, ma’am? No man here?’

Mrs. Hawkshaw bustled out and tried to lay her hand on a man. Failing to find the growth spontaneous, she returned and begged the old gentleman to wait a few moments and the trunk would be sent up.

‘Parcel o’ women!’ was his reply. ‘Regularly be-devilled. Gets worse and worse. I’ll carry it up myself.’

With a wheezy effort he persuaded the trunk to stand on one end, and then looked at it. The exertion made him hot, which may account for the rage he burst into when Mrs. Hawkshaw began flutteringly to apologize.

‘You’re sure, ma’am, sure—what are you sure of?’

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I'll tell you what I am sure of—eh? This keeping clear of men's a damned pretence. You don't impose upon me. Don't believe in your pothouse nunneries—not a bit. Just like you! when you *are* virtuous it's deuced inconvenient. Let one of the maids try? No. Don't believe in 'em.'

Having thus relieved his spleen the old gentleman addressed himself to further efforts and waxed hotter. He managed to tilt the trunk over, and thus gained a length, and by this method of progression arrived at the foot of the stairs, where he halted, and wiped his face, blowing lustily.

Mrs. Mel had been watching him with calm scorn all the while. She saw him attempt most ridiculously to impel the trunk upwards by a similar process, and thought it time to interfere.

'Don't you see you must either take it on your shoulders, or have a help?'

The old gentleman sprang up from his peculiarly tight posture to blaze round at her. He had the words well-peppered on his mouth, but somehow he stopped, and was subsequently content to growl: 'Where's the help in a parcel of petticoats?'

Mrs. Mel did not consider it necessary to give him an answer. She went up two or three steps, and took hold of one handle of the trunk, saying: 'There; I think it can be managed this way,' and she pointed for him to seize the other end with his hand.

He was now in that unpleasant state of prickly heat when testy old gentlemen could commit slaughter with ecstasy. Had it been the maid holding a candle who had dared to advise, he would have overturned her undoubtedly, and established a fresh instance of the

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impertinence, the uselessness and weakness of women. Mrs. Mel topped him by half a head, and in addition stood three steps above him; towering like a giantess. The extreme gravity of her large face dispersed all idea of an assault. The old gentleman showed signs of being horribly injured; nevertheless, he put his hand to the trunk; it was lifted, and the procession ascended the stairs in silence.

The landlady waited for Mrs. Mel to return, and then said:

‘Really, Mrs. Harrington, you are clever. That lifting that trunk’s as good as a lock and bolt on him. You’ve as good as made him a Dolphin—him that was one o’ the oldest Green Dragons in Fallifield. My thanks to you most sincere.’

Mrs. Mel sent out to hear where Dandy had got to: after which, she said: ‘Who is the man?’

‘I told you, Mrs. Harrington—the oldest Green Dragon. His name, you mean? Do you know, if I was to breathe it out, I believe he’d jump out of the window. He’d be off, that you might swear to. Oh, such a whimsical! not ill-meaning—quite the contrary. Study his whims, and you’ll never want. There’s Mrs. Sockley—she’s took ill. He won’t go there—that’s how I’ve caught him, my dear—but he pays her medicine, and she looks to him the same. He hate a sick house: but he pity a sick woman. Now, if I can only please him, I can always look on him as half a Dolphin, to say the least; and perhaps to-morrow I’ll tell you who he is, and what, but not to-night; for there’s his supper to get over, and that, they say, can be as bad as the busting of one of his own vats. Awful!’

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'What does he eat?' said Mrs. Mel.

'A pair o' chops. That seem simple, now, don't it? And yet they chops make my heart go pitty-pat.'

'The commonest things are the worst done,' said Mrs. Mel.

'It ain't that; but they must be done his particular way, do you see, Mrs. Harrington. Laid close on the fire, he say, so as to keep in the juice. But he ups and bounces in a minute at a speck o' black. So, one thing or the other, there you are: no blacks, no juices, I say.'

'Toast the chops,' said Mrs. Mel.

The landlady of the Dolphin accepted this new idea with much enlightenment, but ruefully declared that she was afraid to go against his precise instructions. Mrs. Mel then folded her hands, and sat in quiet reserve. She was one of those numerous women who always know themselves to be right. She was also one of those very few whom Providence favours by confounding dissentients. She was positive the chops would be ill-cooked: but what could she do? She was not in command here; so she waited serenely for the certain disasters to enthrone her. Not that the matter of the chops occupied her mind particularly: nor could she dream that the pair in question were destined to form a part of her history, and divert the channel of her fortunes. Her thoughts were about her own immediate work; and when the landlady rushed in with the chops under a cover, and said: 'Look at 'em, dear Mrs. Harrington!' she had forgotten that she was again to be proved right by the turn of events.

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'Oh, the chops!' she responded. 'Send them while they are hot.'

'Send 'em! Why you don't think I'd have risked their cooling? I have sent 'em; and what do he do but send 'em travelling back, and here they be; and what objections his is I might study till I was blind, and I shouldn't see 'em.'

'No; I suppose not,' said Mrs. Mel. 'He won't eat 'em?'

'Won't eat anything: but his bed-room candle immediately. And whether his sheets are aired. And Mary says he sniffed at the chops; and that gal really did expect he'd fling them at her. I told you what he was. Oh, dear!'

The bell was heard ringing in the midst of the landlady's lamentations.

'Go to him yourself,' said Mrs. Mel. 'No Christian man should go to sleep without his supper.'

'Ah! but he ain't a common Christian,' returned Mrs. Hawkshaw.

The old gentleman was in a hurry to know when his bed-room candle was coming up, or whether they intended to give him one at all that night; if not, let them say so, as he liked plain-speaking. The moment Mrs. Hawkshaw touched upon the chops, he stopped her mouth.

'Go about your business, ma'am. You can't cook 'em. I never expected you could: I was a fool to try you. It requires at least ten years' instruction before a man can get a woman to cook his chop as he likes it.'

'But what was your complaint, sir?' said Mrs. Hawkshaw imploringly.

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'That's right!' and he rubbed his hands, and brightened his eyes savagely. 'That's the way. Opportunity for gossip! Thing's well done—down it goes: you know that. You can't have a word over it—eh? Thing's done fit to toss on a dungheap, aha! Then there's a cackle! My belief is, you do it on purpose. Can't be such rank idiots. You do it on purpose. All done for gossip!'

'Oh, sir, no!' The landlady half curtsied.

'Oh, ma'am, yes!' The old gentleman bobbed his head.

'No, indeed, sir!' The landlady shook hers.

'Damn it, ma'am, I swear you do.'

Symptoms of wrath here accompanied the declaration; and, with a sigh and a very bitter feeling, Mrs. Hawkshaw allowed him to have the last word. Apparently this—which I must beg to call the lady's morsel—comforted his irascible system somewhat; for he remained in a state of composure eight minutes by the clock. And mark how little things hang together. Another word from the landlady, precipitating a retort from him, and a gesture or muttering from her; and from him a snapping outburst, and from her a sign that she held out still; in fact, had she chosen to battle for that last word, as in other cases she might have done, then would he have exploded, gone to bed in the dark, and insisted upon sleeping: the consequence of which would have been to change this history. Now while Mrs. Hawkshaw was upstairs, Mrs. Mel called the servant, who took her to the kitchen, where she saw a prime loin of mutton; off which she cut two chops with a cunning hand: and these she toasted at a gradual distance, putting a plate beneath them, and a tin behind, and hanging the chops so

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that they would turn without having to be pierced. The bell rang twice before she could say the chops were ready. The first time, the maid had to tell the old gentleman she was taking up his water. Her next excuse was, that she had dropped her candle. The chops ready—who was to take them?

‘Really, Mrs. Harrington, you are so clever, you ought, if I might be so bold as say so; you ought to end it yourself,’ said the landlady. ‘I can’t ask him to eat them: he was all but on the busting point when I left him.’

‘And that there candle did for him quite,’ said Mary, the maid.

‘I’m afraid it’s chops cooked for nothing,’ added the landlady.

Mrs. Mel saw them endangered. The maid held back: the landlady feared.

‘We can but try,’ she said.

‘Oh! I wish, mum, you’d face him, ’stead o’ me,’ said Mary; ‘I do dread that old bear’s den.’

‘Here, I will go,’ said Mrs. Mel. ‘Has he got his ale? Better draw it fresh, if he drinks any.’

And upstairs she marched, the landlady remaining below to listen for the commencement of the disturbance. An utterance of something certainly followed Mrs. Mel’s entrance into the old bear’s den. Then silence. Then what might have been question and answer. Then—was Mrs. Mel assaulted? and which was knocked down? It really was a chair being moved to the table. The door opened.

‘Yes, ma’am; do what you like,’ the landlady heard. Mrs. Mel descended, saying: ‘Send him up some fresh ale.’

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‘And you have made him sit down obedient to those chops?’ cried the landlady. ‘Well might poor dear Mr. Harrington—pleasant man as he was!—say, as he used to say, “There’s lovely women in the world, Mrs. Hawkshaw,” he’d say, “and there’s Duchesses,” he’d say, “and there’s they that can sing, and can dance, and some,” he says, “that can cook.” But he’d look sly as he’d stoop his head and shake it. “Roll ’em into one,” he says, “and not any of your grand ladies can match my wife at home.” And, indeed, Mrs. Harrington, he told me he thought so many a time in the great company he frequented.’

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Perfect peace reigning above, Mrs. Hawkshaw and Mrs. Mel sat down to supper below; and Mrs. Hawkshaw talked much of the great one gone. His relict did not care to converse about the dead, save in their practical aspect as ghosts; but she listened, and that passed the time. By-and-by the old gentleman rang, and sent a civil message to know if the landlady had ship’s rum in the house.

‘Dear! here’s another trouble,’ cried the poor woman. ‘No—none!’

‘Say, yes,’ said Mrs. Mel, and called Dandy, and charged him to run down the street to the square, and ask for the house of Mr. Coxwell, the maltster, and beg of him, in her name, a bottle of his ship’s rum.

‘And don’t you tumble down and break the bottle, Dandy. Accidents with spirit-bottles are not excused.’

Dandy went on the errand, after an energetic grunt.

In due time he returned with the bottle, whole and sound, and Mr. Coxwell’s compliments. Mrs. Mel

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examined the cork to see that no process of suction had been attempted, and then said:

‘Carry it up to him, Dandy. Let him see there’s a man in the house besides himself.’

‘Why, my dear,’ the landlady turned to her, ‘it seems natural to you to be mistress where you go. I don’t at all mind, for ain’t it my profit? But you do take us off our legs.’

Then the landlady, warmed by gratitude towards Mrs. Mel, told her that the old gentleman was the great London brewer, who brewed there with his brother, and brewed for himself five miles out of Fallowfield, half of which and a good part of the neighbourhood he owned, and his name was Mr. Tom Cogglesby.

‘Oh!’ said Mrs. Mel. ‘And his brother is Mr. Andrew.’

‘That’s it,’ said the landlady. ‘And because he took it into his head to go and to choose for himself, and be married, no getting his brother, Mr. Tom, to speak to him. Why not, indeed? If there’s to be no marrying, the sooner we lay down and give up, the better, I think. But that’s his way. He do hate us women, Mrs. Harrington. I have heard he was crossed. Some say it was the lady of Beckley Court, who was a Beauty, when he was only a poor cobbler’s son.’

Mrs. Mel breathed nothing of her relationship to Mr. Tom, but continued from time to time to express solicitude about Dandy. They heard the door open, and old Tom laughing in a capital good temper, and then Dandy came down, evidently full of ship’s rum.

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'He's pumped me!' said Dandy, nodding heavily at his mistress.

Mrs. Mel took him up to his bed-room, and locked the door. On her way back she passed old Tom's chamber, and his chuckles were audible to her.

'They finished the rum,' said Mrs. Hawkshaw.

'I shall rate him for that to-morrow,' said Mrs. Mel. 'Giving that poor beast liquor!'

'Rate Mr. Tom! Oh! Mrs. Harrington! Why, he'll snap your head off for a word.'

Mrs. Mel replied that her head would require a great deal of snapping to come off.

During this conversation they had both heard a singular intermittent noise above. Mrs. Hawkshaw was the first to ask:

'What can it be? More trouble with him? He's in his bed-room now.'

'Mad with drink, like Dandy, perhaps,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Hark!' cried the landlady. 'Oh!'

It seemed that Old Tom was bouncing about in an extraordinary manner. Now came a pause, as if he had sworn to take his rest: now the room shook and the windows rattled.

'One'd think, really, his bed was a frying-pan, and him a live fish in it,' said the landlady. 'Oh—there, again! My goodness! have he got a flea?'

The thought was alarming. Mrs. Mel joined in:

'Or a——'

'Don't! don't, my dear!' she was cut short. 'Oh! one o' them little things'd be ruin to me. To think o' that! Hark at him! It must be. And what's to do? I've sent the maids to bed. We haven't a man. If I was to go and knock at his door, and ask?'

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‘Better try and get him to be quiet somehow.’

‘Ah! I dare say I shall make him fire out fifty times worse.’

Mrs. Hawkshaw stipulated that Mrs. Mel should stand by her, and the two women went upstairs and stood at Old Tom’s door. There they could hear him fuming and muttering imprecations, and anon there was an interval of silence, and then the room was shaken, and the cursings recommenced.

‘It must be a fight he’s having with a flea,’ said the landlady. ‘Oh! pray heaven, it is a flea. For a flea, my dear—gentlemen may bring that themselves; but a b—, that’s a stationary, and born of a bed. Don’t you hear? The other thing’d give him a minute’s rest; but a flea’s hop—hop—off and on. And he sound like an old gentleman worried by a flea. What are you doing?’

Mrs. Mel had knocked at the door. The landlady waited breathlessly for the result. It appeared to have quieted Old Tom.

‘What’s the matter?’ said Mrs. Mel severely.

The landlady implored her to speak him fair, and reflect on the desperate things he might attempt.

‘What’s the matter? Can anything be done for you?’

Mr. Tom Cogglesby’s reply comprised an insinuation so infamous regarding women when they have a solitary man in their power, that it cannot be placed on record.

‘Is anything the matter with your bed?’

‘Anything? Yes; anything is the matter, ma’am. Hope twenty live geese inside it’s enough—eh? Bed, do you call it? It’s the rack! It’s damnation! Bed? Ha!’

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After delivering this, he was heard stamping up and down the room.

‘My very best bed!’ whispered the landlady. ‘Would it please you, sir, to change—I can give you another?’

‘I’m not a man of experiments, ma’am—’specially in strange houses.’

‘So very, very sorry!’

‘What the deuce!’ Old Tom came close to the door. ‘You whimpering! You put a man in a beast of a bed—you drive him half mad—and then begin to blubber! Go away.’

‘I am so sorry, sir!’

‘If you don’t go away, ma’am, I shall think your intentions are improper.’

‘Oh, my goodness!’ cried poor Mrs. Hawkshaw. ‘What can one do with him?’

Mrs. Mel put Mrs. Hawkshaw behind her.

‘Are you dressed?’ she called out.

In this way Mrs. Mel tackled Old Tom. He was told that should he consent to cover himself decently, she would come into his room and make his bed comfortable. And in a voice that dispersed armies of innuendoes, she bade him take his choice, either to rest quiet or do her bidding.

Had Old Tom found his master at last, and in one of the hated sex?

Breathlessly Mrs. Hawkshaw waited his answer, and she was an astonished woman when it came.

‘Very well, ma’am. Wait a couple of minutes. Do as you like.’

On their admission to the interior of the chamber, Old Tom was exhibited in his daily garb, sufficiently subdued to be civil and explain the cause of his dis-

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comfort. Lumps in his bed: he was bruised by them. He supposed he couldn't ask women to judge for themselves—they'd be shrieking—but he could assure them he was blue all down his back.

Mrs. Mel and Mrs. Hawkshaw turned the bed about, and punched it, and rolled it.

'Ha!' went Old Tom, 'what's the good of that? That's just how I found it. Moment I got into bed geese began to put up their backs.'

Mrs. Mel seldom indulged in a joke, and then only when it had a proverbial cast. On the present occasion, the truth struck her forcibly, and she said:

'One fool makes many, and so, no doubt, does one goose.'

Accompanied by a smile the words would have seemed impudent; but spoken as a plain fact, and with a grave face, it set Old Tom blinking like a small boy ten minutes after the whip.

'Now,' she pursued, speaking to him as to an old child, 'look here. This is how you manage. *Knead* down in the middle of the bed. Then jump into the hollow. Lie there, and you needn't wake till morning.'

Old Tom came to the side of the bed. He had prepared himself for a wretched night, an uproar, and eternal complaints against the house, its inhabitants, and its foundations; but a woman stood there who as much as told him that digging his fist into the flock and jumping into the hole—into that hole under his eyes—was all that was wanted! that he had been making a noise for nothing, and because he had not the wit to hit on a simple contrivance! Then, too, his jest about the geese—this woman had put a stop to that! He inspected the hollow cynically

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A man might instruct him on a point or two: Old Tom was not going to admit that a woman could.

'Oh, very well; thank you, ma'am; that's your idea. I'll try it. Good night.'

'Good night,' returned Mrs. Mel. 'Don't forget to jump into the middle.'

'Head foremost, ma'am?'

'As you weigh,' said Mrs. Mel, and Old Tom crumped his lips, silenced if not beaten. Beaten, one might almost say, for nothing more was heard of him that night.

He presented himself to Mrs. Mel after breakfast next morning.

'Slept well, ma'am.'

'Oh! then you did as I directed you,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Those chops, too, very good. I got through 'em.'

'Eating, like scratching, only wants a beginning,' said Mrs. Mel.

'Ha! you've got your word, then, as well as everybody else. Where's your Dandy this morning, ma'am?'

'Locked up. You ought to be ashamed to give that poor beast liquor. He won't get fresh air to-day.'

'Ha! May I ask you where you're going to-day, ma'am?'

'I am going to Beckley.'

'So am I, ma'am. What d'ye say, if we join company? Care for insinuations?'

'I want a conveyance of some sort,' returned Mrs. Mel.

'Object to a donkey, ma'am?'

'Not if he's strong and will go.'

'Good,' said Old Tom; and while he spoke a

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donkey-cart stopped in front of the Dolphin, and a well-dressed man touched his hat.

‘Get out of that damned bad habit, will you?’ growled Old Tom. ‘What do ye mean by wearing out the brim o’ your hat in that way? Help this woman in.’

Mrs. Mel helped herself to a part of the seat.

‘We are too much for the donkey,’ she said.

‘Ha, that’s right. What I have, ma’am, is good. I can’t pretend to horses, but my donkey’s the best. Are you going to cry about him?’

‘No. When he’s tired I shall either walk or harness you,’ said Mrs. Mel.

This was spoken half-way down the High Street of Fallowfield. Old Tom looked full in her face, and bawled out:

‘Deuce take it! *Are* you a woman?’

‘I have borne three girls and one boy,’ said Mrs. Mel.

‘What sort of a husband?’

‘He is dead.’

‘Ha! that’s an opening, but ’tain’t an answer. I’m off to Beckley on a marriage business. I’m the son of a cobbler, so I go in a donkey-cart. No damned pretences for me. I’m going to marry off a young tailor to a gal he’s been playing the lord to. If she cares for him she’ll take him: if not, they’re all the luckier, both of ’em.’

‘What’s the tailor’s name?’ said Mrs. Mel.

‘You *are* a woman,’ returned Old Tom. ‘Now, come, ma’am, don’t you feel ashamed of being in a donkey-cart?’

‘I’m ashamed of men, sometimes,’ said Mrs. Mel; ‘never of animals.’

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'Shamed o' me, perhaps.'

'I don't know you.'

'Ha! well! I'm a man with no pretences. Do you like 'em? How have you brought up your three girls and one boy? No pretences—eh?'

Mrs. Mel did not answer, and Old Tom jogged the reins and chuckled, and asked his donkey if he wanted to be a racer.

'Should you take me for a gentleman, ma'am?'

'I dare say your are, sir, at heart. Not from your manner of speech.'

'I mean appearances, ma'am.'

'I judge by the disposition.'

'You do, ma'am? Then, deuce take it, if you are a woman, you 're——' Old Tom had no time to conclude.

A great noise of wheels, and a horn blown, caused them both to turn their heads, and they beheld a curricl descending upon them vehemently, and a fashionably attired young gentleman straining with all his might at the reins. The next instant they were rolling on the bank. About twenty yards a-head the curricl was halted and turned about to see the extent of the mischief done.

'Pardon, a thousand times, my worthy couple,' cried the sonorous Mr. Raikes. 'What we have seen we swear not to divulge. Franko and Fred—your pledge!'

'We swear!' exclaimed this couple.

But suddenly the cheeks of Mr. John Raikes flushed. He alighted from the box, and rushing up to Old Tom, was shouting, 'My bene——'

'Do you want my toe on your plate?' Old Tom stopped him with.

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The mysterious words completely changed the aspect of Mr. John Raikes. He bowed obsequiously and made his friend Franko step down and assist in the task of re-establishing the donkey, who fortunately had received no damage.

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We left Rose and Evan on their way to Lady Jocelyn. At the library-door Rose turned to him, and with her chin archly lifted sideways, said:

'I know what you feel; you feel foolish.'

Now the sense of honour, and of the necessity of acting the part it imposes on him, may be very strong in a young man; but certainly, as a rule, the sense of ridicule is more poignant, and Evan was suffering horrid pangs. We none of us like to play second fiddle. To play second fiddle to a young woman is an abomination to us all. But to have to perform upon that instrument to the darling of our hearts—would we not rather die? nay, almost rather end the duet precipitately and with violence. Evan, when he passed Drummond into the house, and quietly returned his gaze, endured the first shock of this strange feeling. There could be no doubt that he was playing second fiddle to Rose. And what was he about to do? Oh, horror! to stand like a criminal, and say, or worse, have said for him, things to tip the ears with fire! To

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tell the young lady's mother that he had won her daughter's love, and meant—what did he mean? He knew not. Alas! he was second fiddle; he could only mean what she meant. Evan loved Rose deeply and completely, but noble manhood was strong in him. You may sneer at us, if you please, ladies. We have been educated in a theory, that when you lead off with the bow, the order of Nature is reversed, and it is no wonder therefore, that, having stript us of one attribute, our fine feathers moult, and the majestic cock-like march which distinguishes us degenerates. You unsex us, if I may dare to say so. Ceasing to be men, what are we? If we are to please you rightly, always allow us to play First.

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Poor Evan did feel foolish. Whether Rose saw it in his walk, or had a loving feminine intuition of it, and was aware of the golden rule I have just laid down, we need not inquire. She hit the fact, and he could only stammer, and bid her open the door.

'No,' she said, after a slight hesitation, 'it will be better that I should speak to Mama alone, I see. Walk out on the lawn, dear, and wait for me. And if you meet Drummond, don't be angry with him. Drummond is very fond of me, and of course I shall teach him to be fond of you. He only thinks . . . what is not true, because he does not know you. I do thoroughly, and there, you see, I give you my hand.'

Evan drew the dear hand humbly to his lips. Rose then nodded meaningly, and let her eyes dwell on him, and went in to her mother to open the battle.

Could it be that a flame had sprung up in those gray eyes latterly? Once they were like morning before sunrise. How soft and warm and tenderly transparent

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they could now be! Assuredly she loved him. And he, beloved by the noblest girl ever fashioned, why should he hang his head, and shrink at the thought of human faces, like a wretch doomed to the pillory? He visioned her last glance, and lightning emotions of pride and happiness flashed through his veins. The generous, brave heart! Yes, with her hand in his, he could stand at bay—meet any fate. Evan accepted Rose because he believed in her love, and judged it by the strength of his own; her sacrifice of her position he accepted, because in his soul he knew he should have done no less. He mounted to the level of her nobleness, and losing nothing of the beauty of what she did, it was not so strange to him.

Still there was the baleful reflection that he was second fiddle to his beloved. No harmony came of it in his mind. How could he take an initiative? He walked forth on the lawn, where a group had gathered under the shade of a maple, consisting of Drummond Forth, Mrs. Evremonde, Mrs. Shorne, Mr. George Uploft, Seymour Jocelyn, and Ferdinand Laxley. A little apart Juliana Bonner was walking with Miss Carrington. Juliana, when she saw him, left her companion, and passing him swiftly, said, 'Follow me presently into the conservatory.'

Evan strolled near the group, and bowed to Mrs. Shorne, whom he had not seen that morning.

The lady's acknowledgement of his salute was constrained, and but a shade on the side of recognition. They were silent till he was out of earshot. He noticed that his second approach produced the same effect. In the conservatory Juliana was awaiting him.

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'It is not to give you roses I called you here, Mr. Harrington,' she said.

'Not if I beg one?' he responded.

'Ah! but you do not want them from . . . It depends on the person.'

'Pluck this,' said Evan, pointing to a white rose.

She put her fingers to the stem.

'What folly!' she cried, and turned from it.

'Are you afraid that I shall compromise you?' asked Evan.

'You care for me too little for that.'

'My dear Miss Bonner!'

'How long did you know Rose before you called her by her Christian name?'

Evan really could not remember, and was beginning to wonder what he had been called there for. The little lady had feverish eyes and fingers, and seemed to be burning to speak, but afraid.

'I thought you had gone,' she dropped her voice, 'without wishing me good-bye.'

'I certainly should not do that, Miss Bonner.'

'Formal!' she exclaimed, half to herself. 'Miss Bonner thanks you. Do you think I wish you to stay? No friend of yours would wish it. You do not know the selfishness—brutal!—of these people of birth, as they call it.'

'I have met with nothing but kindness here,' said Evan.

'Then go while you can feel that,' she answered; 'for it cannot last another hour. Here is the rose.' She broke it from the stem and handed it to him. 'You may wear that, and they are not so likely to call you an adventurer, and names of that sort. I am hardly considered a lady by them.'

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An adventurer! The full meaning of the phrase struck Evan's senses when he was alone. Miss Bonner knew something of his condition, evidently. Perhaps it was generally known, and perhaps it was thought that he had come to win Rose for his worldly advantage! The idea was overwhelmingly new to him. Up started self-love in arms. He would renounce her.

It is no insignificant contest when love has to crush self-love utterly. At moments it can be done. Love has divine moments. There are times also when Love draws part of his being from self-love, and can find no support without it.

But how could he renounce her, when she came forth to him, smiling, speaking freshly and lightly, and with the colour on her cheeks which showed that she had done her part? How could he retract a step?

'I have told Mama, Evan. That's over. She heard it first from me.'

'And she?'

'Dear Evan, if you are going to be sensitive, I'll run away. You that fear no danger, and are the bravest man I ever knew! I think you are really trembling. She will speak to Papa, and then—and then, I suppose, they will both ask you whether you intend to give me up, or no. I'm afraid you'll do the former.'

'Your mother—Lady Jocelyn listened to you, Rose? You told her all?'

'Every bit.'

'And what does she think of me?'

'Thinks you very handsome and astonishing, and me very idiotic and natural, and that there is a great deal of bother in the world, and that my noble relatives

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will lay the blame of it on her. No, dear, not all that; but she talked very sensibly to me, and kindly. You know she is called a philosopher: nobody knows how deep-hearted she is, though. My mother is true as steel. I can't separate the kindness from the sense, or I would tell you all she said. When I say kindness, I don't mean any "Oh, my child," and tears, and kisses, and maundering, you know. You mustn't mind her thinking me a little fool. You want to know what she thinks of you. She said nothing to hurt you, Evan, and we have gained ground so far, and now we'll go and face our enemies. Uncle Mel expects to hear about your appointment in a day or two, and——'

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'Oh, Rose!' Evan burst out.

'What is it?'

'Why must I owe everything to you?'

'Why, dear? Why, because, if you do, it's very much better than your owing it to anybody else. Proud again?'

Not proud: only second fiddle.

'You know, dear Evan, when two people love, there is no such thing as owing between them.'

'Rose, I have been thinking. It is not too late. I love you, God knows! I did in Portugal: I do now—more and more. But—— Oh, my bright angel!' he ended the sentence in his breast.

'Well? but—what?'

Evan sounded down the meaning of his 'but.' Stripped of the usual heroics, it was, 'what will be thought of me?' not a small matter to any of us. He caught a distant glimpse of the little bit of bare selfishness, and shrank from it.

'Too late,' cried Rose. 'The battle has commenced



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now, and, Mr. Harrington, I will lean on your arm, and be led to my dear friends yonder. Do they think that I am going to put on a mask to please them? Not for anybody! What they are to know they may as well know at once.'

She looked in Evan's face.

'Do you hesitate?'

He felt the contrast between his own and hers; between the niggard spirit of the beggarly receiver, and the high bloom of the exalted giver. Nevertheless, he loved her too well not to share much of her nature, and wedding it suddenly, he said:

'Rose, tell me, now. If you were to see the place where I was born, could you love me still?'

'Yes, Evan.'

'If you were to hear me spoken of with contempt——'

'Who dares?' cried Rose. 'Never to me!'

'Contempt of what I spring from, Rose. Names used. . . . Names are used. . . .'

'Tush!—names!' said Rose, reddening. 'How cowardly that is! Have you finished? Oh, faint heart! I suppose I'm not a fair lady, or you wouldn't have won me. Now, come. Remember, Evan, I conceal nothing; and if anything makes you wretched here, do think how I love you.'

In his own firm belief he had said everything to arrest her in her course, and been silenced by transcendent logic. She thought the same.

Rose made up to the conclave under the maple.

The voices hushed as they approached.

'Capital weather,' said Rose. 'Does Harry come back from London to-morrow—does anybody know?'

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'Not aware,' Laxley was heard to reply.

'I want to speak a word to you, Rose,' said Mrs. Shorne.

'With the greatest pleasure, my dear aunt': and Rose walked after her.

'My dear Rose,' Mrs. Shorne commenced, 'your conduct requires that I should really talk to you most seriously. You are probably not aware of what you are doing. Nobody likes ease and natural familiarity more than I do. I am persuaded it is nothing but your innocence. You are young to the world's ways, and perhaps a little too headstrong, and vain.'

'Conceited and wilful,' added Rose.

'If you like the words better. But I must say—I do not wish to trouble your father—you know he cannot bear worry—but I must say, that if you do not listen to me, he must be spoken to.'

'Why not Mama?'

'I should naturally select my brother first. No doubt you understand me.'

'Any distant allusion to Mr. Harrington?'

'Pertness will not avail you, Rose.'

'So you want me to do secretly what I am doing openly?'

'You must and shall remember you are a Jocelyn, Rose.'

'Only half, my dear aunt!'

'And by birth a lady, Rose.'

'And I ought to look under my eyes, and blush, and shrink, whenever I come near a gentleman, aunt!'

'Ah! my dear. No doubt you will do what is most telling. Since you have spoken of this Mr. Harrington,

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I must inform you that I have it on certain authority from two or three sources, that he is the son of a small shopkeeper at Lymport.'

Mrs. Shorne watched the effect she had produced.

'Indeed, aunt?' cried Rose. 'And do you know this to be true?'

'So when you talk of gentlemen, Rose, please be careful whom you include.'

'I mustn't include poor Mr. Harrington? Then my Grandpapa Bonner is out of the list, and such numbers of good worthy men?'

Mrs. Shorne understood the hit at the defunct manufacturer. She said: 'You must most distinctly give me your promise, while this young adventurer remains here—I think it will not be long—not to be compromising yourself further, as you now do. *Or*—indeed I must—I shall let your parents perceive that such conduct is ruin to a young girl in your position, and certainly you will be sent to Elburne House for the winter.'

Rose lifted her hands, crying: 'Ye Gods!—as Harry says. But I'm very much obliged to you, my dear aunt. Concerning Mr. Harrington, wonderfully obliged. Son of a small——! Is it a t-t-tailor, aunt?'

'It is—I have heard.'

'And that is much worse. Cloth is viler than cotton! And don't they call these creatures sn-snips? Some word of that sort?'

'It makes little difference what they are called.'

'Well, aunt, I sincerely thank you. As this subject seems to interest you, go and see Mama, now. She can tell you a great deal more: and, if you want her authority, come back to me.'

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Rose then left her aunt in a state of extreme indignation. It was a clever move to send Mrs. Shorne to Lady Jocelyn. They were antagonistic, and, rational as Lady Jocelyn was, and with her passions under control, she was unlikely to side with Mrs. Shorne.

Now Rose had fought against herself, and had, as she thought, conquered. In Portugal Evan's half insinuations had given her small suspicions, which the scene on board the *Jocasta* had half confirmed: and since she came to communicate with her own mind, she bore the attack of all that rose against him, bit by bit. She had not been too blind to see the unpleasantness of the fresh facts revealed to her. They did not change her; on the contrary, drew her to him faster—and she thought she had completely conquered whatever could rise against him. But when Juliana Bonner told her that day that Evan was not only the son of the thing, but the thing himself, and that his name could be seen any day in Lympport, and that he had come from the shop to Beckley, poor Rosey had a sick feeling that almost sank her. For a moment she looked back wildly to the doors of retreat. Her eyes had to feed on Evan, she had to taste some of the luxury of love, before she could gain composure, and then her arrogance towards those she called her enemies did not quite return.

‘In that letter you told me all—all—all, Evan?’

‘Yes, all—religiously.’

‘Oh, why did I miss it!’

‘Would it give you pleasure?’

She feared to speak, being tender as a mother to his sensitiveness. The expressive action of her eyebrows sufficed. She could not bear concealment, or doubt,

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or a shadow of dishonesty; and he, gaining force of soul to join with hers, took her hands and related the contents of the letter fully. She was pale when he had finished. It was some time before she was able to get free from the trammels of prejudice, but when she did, she did without reserve, saying: 'Evan, there is no man who would have done so much.' These little exaltations and generousities bind lovers tightly. He accepted the credit she gave him, and at that we need not wonder. It helped him further to accept herself, otherwise could he—his name known to be on a shop-front—have aspired to her still? But, as an unexampled man, princely in soul, as he felt, why, he might kneel to Rose Jocelyn. So they listened to one another, and blinded the world by putting bandages on their eyes, after the fashion of little boys and girls.

Meantime the fair being who had brought these two from the ends of the social scale into this happy tangle, the beneficent Countess, was wretched. When you are in the enemy's country you are dependent on the activity and zeal of your spies and scouts, and the best of these—Polly Wheedle, to wit—had proved defective, recalcitrant even. And because a letter had been lost in her room! as the Countess exclaimed to herself, though Polly gave her no reasons. The Countess had, therefore, to rely chiefly upon personal observation, upon her intuitions, upon her sensations in the proximity of the people to whom she was opposed; and from these she gathered that she was, to use the word which seemed fitting to her, betrayed. Still to be sweet, still to smile and to amuse,—still to give her zealous attention to the business of the diplomatist's Election, still to go through her church-

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services devoutly, required heroism; she was equal to it, for she had remarkable courage; but it was hard to feel no longer at one with Providence. Had not Providence suggested Sir Abraham to her? killed him off at the right moment in aid of her? And now Providence had turned, and the assistance she had formerly received from that Power, and given thanks for so profusely, was the cause of her terror. It was absolutely as if she had been borrowing from a Jew, and were called upon to pay fifty-fold interest.

‘Evan!’ she writes in a gasp to Harriet. ‘We must pack up and depart. Abandon everything. He has disgraced us all, and ruined himself. Impossible that we can stay for the pic-nic. We are *known*, dear. Think of my position one day in this house! Particulars when I embrace you. I *dare* not trust a letter here. If Evan had confided in me! He is impenetrable. He will be low all his life, and I *refuse* any more to sully myself in attempting to lift him. For Silva’s sake I must positively break the connection. Heaven knows what I have done for this boy, and will support me in the feeling that I have done enough. My conscience at least is safe.’

Like many illustrious Generals, the Countess had, for the hour, lost heart. We find her, however, the next day, writing:

‘Oh! Harriet! what trials for sisterly affection! Can I possibly—weather the gale, as the old L—sailors used to say? It is dreadful. I fear I am by duty bound to stop on.—Little Bonner thinks Evan quite a duke’s son,—has been speaking to her Grandmama, and *to-day*, this morning, the venerable old lady quite as much as gave me to understand that an union between our

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brother and her son's child would sweetly gratify her, and help her to go to her rest in peace. Can I chase that spark of comfort from one so truly pious? Dearest Juliana! I have anticipated Evan's feeling for her, and so she thinks his conduct cold. Indeed, I told her, point blank, he loved her. That, you know, is different from saying *dying* of love, which would have been an untruth. But Evan, of course! No getting him! Should Juliana ever reproach me, I can assure the child that any man is in love with any woman—which is really the case. It is, you dear humdrum! what the dictionary calls "nascent." I never liked the word, but it stands for a fact.'

The Countess here exhibits the weakness of a self-educated intelligence. She does not comprehend the joys of scholarship in her employment of Latinisms. It will be pardoned to her by those who perceive the profound piece of feminine discernment which precedes it.

'I do think I shall now have courage to stay out the pic-nic,' she continues. 'I really do not think *all* is known. Very little *can* be known, or I am sure I could not feel as I do. It would burn me up. George Up—does not dare; and his most beautiful lady-love had far better not. Mr. Forth may repent his whispers. But, Oh! what Evan may do! Rose is almost detestable. Manners, my dear? Totally deficient!

'An ally has just come. Evan's good fortune is most miraculous. His low friend turns out to be a young Fortunatus; very original, sparkling, and in *my* hands to be made much of. I do think he will—for he is most zealous—he will counteract that hateful Mr. Forth, who may soon have work enough. Mr. Raikes

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(Evan's friend) met a mad captain in Fallowfield! Dear Mr. Raikes is ready to say anything; not from love of falsehood, but because he is ready to *think* it. He has confessed to me that Evan told him! Louisa de Saldar has changed his opinion, and much impressed this eccentric young gentleman. Do you know any young girl who wants a fortune, and would be *grateful*?

'Dearest! I have decided on the pic-nic. Let your conscience be clear, and Providence *cannot* be against you. So I feel. Mr. Parsley spoke very beautifully to that purpose last Sunday in the morning service. A little too much through his nose, perhaps; but the poor young man's nose is a great organ, and we will not cast it in his teeth more than nature has done. I said so to my diplomatist, who was amused. If you are sparkingly vulgar with the English, you are aristocratic. Oh! what principle we women require in the thorny walk of life. I can show you a letter when we meet that will astonish humdrum. Not so diplomatic as the writer thought! Mrs. Melville (sweet woman!) must continue to practise civility; for a woman who is a wife, my dear, in verity she lives in a glass house, and let her fling no stones. "Let him who is without sin." How beautiful that Christian sentiment! I hope I shall be pardoned, but it *always* seems to me that what *we* have to endure is infinitely worse than any other suffering, for you find no comfort for the children of T——s in Scripture, nor any defence of their dreadful position. Robbers, thieves, Magdalens! but, no! the unfortunate offspring of that class are not even mentioned: at least, in my most diligent perusal of the Scriptures, I never lighted upon any remote allusion;

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and we know the Jews did wear clothing. Outcasts, verily! And Evan could go, and write—but I have no patience with him. He is the blind tool of his mother, and anybody's puppet.'

The letter concludes, with horrid emphasis :

'The Madre in Beckley! Has sent for Evan from a low public-house! I have intercepted the messenger. Evan closeted with Sir Franks. Andrew's horrible old brother with Lady Jocelyn. The whole house, from garret to kitchen, full of whispers!'

A prayer to Providence closes the communication.

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Tom Cogglesby's proposition

The appearance of a curricule and a donkey-cart within the gates of Beckley Court, produced a sensation among the men of the lower halls, and a couple of them rushed out, with the left calf considerably in advance, to defend the house from violation. Toward the curricule they directed what should have been a bow, but was a nod. Their joint attention was then given to the donkey-cart, in which old Tom Cogglesby sat alone, bunchy in figure, bunched in face, his shrewd gray eyes twinkling under the bush of his eyebrows.

'Oy, sir—you! my man!' exclaimed the tallest of the pair resolutely. 'This won't do. Don't you know driving this sort of conveyance slap along the gravel 'ere, up to the pillars' unparliamentary? Can't be allowed. Now, right about!'

This address, accompanied by a commanding eleva-

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tion of the dexter hand, seemed to excite Mr. Raikes far more than Old Tom. He alighted from his perch in haste, and was running up to the stalwart figure, crying, 'Fellow!' when, as you tell a dog to lie down, Old Tom called out, 'Be quiet, sir!' and Raikes halted with prompt military obedience.

The sight of the curricule acting satellite to the donkey-cart staggered the two footmen.

'Are you lords?' sang out Old Tom.

A burst of laughter from the friends of Mr. Raikes, in the curricule, helped to make the powdered gentlemen aware of a sarcasm, and one with no little dignity replied that they were not lords.

'Oh! Then come and hold my donkey.'

Great irresolution was displayed at the injunction, but having consulted the face of Mr. Raikes, one fellow, evidently half overcome by what was put upon him, with the steps of Adam into exile, descended to the gravel, and laid his hand on the donkey's head.

'Hold hard!' cried Old Tom. 'Whisper in his ear. He'll know your language.'

'May I have the felicity of assisting you to terra firma?' interposed Mr. Raikes, with a bow of deferential familiarity.

'Done that once too often,' returned Old Tom, jumping out. 'There. What's the fee? There's a crown for you that ain't afraid of a live donkey; and there's a sixpenny bit for you that are—to keep up your courage; and when he's dead you shall have his skin—to shave by.'

'Excellent!' shouted Raikes.

'Thomas!' he addressed a footman, 'hand in my card. Mr. John Feversham Raikes.'

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'And tell my lady, Tom Cogglesby's come,' added the owner of that name.

We will follow Tom Cogglesby, as he chooses to be called.

Lady Jocelyn rose on his entering the library, and walking up to him, encountered him with a kindly full face.

'So I see you at last, Tom?' she said, without releasing his hand; and Old Tom mounted patches of red in his wrinkled cheeks, and blinked, and betrayed a singular antiquated bashfulness, which ended, after a mumble of 'Yes, there he was, and he hoped her ladyship was well,' by his seeking refuge in a chair, where he sat hard, and fixed his attention on the leg of a table.

'Well, Tom, do you find much change in me?' she was woman enough to continue.

He was obliged to look up.

'Can't say I do, my lady.'

'Don't you see the gray hairs, Tom?'

'Better than a wig,' rejoined he.

Was it true that her ladyship had behaved rather ill to Old Tom in her youth? Excellent women have been naughty girls, and young Beauties will have their train. It is also very possible that Old Tom had presumed upon trifles, and found it difficult to forgive her his own folly.

'Preferable to a wig? Well, I would rather see you with your natural thatch. You're bent, too. You look as if you had kept away from Beckley a little too long.'

'Told you, my lady, I should come when your daughter was marriageable.'

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'Oho! that's it? I thought it was the Election.'

'Election be—hem!—beg pardon, my lady.'

'Swear, Tom, if it relieves you. I think it bad to check an oath or a sneeze.'

'I'm come to see you on business, my lady, or I shouldn't have troubled you.'

'Malice?'

'You'll see I don't bear any, my lady.'

'Ah! if you had only sworn roundly twenty-five years ago, what a much younger man you would have been! and a brave capital old friend whom I should not have missed all that time.'

'Come!' cried Old Tom, varying his eyes rapidly between her ladyship's face and the floor, 'you acknowledge I had reason to.'

'Mais, cela va sans dire.'

'Cobblers' sons ain't scholars, my lady.'

'And are not all in the habit of throwing their fathers in our teeth, I hope!'

Old Tom wriggled in his chair. 'Well, my lady, I'm not going to make a fool of myself at my time o' life. Needn't be alarmed now. You've got the bell-rope handy and a husband on the premises.'

Lady Jocelyn smiled, stood up, and went to him. 'I like an honest fist,' she said, taking his. 'We're not going to be doubtful friends, and we won't snap and snarl. That's for people who're independent of wigs, Tom. I find, for my part, that a little gray on the top of my head cools the temper amazingly. I used to be rather hot once.'

'You could be peppery, my lady.'

'Now I'm cool, Tom, and so must you be; or, if you fight, it must be in my cause, as you did when

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you thrashed that saucy young carter. Do you remember?’

‘If you’ll sit ye down, my lady, I’ll just tell you what I’m come for,’ said Old Tom, who plainly showed that he did remember, and was alarmingly softened by her ladyship’s retention of the incident.

Lady Jocelyn returned to her place.

‘You’ve got a marriageable daughter, my lady?’

‘I suppose we may call her so,’ said Lady Jocelyn, with a composed glance at the ceiling.

‘Gaged to be married to any young chap?’

‘You must put the question to her, Tom.’

‘Ha! I don’t want to see her.’

At this Lady Jocelyn looked slightly relieved. Old Tom continued.

‘Happen to have got a little money—not so much as many a lord’s got, I dare say; such as ’tis, there ’tis. Young fellow I know wants a wife, and he shall have best part of it. Will that suit ye, my lady?’

Lady Jocelyn folded her hands. ‘Certainly; I’ve no objection. What it has to do with me I can’t perceive.’

‘Ahem!’ went Old Tom. ‘It won’t hurt your daughter to be married now, will it?’

‘Oh! my daughter is the destined bride of your “young fellow,”’ said Lady Jocelyn. ‘Is that how it’s to be?’

‘She’—Old Tom cleared his throat—‘she won’t marry a lord, my lady; but she—’hem—if she don’t mind that—’ll have a deuced sight more hard cash than many lord’s son’d give her, and a young fellow for a husband, sound in wind and limb, good bone and muscle, speaks grammar and two or three languages, and——’

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'Stop!' cried Lady Jocelyn. 'I hope this is not a prize young man? If he belongs, at his age, to the *unco guid*, I refuse to take him for a son-in-law, and I think Rose will, too.'

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Old Tom burst out vehemently: 'He's a damned good young fellow, though he isn't a lord.'

'Well,' said Lady Jocelyn, 'I've no doubt you're in earnest, Tom. It's curious, for this morning Rose has come to me and given me the first chapter of a botheration, which she declares is to end in the common rash experiment. What is your "young fellow's" name? Who is he? What is he?'

'Won't take my guarantee, my lady?'

'Rose—if she marries—must have a name, you know?'

Old Tom hit his knee. 'Then there's a pill for ye to swallow, for he ain't the son of a lord.'

'That's swallowed, Tom. What is he?'

'He's the son of a tradesman, then, my lady.' And Old Tom watched her to note the effect he had produced.

'More's the pity,' was all she remarked.

'And he'll have his thousand a year to start with; and he's a tailor, my lady.'

Her ladyship opened her eyes.

'Harrington's his name, my lady. Don't know whether you ever heard of it.'

Lady Jocelyn flung herself back in her chair. 'The queerest thing I ever met!' said she.

'Thousand a year to start with,' Old Tom went on, 'and if she marries—I mean if he marries *her*, I'll settle a thousand per ann. on the first baby—boy or gal.'

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'Hum! Is this gross collusion, Mr. Tom?' Lady Jocelyn inquired.

'What does that mean?'

'Have you spoken of this before to any one?'

'I haven't, my lady. Decided on it this morning. Hem! you got a son, too. He's fond of a young gal, or he ought to be. I'll settle him when I've settled the daughter.'

'Harry is strongly attached to a dozen, I believe,' said his mother. 'Well, Tom, we'll think of it. I may as well tell you: Rose has just been here to inform me that this Mr. Harrington has turned her head, and that she has given her troth, and all that sort of thing. I believe such was not to be laid to my charge in my day.'

'*You* were open enough, my lady,' said Old Tom. 'She's fond of the young fellow? She'll have a pill to swallow! poor young woman!'

Old Tom visibly chuckled. Lady Jocelyn had a momentary temptation to lead him out, but she did not like the subject well enough to play with it.

'Apparently Rose has swallowed it,' she said.

'Goose, shears, cabbage, and all!' muttered Old Tom. 'Got a stomach!—she knows he's a tailor, then? The young fellow told her? He hasn't been playing the lord to her?'

'As far as he's concerned, I think he has been tolerably honest, Tom, for a man and a lover.'

'And told her he was born and bound a tailor?'

'Rose certainly heard it from him.'

Slapping his knee, Old Tom cried: 'Bravo!' For though one part of his nature was disappointed, and the best part of his plot disarranged, he liked Evan's

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proceeding and felt warm at what seemed to him Rose's scorn of rank.

'She must be a good gal, my lady. She couldn't have got it from t' other side. Got it from you. Not that you——'

'No,' said Lady Jocelyn, apprehending him. 'I'm afraid I have no Republican virtues. I'm afraid I should have rejected the pill. Don't be angry with me,' for Old Tom looked sour again; 'I like birth and position, and worldly advantages, and, notwithstanding Rose's pledge of the instrument she calls her heart, and in spite of your offer, I shall, I tell you honestly, counsel her to have nothing to do with——'

'Anything less than lords,' Old Tom struck in. 'Very well. Are you going to lock her up, my lady?'

'No. Nor shall I whip her with rods.'

'Leave her free to her choice?'

'She will have my advice. That I shall give her. And I shall take care that before she makes a step she shall know exactly what it leads to. Her father, of course, will exercise his judgement.' (Lady Jocelyn said this to uphold the honour of Sir Franks, knowing at the same time perfectly well that he would be wheedled by Rose.) 'I confess I like this Mr. Harrington. But it's a great misfortune for him to have had a notorious father. A tailor should certainly avoid fame, and this young man will have to carry his father on his back. He'll never throw the great Mel off.'

Tom Cogglesby listened, and was really astonished at her ladyship's calm reception of his proposal.

'Shameful of him! shameful!' he muttered perversely: for it would have made him desolate to have had to change his opinion of her ladyship after

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cherishing it, and consoling himself with it, five-and-twenty years. Fearing the approach of softness, he prepared to take his leave.

'Now—your servant, my lady. I stick to my word, mind: and if your people here are willing, I—I've got a candidate up for Fall'field—I'll knock him down, and you shall sneak in your Tory. Servant, my lady.'

Old Tom rose to go. Lady Jocelyn took his hand cordially, though she could not help smiling at the humility of the cobbler's son in his manner of speaking of the Tory candidate.

'Won't you stop with us a few days?'

'I'd rather not, I thank ye.'

'Won't you see Rose?'

'I won't. Not till she's married.'

'Well, Tom, we're friends now?'

'Not aware I've ever done you any harm, my lady.'

'Look me in the face.'

The trial was hard for him. Though she had been five-and-twenty years a wife, she was still very handsome: but he was not going to be melted, and when the perverse old fellow obeyed her, it was with an aspect of resolute disgust that would have made any other woman indignant. Lady Jocelyn laughed.

'Why, Tom, your brother Andrew's here, and makes himself comfortable with us. We rode by Brook's farm the other day. Do you remember Copping's pond—how we dragged it that night? What days we had!'

Old Tom tugged once or twice at his imprisoned fist, while these youthful frolics of his too stupid self and the wild and beautiful Miss Bonner were being recalled.

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'I remember!' he said savagely, and reaching the door hurled out: 'And I remember the Bull-dogs, too!—servant, my lady.' With which he effected a retreat, to avoid a ringing laugh he heard in his ears.

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Lady Jocelyn had not laughed. She had done no more than look and smile kindly on the old boy. It was at the Bull-dogs, a fall of water on the borders of the park, that Tom Cogglesby, then a hearty young man, had been guilty of his folly: had mistaken her frank friendliness for a return of his passion, and his stubborn vanity still attributed her rejection of his suit to the fact of his descent from a cobbler, or, as he put it, to her infernal worship of rank.

'Poor old Tom!' said her ladyship, when alone. 'He's rough at the rind, but sound at the core.' She had no idea of the long revenge Old Tom cherished, and had just shaped into a plot to be equal with her for the Bull-dogs!

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Money was a strong point with the Elburne brood. The Jocelyns very properly respected blood; but being, as Harry, their youngest representative, termed them, poor as rats, they were justified in considering it a marketable stuff; and when they married they married for money. The Hon. Miss Jocelyn had espoused a manufacturer, who failed in his contract, and deserved his death. The diplomatist, Melville, had not stepped aside from the family traditions in

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his alliance with Miss Black, the daughter of a bold bankrupt, educated in affluence; and if he touched nothing but five thousand pounds and some very pretty ringlets, that was not his fault. Sir Franks, too, mixed his pure stream with gold. As yet, however, the gold had done little more than shine on him; and, belonging to expectancy, it might be thought unsubstantial. Beckley Court was in the hands of Mrs. Bonner, who, with the highest sense of duty toward her only living child, was the last to appreciate Lady Jocelyn's entire absence of demonstrative affection, and severely reprobated her daughter's philosophic handling of certain serious subjects. Sir Franks, no doubt, came better off than the others; her ladyship brought him twenty thousand pounds, and Harry had ten in the past tense, and Rose ten in the future; but living, as he had done, a score of years anticipating the demise of an incurable invalid, he, though an excellent husband and father, could scarcely be taught to imagine that the Jocelyn object of his bargain was attained. He had the semblance of wealth, without the personal glow which absolute possession brings. It was his habit to call himself a poor man, and it was his dream that Rose should marry a rich one. Harry was hopeless. He had been his Grandmother's pet up to the years of adolescence: he was getting too old for any prospect of a military career: he had no turn for diplomacy, no taste for any of the walks open to blood and birth, and was in headlong disgrace with the fountain of goodness at Beckley Court, where he was still kept in the tacit understanding that, should Juliana inherit the place, he must be at hand to marry her instantly, after the

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fashion of the Jocelyns. They were an injured family; for what they gave was good, and the commercial world had not behaved honourably to them.

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Now, Ferdinand Laxley was just the match for Rose. Born to a title and fine estate, he was evidently fond of her, and there had been a gentle hope in the bosom of Sir Franks that the family fatality would cease, and that Rose would marry both money and blood.

From this happy delusion poor Sir Franks was awakened to hear that his daughter had plighted herself to the son of a tradesman: that, as the climax to their evil fate, she who had some blood and some money of her own—the only Jocelyn who had ever united the two—was desirous of wasting herself on one who had neither. The idea was so utterly opposed to the principles Sir Franks had been trained in, that his intellect could not grasp it. He listened to his sister, Mrs. Shorne: he listened to his wife; he agreed with all they said, though what they said was widely diverse: he consented to see and speak to Evan, and he did so, and was much the most distressed. For Sir Franks liked many things in life, and hated one thing alone—which was ‘bother.’ A smooth world was his delight. Rose knew this, and her instruction to Evan was: ‘You cannot give me up—you will go, but you cannot give me up while I am faithful to you: tell him that.’ She knew that to impress this fact at once on the mind of Sir Franks would be a great gain; for in his detestation of bother he would soon grow reconciled to things monstrous: and hearing the same on both sides, the matter would assume an inevitable shape to him. Mr. Second Fiddle had no difficulty in declaring the eternity of his sentiments; but he toned

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them with a despair Rose did not contemplate, and added also his readiness to repair, in any way possible, the evil done. He spoke of his birth and position. Sir Franks, with a gentlemanly delicacy natural to all lovers of a smooth world, begged him to see the main and the insurmountable objection. Birth was to be desired, of course, and position, and so forth: but without money how can two young people marry? Evan's heart melted at this generous way of putting it. He said he saw it, he had no hope: he would go and be forgotten: and begged that for any annoyance his visit might have caused Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn, they would pardon him. Sir Franks shook him by the hand, and the interview ended in a dialogue on the condition of the knees of Black Lymport, and on horse-flesh in Portugal and Spain.

Following Evan, Rose went to her father and gave him a good hour's excitement, after which the worthy gentleman hurried for consolation to Lady Jocelyn, whom he found reading a book of French memoirs, in her usual attitude, with her feet stretched out, and her head thrown back, as in a distant survey of the lively people screening her from a troubled world. Her ladyship read him a piquant story, and Sir Franks capped it with another from memory; whereupon her ladyship held him wrong in one turn of the story, and Sir Franks rose to get the volume to verify, and while he was turning over the leaves, Lady Jocelyn told him incidentally of old Tom Cogglesby's visit and proposal. Sir Franks found the passage, and that her ladyship was right, which it did not move her countenance to hear.

'Ah!' said he, finding it no use to pretend there was

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no bother in the world, 'here's a pretty pickle! Rose says she will have that fellow.'

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'Hum!' replied her ladyship. 'And if she keeps her mind a couple of years, it will be a wonder.'

'Very bad for her this sort of thing—talked about,' muttered Sir Franks. 'Ferdinand was just the man.'

'Well, yes; I suppose it's her mistake to think brains an absolute requisite,' said Lady Jocelyn, opening her book again, and scanning down a column.

Sir Franks, being imitative, adopted a similar refuge, and the talk between them was varied by quotations and choice bits from the authors they had recourse to. Both leaned back in their chairs, and spoke with their eyes on their books.

'Julia's going to write to her mother,' said he.

'Very filial and proper,' said she.

'There'll be a horrible hubbub, you know, Emily.'

'Most probably. I shall get the blame; cela se concoit.'

'Young Harrington goes the day after to-morrow. Thought it better not to pack him off in a hurry.'

'And just before the pic-nic; no, certainly. I suppose it would look odd.'

'How are we to get rid of the Countess?'

'Eh? This Bautre is amusing, Franks; but he's nothing to Vandy. Homme incomparable! On the whole I find Ménage rather dull. The Countess? what an accomplished liar that woman is! She seems to have stepped out of Tallemant's Gallery. Concerning the Countess, I suppose you had better apply to Melville.'

'Where the deuce did this young Harrington get his breeding from?'

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'Yes, but there's no sign of the snob in him.'

'And I exonerate him from the charge of "adventuring" after Rose. George Uploft tells me—I had him in just now—that the mother is a woman of mark and strong principle. She has probably corrected the too luxuriant nature of Mel in her offspring. That is to say in this one. *Pour les autres, je ne dis pas.* Well, the young man will go; and if Rose chooses to become a monument of constancy, we can do nothing. I shall give my advice; but as she has not deceived me, and she is a reasonable being, I sha'n't interfere. Putting the case at the worst, they will not want money. I have no doubt Tom Cogglesby means what he says, and will do it. So there we will leave the matter till we hear from Elburne House.'

Sir Franks groaned at the thought.

'How much does he offer to settle on them?' he asked.

'A thousand a year on the marriage, and the same amount to the first child. I daresay the end would be that they would get all.'

Sir Franks nodded, and remained with one eyebrow pitiably elevated above the level of the other.

'Anything but a tailor!' he exclaimed presently, half to himself.

'There is a prejudice against that craft,' her ladyship acquiesced. 'Béranger—let me see—your favourite Frenchman, Franks, wasn't it his father?—no, his grandfather. "*Mon pauvre et humble grandpère,*" I think, was a tailor. Hum! the degrees of the thing, I confess, don't affect me. One trade I imagine to be no worse than another.'

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'Ferdinand's allowance is about a thousand,' said Sir Franks meditatively.

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'And won't be a farthing more till he comes to the title,' added her ladyship.

'Well,' resumed Sir Franks, 'it's a horrible bother!'

His wife philosophically agreed with him, and the subject was dropped.

Lady Jocelyn felt with her husband, more than she chose to let him know, and Sir Franks could have burst into anathemas against fate and circumstances, more than his love of a smooth world permitted. He, however, was subdued by her calmness; and she, with ten times the weight of brain, was manœuvred by the wonderful dash of General Rose Jocelyn. For her ladyship, thinking, 'I shall get the blame of all this,' rather sided insensibly with the offenders against those who condemned them jointly; and seeing that Rose had been scrupulously honest and straightforward in a very delicate matter, this lady was so constituted that she could not but applaud her daughter in her heart. A worldly woman would have acted, if she had not thought, differently; but her ladyship was not a worldly woman. Evan's bearing and character had, during his residence at Beckley Court, become so thoroughly accepted as those of a gentleman, and one of their own rank, that, after an allusion to the origin of his breeding, not a word more was said by either of them on that topic. Besides, Rose had dignified him by her decided conduct.

By the time poor Sir Franks had read himself into tranquillity, Mrs. Shorne, who knew him well, and was determined that he should not enter upon his usual negotiations with an unpleasantness: that is to say,

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to forget it, joined them in the library, bringing with her Sir John Loring and Hamilton Jocelyn. Her first measure was to compel Sir Franks to put down his book. Lady Jocelyn subsequently had to do the same.

‘Well, what have you done, Franks?’ said Mrs. Shorne.

‘Done?’ answered the poor gentleman. ‘What is there to be done? I’ve spoken to young Harrington.’

‘Spoken to him! He deserves horsewhipping! Have you not told him to quit the house instantly?’

Lady Jocelyn came to her husband’s aid ‘It wouldn’t do, I think, to kick him out. In the first place, he hasn’t deserved it.’

‘Not deserved it, Emily!—the commonest, low, vile, adventuring tradesman!’

‘In the second place,’ pursued her ladyship, ‘it’s not advisable to do anything that will make Rose enter into the young woman’s sublimities. It’s better not to let a lunatic see that you think him stark mad, and the same holds with young women afflicted with the love-mania. The sound of sense, even if they can’t understand it, flatters them so as to keep them within bounds. Otherwise you drive them into excesses best avoided.’

‘Really, Emily,’ said Mrs. Shorne, ‘you speak almost, one would say, as an advocate of such unions.’

‘You must know perfectly well that I entirely condemn them,’ replied her ladyship, who had once, and once only, delivered her opinion of the nuptials of Mr. and Mrs. Shorne.

In self-defence, and to show the total difference between the cases, Mrs. Shorne interjected: ‘An utterly penniless young adventurer!’

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'Oh, no; there's money,' remarked Sir Franks.

'Money is there?' quoth Hamilton respectfully.

'And there's wit,' added Sir John, 'if he has half his sister's talent.'

'Astonishing woman!' Hamilton chimed in; adding, with a shrug, 'But, egad!'

'Well, we don't want him to resemble his sister,' said Lady Jocelyn. 'I acknowledge she's amusing.'

'Amusing, Emily!' Mrs. Shorne never encountered her sister-in-law's calmness without indignation. 'I could not rest in the house with such a person, knowing her what she is. A vile adventuress, as I firmly believe. What does she do all day with your mother? Depend upon it, you will repent her visit in more ways than one.'

'A prophecy?' asked Lady Jocelyn, smiling.

On the grounds of common sense, on the grounds of propriety, and consideration of what was due to themselves, all agreed to condemn the notion of Rose casting herself away on Evan. Lady Jocelyn agreed with Mrs. Shorne; Sir Franks with his brother, and Sir John. But as to what they were to do, they were divided. Lady Jocelyn said she should not prevent Rose from writing to Evan, if she had the wish to do so.

'Folly must come out,' said her ladyship. 'It's a combustible material. I won't have her health injured. She shall go into the world more. She will be presented at Court, and if it's necessary to give her a dose or two to counteract her vanity, I don't object. This will wear off, or, si c'est véritablement une grande passion, eh bien! we must take what Providence sends us.'

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‘And which we might have prevented if we had condescended to listen to the plainest worldly wisdom,’ added Mrs. Shorne.

‘Yes,’ said Lady Jocelyn equably, ‘you know, you and I, Julia, argue from two distinct points. Girls may be shut up, as you propose. I don’t think nature intended to have them the obverse of men. I’m sure their mothers never designed that they should run away with footmen, riding-masters, chance curates, as they occasionally do, and wouldn’t if they had points of comparison. My opinion is that Prospero was just saved by the Prince of Naples being wrecked on his island, from a shocking mis-alliance between his daughter and the son of Sycorax. I see it clearly. Poetry conceals the extreme probability, but from what I know of my sex, I should have no hesitation in turning prophet also, as to that.’

What could Mrs. Shorne do with a mother who talked in this manner? Mrs. Melville, when she arrived to take part in the conference, which gradually swelled to a family one, was equally unable to make Lady Jocelyn perceive that her plan of bringing up Rose was, in the present result of it, other than unlucky.

Now the two Generals—Rose Jocelyn and the Countess de Saldar—had brought matters to this pass; and from the two tactical extremes: the former by openness and dash; the latter by subtlety, and her own interpretations of the means extended to her by Providence. I will not be so bold as to state which of the two I think right. Good and evil work together in this world. If the Countess had not woven the tangle, and gained Evan time, Rose would never have

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seen his blood,—never have had her spirit harried out of all shows and forms and habits of thought, up to the gates of existence, as it were, where she took him simply as God created him and her, and clave to him. Again, had Rose been secret, when this turn in her nature came, she would have forfeited the strange power she received from it, and which endowed her with decision to say what was in her heart, and stamp it lastingly there. The two Generals were quite antagonistic, but no two, in perfect ignorance of one another's proceedings, ever worked so harmoniously toward the main result. The Countess was the skilful engineer: Rose the General of cavalry. And it did really seem that, with Tom Cogglesby and his thousands in reserve, the victory was about to be gained. The male Jocelyns, an easy race, decided that, if the worst came to the worst, and Rose proved a wonder, there was money, which was something.

But social prejudice was about to claim its champion. Hitherto there had been no General on the opposite side. Love, aided by the Countess, had engaged an inert mass. The champion was discovered in the person of the provincial Don Juan, Mr. Harry Jocelyn. Harry had gone on a mysterious business of his own to London. He returned with a green box under his arm, which, five minutes after his arrival, was entrusted to Conning, in company with a genial present for herself, of a kind not perhaps so fit for exhibition; at least they both thought so, for it was given in the shades. Harry then went to pay his respects to his mother, who received him with her customary ironical tolerance. His father, to whom he was an incarnation of bother, likewise nodded to

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him and gave him a finger. Duty done, Harry looked round him for pleasure, and observed nothing but glum faces. Even the face of John Raikes was heavy. He had been hovering about the Duke and Miss Current for an hour, hoping the Countess would come and give him a promised introduction. The Countess stirred not from above, and Jack drifted from group to group on the lawn, and grew conscious that wherever he went he brought silence with him. His isolation made him humble, and when Harry shook his hand, and said he remembered Fallowfield and the fun there, Mr. Raikes thanked him.

Harry made his way to join his friend Ferdinand, and furnished him with the latest London news not likely to appear in the papers. Laxley was distant and unamused. From the fact, too, that Harry was known to be the Countess's slave, his presence produced the same effect in the different circles about the grounds, as did that of John Raikes. Harry began to yawn and wish very ardently for his sweet lady. She, however, had too fine an instinct to descend.

An hour before dinner, Juliana sent him a message that she desired to see him.

'Jove! I hope that girl's not going to be blowing hot again,' sighed the conqueror.

He had nothing to fear from Juliana. The moment they were alone she asked him, 'Have you heard of it?'

Harry shook his head and shrugged.

'They haven't told you? Rose has engaged herself to Mr. Harrington, a tradesman, a tailor!'

'Pooh! have you got hold of that story?' said Harry. 'But I'm sorry for old Ferdy. He was fond of Rosey. Here's another bother!'

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‘You don’t believe me, Harry?’

Harry was mentally debating whether, in this new posture of affairs, his friend Ferdinand would press his claim for certain moneys lent.

‘Oh, I believe you,’ he said. ‘Harrington has the knack with you women. Why, you made eyes at him. It was a toss-up between you and Rosey once.’

Juliana let this accusation pass.

‘He is a tradesman. He has a shop in Lymport, I tell you, Harry, and his name on it. And he came here on purpose to catch Rose. And now he has caught her, he tells her. And his mother is now at one of the village inns, waiting to see him. Go to Mr. George Uploft; he knows the family. Yes, the Countess has turned your head, of course; but she has schemed and schemed, and told such stories—God forgive her!’—

The girl had to veil her eyes in a spasm of angry weeping.

‘Oh, come! Juley!’ murmured her killing cousin. Harry boasted an extraordinary weakness at the sight of feminine tears. ‘I say! Juley! you know if you begin crying I’m done for, and it isn’t fair.’

He dropped his arm on her waist to console her, and generously declared to her that he always had been very fond of her. These scenes were not foreign to the youth. Her fits of crying, from which she would burst in a frenzy of contempt at him, had made Harry say stronger things; and the assurances of profound affection uttered in a most languid voice will sting the hearts of women.

Harry still went on with his declarations, heating them rapidly, so as to bring on himself the usual outburst and check. She was longer in coming to

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it this time, and he had a horrid fear, that instead of dismissing him fiercely, and so annulling his words, the strange little person was going to be soft and hold him to them. There were her tears, however, which she could not stop.

‘Well, then, Juley, look. I do, upon my honour, yes—there, don’t cry any more—I do love you.’

Harry held his breath in awful suspense. Juliana quietly disengaged her waist, and looking at him, said, ‘Poor Harry! You need not lie any more to please me.’

Such was Harry’s astonishment, that he exclaimed, ‘It isn’t a lie! I say, I do love you.’ And for an instant he thought and hoped that he did love her.

‘Well, then, Harry, I don’t love you,’ said Juliana; which revealed to our friend that he had been mistaken in his own emotions. Nevertheless, his vanity was hurt when he saw she was sincere, and he listened to her, a moody being. This may account for his excessive wrath at Evan Harrington after Juliana had given him proofs of the truth of what she said.

But the Countess was Harrington’s sister! The image of the Countess swam before him. Was it possible? Harry went about asking everybody he met. The initiated were discreet; those who had the whispers were open. A bare truth is not so convincing as one that discretion confirms. Harry found the detestable news perfectly true.

‘Stop it by all means if you can,’ said his father.

‘Yes, try a fall with Rose,’ said his mother.

‘And I must sit down to dinner to-day with a confounded fellow, the son of a tailor, who’s had the——impudence to make love to my sister!’ cried

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Harry. 'I'm determined to kick him out of the house!—half.'

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'To what is the modification of your determination due?' Lady Jocelyn inquired, probably suspecting the sweet and gracious person who divided Harry's mind.

Her ladyship treated her children as she did mankind generally, from her intellectual eminence. Harry was compelled to fly from her cruel shafts. He found comfort with his Aunt Shorne, and she as much as told Harry that he was the head of the house, and must take up the matter summarily. It was expected of him. Now was the time for him to show his manhood.

Harry could think of but one way to do that.

'Yes, and if I do—all up with the old lady,' he said, and had to explain that his Grandmama Bonner would never leave a penny to a fellow who had fought a duel.

'A duel!' said Mrs. Shorne. 'No, there are other ways. *Insist* upon his renouncing her. And Rose—treat her with a high hand, as becomes you. Your mother is incorrigible, and as for your father, one knows him of old. This devolves upon you. Our family honour is in your hands, Harry.'

Considering Harry's reputation, the family honour must have got low. Harry, of course, was not disposed to think so. He discovered a great deal of unused pride within him, for which he had hitherto not found an agreeable vent. He vowed to his aunt that he would not suffer the disgrace, and while still that blandishing olive-hued visage swam before his eyes, he pledged his word to Mrs. Shorne that he would come to an understanding with Harrington that night.

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'Quietly,' said she. 'No scandal, pray.'

'Oh, never mind how I do it,' returned Harry manfully. 'How am I to do it, then?' he added, suddenly remembering his debt to Evan.

Mrs. Shorne instructed him how to do it quietly, and without fear of scandal. The miserable champion replied that it was very well for her to tell him to say this and that, but—and she thought him demented—he must, previous to addressing Harrington in those terms, have money.

'Money!' echoed the lady. 'Money!'

'Yes, money!' he iterated doggedly, and she learnt that he had borrowed a sum of Harrington, and the amount of the sum.

It was a disastrous plight, for Mrs. Shorne was penniless.

She cited Ferdinand Laxley as a likely lender.

'Oh, I'm deep with him already,' said Harry, in apparent dejection.

'How dreadful are these everlasting borrowings of yours!' exclaimed his aunt, unaware of a trifling incongruity in her sentiments. 'You must speak to him without—pay him by-and-by. We must scrape the money together. I will write to your grandfather.'

'Yes; speak to him! How can I when I owe him? I can't tell a fellow he's a blackguard when I owe him, and I can't speak any other way. I ain't a diplomatist. Dashed if I know what to do!'

'Juliana,' murmured his aunt.

'Can't ask her, you know.'

Mrs. Shorne combatted the one prominent reason for the objection: but there were two. Harry believed that he had exhausted Juliana's treasury. Reproaching

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him further for his wastefulness, Mrs. Shorne promised him the money should be got, by hook or by crook, next day.

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‘And you will speak to this Mr. Harrington to-night, Harry? No allusion to the loan till you return it. Appeal to his sense of honour.’

The dinner-bell assembled the inmates of the house. Evan was not among them. He had gone, as the Countess said aloud, on a diplomatic mission to Fallowfield, with Andrew Cogglesby. The truth being that he had finally taken Andrew into his confidence concerning the letter, the annuity, and the bond. Upon which occasion Andrew had burst into a laugh, and said he could lay his hand on the writer of the letter.

‘Trust Old Tom for plots, Van! He’ll blow you up in a twinkling, the cunning old dog! He pretends to be hard—he’s as soft as I am, if it wasn’t for his crotchets. We’ll hand him back the cash, and that’s ended. And—eh? what a dear girl she is! Not that I’m astonished. My Harry might have married a lord—sit at top of any table in the land! And you’re as good as any man. That’s my opinion. But I say she’s a wonderful girl to see it.’

Chattering thus, Andrew drove with the dear boy into Fallowfield. Evan was still in his dream. To him the generous love and valiant openness of Rose, though they were matched in his own bosom, seemed scarcely human. Almost as noble to him were the gentlemanly plain-speaking of Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn’s kind common-sense. But the more he esteemed them, the more unbounded and miraculous appeared the prospect of his calling their daughter by



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the sacred name, and kneeling with her at their feet. Did the dear heavens have that in store for him? The horizon edges were dimly lighted.

Harry looked about under his eyelids for Evan, trying at the same time to compose himself for the martyrdom he had to endure in sitting at table with the presumptuous fellow. The Countess signalled him to come within the presence. As he was crossing the room, Rose entered, and moved to meet him, with: 'Ah, Harry! back again! Glad to see you.'

Harry gave her a blunt nod, to which she was inattentive.

'What!' whispered the Countess, after he pressed the tips of her fingers. 'Have you brought back the grocer?'

Now this was hard to stand. Harry could forgive her her birth, and pass it utterly by if she chose to fall in love with him; but to hear the grocer mentioned, when he knew of the tailor, was a little too much, and what Harry felt his ingenuous countenance was accustomed to exhibit. The Countess saw it. She turned her head from him to the diplomatist, and he had to remain like a sentinel at her feet. He did not want to be thanked for the green box: still he thought she might have favoured him with one of her much-embracing smiles.

In the evening, after wine, when he was warm, and had almost forgotten the insult to his family and himself, the Countess snubbed him. It was unwise on her part, but she had the ghastly thought that facts were oozing out, and were already half known. She was therefore sensitive tenfold to appearances; savage if one failed to keep up her lie to her, and was guilty

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of a shadow of difference of behaviour. The picnic over, our General would evacuate Beckley Court, and shake the dust off her shoes, and leave the harvest of what she had sown to Providence. Till then, respect, and the honours of war! So the Countess snubbed him, and he being full of wine, fell into the hands of Juliana, who had witnessed the little scene.

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‘She has made a fool of others as well as of you,’ said Juliana.

‘How has she?’ he inquired.

‘Never mind. Do you want to make her humble and crouch to you?’

‘I want to see Harrington,’ said Harry.

‘He will not return to-night from Fallowfield. He has gone there to get Mr. Andrew Cogglesby’s brother to do something for him. You won’t have such another chance of humbling them both—both! I told you his mother is at an inn here. The Countess has sent Mr. Harrington to Fallowfield to be out of the way, and she has told her mother all sorts of falsehoods.’

‘How do you know all that?’ quoth Harry. ‘By Jove, Juley! talk about plotters! No keeping anything from you, ever!’

‘Never mind. The mother is here. She must be a vulgar woman. Oh! if you could manage, Harry, to get this woman to come—you could do it so easily!—while they are at the picnic to-morrow. It would have the best effect on Rose. She would then understand! And the Countess!’

‘I could send the old woman a message!’ cried Harry, rushing into the scheme, inspired by Juliana’s

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fiery eyes. 'Send her a sort of message to say where we all were.'

'Let her know that her son *is* here, in some way,' Juley resumed.

'And, egad! what an explosion!' pursued Harry. 'But, suppose——'

'No one shall know, if you leave it to me—if you do just as I tell you, Harry. You won't be treated as you were this evening after that, if you bring down her pride. And, Harry, I hear you want money—I can give you some.'

'You're a perfect trump, Juley!' exclaimed her enthusiastic cousin. 'But, no; I can't take it. I must kiss you, though.'

He put a kiss upon her cheek. Once his kisses had left a red waxen stamp; she was callous to these compliments now.

'Will you do what I advise you to-morrow?' she asked.

After a slight hesitation, during which the olive-hued visage flitted faintly in the distances of his brain, Harry said:

'It'll do Rose good, and make Harrington cut. Yes! I declare I will.'

Then they parted. Juliana went to her bed-room, and flung herself upon the bed hysterically. As the tears came thick and fast, she jumped up to lock the door, for this outrageous habit of crying had made her contemptible in the eyes of Lady Jocelyn, and an object of pity to Rose. Some excellent and noble natures cannot tolerate disease, and are mystified by its ebullitions. It was very sad to see the slight thin frame grasped by those wan hands to contain the violence of

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the frenzy that possessed her! the pale, hapless face rigid above the torment in her bosom! She had prayed to be loved like other girls, and her readiness to give her heart in return had made her a by-word in the house. She went to the window and leaned out on the casement, looking towards Fallowfield over the downs, weeping bitterly, with a hard shut mouth. One brilliant star hung above the ridge, and danced on her tears.

‘Will he forgive me?’ she murmured. ‘Oh, my God! I wish we were dead together!’

Her weeping ceased, and she closed the window, and undressed as far away from the mirror as she could get; but its force was too much for her, and drew her to it. Some undefined hope had sprung in her suddenly. With nervous slow steps she approached the glass, and first brushing back the masses of black hair from her brow, looked as for some new revelation. Long and anxiously she perused her features: the wide bony forehead; the eyes deep-set and rounded with the scarlet of recent tears, the thin nose—sharp as the dead; the weak irritable mouth and sunken cheeks. She gazed like a spirit disconnected from what she saw. Presently a sort of forlorn negative was indicated by the motion of her head.

‘I can pardon him,’ she said, and sighed. ‘How could he love such a face!’

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At the South-western extremity of the park, with a view extending over wide meadows and troubled mill-waters, yellow barn-roofs and weather-gray old farm-walls, two grassy mounds threw their slopes to the margin of the stream. Here the bull-dogs held revel. The hollow between the slopes was crowned by a bending birch, which rose three-stemmed from the root, and hung a noiseless green shower over the basin of green it shadowed. Beneath it the interminable growl sounded pleasantly; softly shot the sparkle of the twisting water, and you might dream things half-fulfilled. Knots of fern were about, but the tops of the mounds were firm grass, evidently well rolled, and with an eye to airy feet. Olympus one eminence was called, Parnassus the other. Olympus a little overlooked Parnassus, but Parnassus was broader and altogether better adapted for the games of the Muses. Round the edges of both there was a well-trimmed bush of laurel, obscuring only the feet of the dancers from the observing gods. For on Olympus the elders reclined. Great efforts had occasionally been made to dispossess and unseat them, and their security depended mainly on a hump in the middle of the mound which defied the dance.

Watteau-like groups were already couched in the shade. There were ladies of all sorts: town-bred and country-bred: farmers' daughters and daughters of peers: for this pic-nic, as Lady Jocelyn, disgusting the

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Countess, would call it, was in reality a fête champêtre, given annually, to which the fair offspring of the superior tenants were invited—the brothers and fathers coming to fetch them in the evening. It struck the eye of the Countess de Saldar that Olympus would be a fitting throne for her, and a point whence her shafts might fly without fear of a return. Like another illustrious General at Salamanca, she directed a detachment to take possession of the height. Courtly Sir John Loring ran up at once, and gave the diplomatist an opportunity to thank her flatteringly for gaining them two minutes to themselves. Sir John waved his handkerchief in triumph, welcoming them under an awning where carpets and cushions were spread, and whence the Countess could eye the field. She was dressed ravishingly; slightly in a foreign style, the bodice being peaked at the waist, as was then the Portuguese persuasion. The neck, too, was deliciously veiled with fine lace—and thoroughly veiled, for it was a feature the Countess did not care to expose to the vulgar daylight. Off her gentle shoulders, as it were some fringe of cloud blown by the breeze this sweet lady opened her bosom to, curled a lovely black lace scarf: not Caroline's. If she laughed, the tinge of mourning lent her laughter new charms. If she sighed, the exuberant array of her apparel bade the spectator be of good cheer. Was she witty, men surrendered reason and adored her. Only when she entered the majestic mood, and assumed the languors of greatness, and recited musky anecdotes of her intimacy with it, only then did mankind, as represented at Beckley Court, open an internal eye and reflect that it was wonderful in a tailor's daughter. And she felt that

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mankind did so reflect. Her instincts did not deceive her. She knew not how much was known; in the depths of her heart she kept low the fear that possibly all might be known; and succeeding in this, she said to herself that probably nothing was *known* after all. George Uploft, Miss Carrington, and Rose, were the three she abhorred. Partly to be out of their way, and to be out of the way of chance shots (for she had heard names of people coming that reminded her of Dubbins's, where, in past days, there had been on one awful occasion a terrific discovery made), the Countess selected Olympus for her station. It was her last day, and she determined to be happy. Doubtless, she was making a retreat, but have not illustrious Generals snatched victory from their pursuers? Fair, then, sweet, and full of grace, the Countess moved. As the restless shifting of colours to her motions was the constant interchange of her semi-sorrowful manner and ready archness. Sir John almost capered to please her, and the diplomatist in talking to her forgot his diplomacy and the craft of his tongue.

It was the last day also of Caroline and the Duke. The Countess clung to Caroline and the Duke more than to Evan and Rose. She could see the first couple walking under an avenue of limes, and near them that young man or monkey, Raikes, as if in ambush. Twice they passed him, and twice he doffed his hat and did homage.

‘A most singular creature!’ exclaimed the Countess. ‘It is my constant marvel where my brother discovered such a curiosity. Do notice him.’

‘That man? Raikes?’ said the diplomatist. ‘Do you know he is our rival? Harry wanted an excuse for

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another bottle last night, and proposed "the Member" for Fallowfield. Up got this Mr. Raikes and returned thanks.'

'Yes?' the Countess negligently interjected in a way she had caught from Lady Jocelyn.

'Cogglesby's nominee, apparently.'

'I know it all,' said the Countess. 'We need have no apprehension. He is docile. My brother-in-law's brother, you see, is most eccentric. We can manage him best through this Mr. Raikes, for a personal application would be ruin. He quite detests our family, and indeed all the aristocracy.'

Melville's mouth pursed, and he looked very grave.

Sir John remarked: 'He seems like a monkey just turned into a man.'

'And doubtful about the tail,' added the Countess.

The image was tolerably correct, but other causes were at the bottom of the air worn by John Raikes. The Countess had obtained an invitation for him, with instructions that he should come early, and he had followed them so implicitly that the curricule was flinging dust on the hedges between Fallowfield and Beckley but an hour or two after the chariot of Apollo had mounted the heavens, and Mr. Raikes presented himself at the breakfast table. Fortunately for him the Countess was there. After the repast she introduced him to the Duke: and he bowed to the Duke, and the Duke bowed to him: and now, to instance the peculiar justness in the mind of Mr. Raikes, he, though he worshipped a coronet and would gladly have recalled the feudal times to a corrupt land, could not help thinking that his bow had beaten the Duke's and was better. He would rather not have thought so, for

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it upset his preconceptions and threatened a revolution in his ideas. For this reason he followed the Duke, and tried, if possible, to correct, or at least chasten the impressions he had of possessing a glaring advantage over the nobleman. The Duke's second notice of him was hardly a nod. 'Well!' Mr. Raikes reflected, 'if this is your Duke, why, egad! for figure and style my friend Harrington beats him hollow.' And Raikes thought he knew who could conduct a conversation with superior dignity and neatness. The torchlight of a delusion was extinguished in him, but he did not wander long in that gloomy cavernous darkness of the disenchanted, as many of us do, and as Evan had done, when after a week at Beckley Court he began to examine of what stuff his brilliant father, the great Mel, was composed. On the contrary, as the light of the Duke dwindled, Raikes gained in lustre. 'In fact,' he said, 'there's nothing but the title wanting.' He was by this time on a level with the Duke in his elastic mind.

Olympus had been held in possession by the Countess about half an hour, when Lady Jocelyn mounted it, quite unconscious that she was scaling a fortified point. The Countess herself fired off the first gun at her.

'It has been so extremely delightful up alone here, Lady Jocelyn: to look at everybody below. I hope many will not intrude on us!'

'None but the dowagers who have breath to get up,' replied her ladyship, panting. 'By the way, Countess, you hardly belong to us yet. You dance?'

'Indeed, I do not.'

'Oh, then you are in your right place. A dowager

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is a woman who doesn't dance: and her male attendant is—what is he? We will call him a fogy.'

Lady Jocelyn directed a smile at Melville and Sir John, who both protested that it was an honour to be the Countess's fogy.

Rose now joined them, with Laxley morally dragged in her wake.

'Another dowager and fogy!' cried the Countess musically. 'Do *you* not dance, my child?'

'Not till the music strikes up,' rejoined Rose. 'I suppose we shall have to eat first.'

'That is the Hamlet of the pic-nic play, I believe,' said her mother.

'Of course you dance, don't you, Countess?' Rose inquired, for the sake of amiable conversation.

The Countess's head signified: 'Oh, no! quite out of the question': she held up a little bit of her mournful draperies, adding: 'Besides, *you*, dear child, know your company, and can select; *I* do not, and cannot do so. I understand we have a most varied assembly!'

Rose shut her eyes, and then looked at her mother. Lady Jocelyn's face was undisturbed; but while her eyes were still upon the Countess, she drew her head gently back, imperceptibly. If anything, she was admiring the lady; but Rose could be no placid philosophic spectator of what was to her a horrible assumption and hypocrisy. For the sake of him she loved, she had swallowed a nauseous cup bravely. The Countess was too much for her. She felt sick to think of being allied to this person. She had a shuddering desire to run into the ranks of the world, and hide her head from multitudinous hootings. With a pang of envy she saw her friend Jenny walking by

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the side of William Harvey, happy, untried, unoffending: full of hope, and without any bitter draughts to swallow!

Aunt Bel now came tripping up gaily.

‘Take the alternative, *douairière* or *demoiselle*?’ cried Lady Jocelyn. ‘We must have a sharp distinction, or Olympus will be mobbed.’

‘*Entre les deux, s’il vous plait,*’ responded Aunt Bel. ‘Rose, hurry down, and leaven the mass. I see ten girls in a bunch. It’s shocking. Ferdinand, pray disperse yourself. Why is it, Emily, that we are always in excess at pic-nics? Is man dying out?’

‘From what I can see,’ remarked Lady Jocelyn, ‘Harry will be lost to his species unless some one quickly relieves him. He’s already half eaten up by the Conley girls. Countess, isn’t it your duty to rescue him?’

The Countess bowed, and murmured to Sir John:

‘A dismissal!’

‘I fear my fascinations, Lady Jocelyn, may not compete with those fresh young persons.’

‘Ha! ha! “fresh young persons,”’ laughed Sir John: for the ladies in question were romping boisterously with Mr. Harry.

The Countess inquired for the names and condition of the ladies, and was told that they sprang from Farmer Conley, a well-to-do son of the soil, who farmed about a couple of thousand acres between Fallowfield and Beckley, and bore a good reputation at the county bank.

‘But I do think,’ observed the Countess, ‘it must indeed be pernicious for any youth to associate with that class of woman. A deterioration of manners!’

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Rose looked at her mother again. She thought: 'Those girls would scorn to marry a tradesman's son!'

The feeling grew in Rose that the Countess lowered and degraded her. Her mother's calm contemplation of the lady was more distressing than if she had expressed the contempt Rose was certain, according to her young ideas, Lady Jocelyn must hold.

Now the Countess had been considering that she would like to have a word or two with Mr. Harry, and kissing her fingers to the occupants of Olympus, and fixing her fancy on the diverse thoughts of the ladies and gentlemen, deduced from a rapturous or critical contemplation of her figure from behind, she descended the slope.

Was it going to be a happy day? The well-imagined opinions of the gentlemen on her attire and style, made her lean to the affirmative; but Rose's demure behaviour, and something—something would come across her hopes. She had, as she now said to herself, stopped for the pic-nic, mainly to give Caroline a last opportunity of binding the Duke to visit the Cogglesby saloons in London. Let Caroline cleverly contrive this, as she might, without any compromise, and the stay at Beckley Court would be a great gain. Yes, Caroline was still with the Duke; they were talking earnestly. The Countess breathed a short appeal to Providence that Caroline might not prove a fool. Overnight she had said to Caroline: 'Do not be so English. Can one not enjoy friendship with a nobleman without wounding one's conscience or breaking with the world? My dear, the Duke visiting you, you *cow* that infamous Strike of yours. He will be utterly obsequious! I am not telling you to *pass the line*.

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The contrary. But we continentals have our grievous reputation because we dare to meet as intellectual beings, and defy the imputation that ladies and gentlemen are no better than animals.'

It sounded very lofty to Caroline, who, accepting its sincerity, replied:

'I cannot do things by halves. I cannot live a life of deceit. A life of misery—not deceit.'

Whereupon, pitying her poor English nature, the Countess gave her advice, and this advice she now implored her familiars to instruct or compel Caroline to follow.

The Countess's garment was plucked at. She beheld little Dorothy Loring glancing up at her with the roguish timidity of her years.

'May I come with you?' asked the little maid, and went off into a prattle: 'I spent that five shillings—I bought a shilling's worth of sweet stuff, and nine penn'orth of twine, and a shilling for small wax candles to light in my room when I'm going to bed, because I like plenty of light by the looking-glass always, and they do make the room so hot! My Jane declared she almost fainted, but I burnt them out! Then I only had very little left for a horse to mount my doll on; and I wasn't going to get a screw, so I went to Papa, and he gave me five shillings. And, oh, do you know, Rose can't bear me to be with you. Jealousy, I suppose, for you're very agreeable. And, do you know, your Mama is coming to-day? I've got a Papa and no Mama, and you've got a Mama and no Papa. Isn't it funny? But I don't think so much of it, as you're grown up. Oh, I'm quite sure she *is* coming, because I heard Harry telling Juley

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she was, and Juley said it would be so gratifying to you.'

A bribe and a message relieved the Countess of Dorothy's attendance on her.

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What did this mean? Were people so base as to be guilty of hideous plots in this house? Her mother coming! The Countess's blood turned deadly chill. Had it been her father she would not have feared, but her mother was so vilely plain of speech; she never opened her mouth save to deliver facts: which was to the Countess the sign of atrocious vulgarity.

But her mother had written to say she would wait for Evan in Fallowfield! The Countess grasped at straws. *Did* Dorothy hear that? And if Harry and Juliana spoke of her mother, what did that mean? That she was hunted, and must stand at bay!

'Oh, Papa! Papa! why *did* you marry a Dawley?' she exclaimed, plunging to what was, in her idea, the root of the evil.

She had no time for outcries and lamentations. It dawned on her that this was to be a day of battle. Where was Harry? Still in the midst of the Conley throng, apparently pooh-poohing something, to judge by the twist of his mouth.

The Countess delicately signed for him to approach her. The extreme delicacy of the signal was at least an excuse for Harry to perceive nothing. It was renewed, and Harry burst into a fit of laughter at some fun of one of the Conley girls. The Countess passed on, and met Juliana pacing by herself near the lower gates of the park. She wished only to see how Juliana behaved. The girl looked perfectly trustful, as much so as when the Countess was pouring in her ears

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the tales of Evan's growing but bashful affection for her.

'He will soon be here,' whispered the Countess. 'Has he told you he will come by this entrance?'

'No,' replied Juliana.

'You do not look well, sweet child.'

'I was thinking that you did not, Countess?'

'Oh, indeed, yes! with reason, alas! All our visitors have by this time arrived, I presume?'

'They come all day.'

The Countess hastened away from one who, when roused, could be almost as clever as herself, and again stood in meditation near the joyful Harry. This time she did not signal so discreetly. Harry could not but see it, and the Conley girls accused him of cruelty to the beautiful dame, which novel idea stung Harry with delight, and he held out to indulge in it a little longer. His back was half turned, and as he talked noisily, he could not observe the serene and resolute march of the Countess toward him. The youth gaped when he found his arm taken prisoner by the insertion of a small deliciously-gloved and perfumed hand through it.

'I must claim you for a few moments,' said the Countess, and took the startled Conley girls one and all in her beautiful smile of excuse.

'Why do you compromise me thus, sir?'

These astounding words were spoken out of the hearing of the Conley girls.

'Compromise you!' muttered Harry.

Masterly was the skill with which the Countess contrived to speak angrily and as an injured woman, while she wore an indifferent social countenance.

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'I repeat, compromise me. No, Mr. Harry Jocelyn, you are not the jackanapes you try to make people think you: *you* understand me.'

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The Countess might accuse him, but Harry never had the ambition to make people think him that: his natural tendency was the reverse: and he objected to the application of the word jackanapes to himself, and was ready to contest the fact of people having that opinion at all. However, all he did was to repeat: 'Compromise!'

'Is not open unkindness to me compromising me?'

'How?' asked Harry.

'Would you dare to do it to a strange lady? Would you have the impudence to attempt it with any woman here but me? No, I am innocent; it is my consolation; I have resisted you, but you by this cowardly behaviour place me—and my reputation, which is more—at your mercy. Noble behaviour, Mr. Harry Jocelyn! I shall remember my young English gentleman.'

The view was totally new to Harry.

'I really had no idea of compromising you,' he said. 'Upon my honour, I can't see how I did it now!'

'Oblige me by walking less in the neighbourhood of those fat-faced glaring farm-girls,' the Countess spoke under her breath; 'and don't look as if you were being whipped. The art of it is evident—you are but carrying on the game.—Listen. If you permit yourself to exhibit an unkindness to me, you show to any man who is a judge, and to every woman, that there has been something between us. You know my innocence—yes! but you must punish me for having resisted you thus long.'

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Harry swore he never had such an idea, and was much too much of a man and a gentleman to behave in that way.—And yet it seemed wonderfully clever! And here was the Countess saying :

‘Take your reward, Mr. Harry Jocelyn. You have succeeded; I am your humble slave. I come to you and sue for peace. To save my reputation I endanger myself. This is generous of you.’

‘Am I such a clever fellow?’ thought the young gentleman. ‘Deuced lucky with women’: he knew that: still a fellow must be wonderfully, miraculously, clever to be able to twist and spin about such a woman as this in that way. He did not object to conceive that he was the fellow to do it. Besides, here was the Countess de Saldar—worth five hundred of the Conley girls—almost at his feet!

Mollified, he said: ‘Now, didn’t you begin it?’

‘Evasion!’ was the answer. ‘It would be such pleasure to you to see a proud woman weep! And if yesterday, persecuted as I am, with dreadful falsehoods abroad respecting me and mine, if yesterday I did seem cold to your great merits, is it generous of you to take this revenge?’

Harry began to scent the double meaning in her words. She gave him no time to grow cool over it. She leaned, half-abandoned, on his arm. Arts feminine and irresistible encompassed him. It was a fatal mistake of Juliana’s to enlist Harry Jocelyn against the Countess de Saldar. He engaged, still without any direct allusion to the real business, to move heaven and earth to undo all that he had done; and the Countess implied an engagement to do—what? more than she intended to fulfil.

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Ten minutes later she was alone with Caroline.

'Tie yourself to the Duke at the dinner,' she said, in the forcible phrase she could use when necessary. 'Don't let them scheme to separate you. Never mind looks—do it!'

Caroline, however, had her reasons for desiring to maintain appearances. The Countess dashed at her hesitation.

'There is a plot to humiliate us in the most abominable way. The whole family have sworn to make us blush publicly. Publicly blush! They have written to Mama to come and speak *out*. *Now* will you attend to me, Caroline? You do not credit such atrocity? I know it to be true.'

'I never can believe that Rose would do such a thing,' said Caroline. 'We can hardly have to endure more than has befallen us already.'

Her speech was pensive, as of one who had matter of her own to ponder over. A swift illumination burst in the Countess's mind.

'No? Have you, dear, darling Carry? not that I intend that you should! but to-day the Duke would be such ineffable support to us. May I deem you have not been too cruel to-day? You dear silly English creature, "Duck," I used to call you when I was your little Louy. All is not yet lost, but I will save you from the ignominy if I can. I will!'

Caroline denied nothing—confirmed nothing, just as the Countess had stated nothing. Yet they understood one another perfectly. Women have a subtler language than ours: the veil pertains to them morally as bodily, and they see clearer through it.

The Countess had no time to lose. Wrath was in

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her heart. She did not lend all her thoughts to self-defence.

Without phrasing a word, or absolutely shaping a thought in her head, she slanted across the sun to Mr. Raikes, who had taken refreshment, and in obedience to his instinct, notwithstanding his enormous pretensions, had commenced a few preliminary antics.

‘Dear Mr. Raikes!’ she said, drawing him aside, ‘not before dinner!’

‘I really can’t contain the exuberant flow!’ returned that gentleman. ‘My animal spirits always get the better of me,’ he added confidentially.

‘Suppose you devote your animal spirits to my service for half an hour.’

‘Yours, Countess, from the os frontis to the chine!’ was the exuberant rejoinder.

The Countess made a wry mouth.

‘Your curricule is in Beckley?’

‘Behold!’ said Jack. ‘Two juveniles, not half so blest as I, do from the seat regard the festive scene o’er yon park-palings. They are there, even Franko and Fred. I’m afraid I promised to get them in at a later period of the day. Which sadly sore my conscience doth disturb! But what is to be done about the curricule, my Countess?’

‘Mr. Raikes,’ said the Countess, smiling on him fixedly, ‘you are amusing; but in addressing me, you must be precise, and above all things accurate. I am not your Countess!’

He bowed profoundly. ‘Oh, that I might say my Queen!’

The Countess replied: ‘A conviction of your lunacy

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would prevent my taking offence, though I might wish you enclosed and guarded.'

Without any further exclamations, Raikes acknowledged a superior.

'And, now, attend to me,' said the Countess. 'Listen: You go yourself, or send your friends instantly to Fallowfield. Bring with you that girl and her child. Stop: there is such a person. Tell her she is to be spoken to about the prospects of the poor infant. I leave that to your inventive genius. Evan wishes her here. Bring her, and *should* you see the mad captain who behaves so oddly, favour him with a ride. He says he dreams his wife is here, and he will not reveal his name! Suppose it should be my own beloved husband! I am quite anxious.'

The Countess saw him go up to the palings and hold a communication with his friends Franko and Fred. One took the whip, and after mutual flourishes, drove away.

'Now!' mused the Countess, 'if Captain Evremonde *should* come!' It would break up the pic-nic. Alas! the Countess had surrendered her humble hopes of a day's pleasure. But if her mother came as well, what a diversion that would be! If her mother came before the Captain, his arrival would cover the retreat; if the Captain preceded her, she would not be noticed. Suppose her mother refrained from coming? In that case it was a pity, but the Jocelyns had brought it on themselves.

This mapping out of consequences followed the Countess's deeds, and did not inspire them. Her passions sharpened her instincts, which produced her actions. The reflections ensued: as in nature, the

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consequences were all seen subsequently! Observe the difference between your male and female Generals. On reflection, too, the Countess praised herself for having done all that could be done. She might have written to her mother: but her absence would have been remarked: her messenger might have been overhauled: and, lastly, Mrs. Mel—‘Gorgon of a mother!’ the Countess cried out: for Mrs. Mel was like a Fate to her. She could remember only two occasions in her whole life when she had been able to manage her mother, and then by lying in such a way as to distress her conscience severely.

‘If Mama has conceived this idea of coming, nothing will impede her. My prayers will infuriate her!’ said the Countess, and she was sure that she had acted both rightly and with wisdom.

She put on her armour of smiles: she plunged into the thick of the enemy. Since they would not allow her to taste human happiness—she had asked but for the picnic! a small truce!—since they denied her that, rather than let them triumph by seeing her wretched, she took into her bosom the joy of demons. She lured Mr. George Uploft away from Miss Carrington, and spoke to him strange hints of matrimonial disappointments, looking from time to time at that apprehensive lady, doating on her terrors. And Mr. George seconded her by his clouded face, for he was ashamed not to show that he did not know Louisa Harrington in the Countess de Saldar, and had not the courage to declare that he did. The Countess spoke familiarly, but without any hint of an ancient acquaintance between them. ‘What a post her husband’s got!’ thought Mr. George, not envying the Count. He

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was wrong: she was an admirable ally. All over the field the Countess went, watching for her mother, praying that if she did come, Providence might prevent her from coming while they were at dinner. How clearly Mrs. Shorne and Mrs. Melville saw her vulgarity now! By the new light of knowledge, how certain they were that they had seen her ungentle training in a dozen little instances.

'She is not well-bred, cela se voit,' said Lady Jocelyn.

'Bred! it's the stage! How could such a person be bred?' said Mrs. Shorne.

Accept in the Countess the heroine who is combatting class-prejudices, and surely she is pre-eminently noteworthy. True, she fights only for her family, and is virtually the champion of the opposing institution misplaced. That does not matter: the Fates may have done it purposely: by conquering she establishes a principle. A Duke adores her sister, the daughter of the house her brother, and for herself she has many protestations in honour of her charms: nor are they empty ones. She can confound Mrs. Melville, if she pleases to, by exposing an adorer to lose a friend. Issuing out of Tailorland, she, a Countess, has done all this; and it were enough to make her glow, did not little evils, and angers, and spites, and alarms so frightfully beset her.

The sun of the pic-nic system is dinner. Hence philosophers may deduce that the pic-nic is a British invention. There is no doubt that we do not shine at the pic-nic until we reflect the face of dinner. To this, then, all who were not lovers began seriously to look forward, and the advance of an excellent county

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band, specially hired to play during the entertainment, gave many of the guests quite a new taste for sweet music; and indeed we all enjoy a thing infinitely more when we see its meaning.

About this time Evan entered the lower park-gates with Andrew. The first object he encountered was John Raikes in a state of great depression. He explained his case:

‘Just look at my frill! Now, upon my honour, you know, I’m good-tempered; I pass their bucolic habits, but this is beyond bearing. I was near the palings there, and a fellow calls out, “Hi! will you help the lady over?” Holloa! thinks I, an adventure! However, I advised him to take her round to the gates. The beast burst out laughing. “Now, then,” says he, and I heard a scrambling at the pales, and up came the head of a dog. “Oh! the dog first,” says I. “Catch by the ears,” says he. I did so. “Pull,” says he. ‘Gad, pull indeed! The beast gave a spring and came slap on my chest, with his dirty wet muzzle in my neck! I felt instantly it was the death of my frill, but gallant as you know me, I still asked for the lady. “If you will please, or an it meet your favour, to extend your hand to me!” I confess I did think it rather odd, the idea of a lady coming in that way over the palings! but my curst love of adventure always blinds me. It *always* misleads my better sense, Harrington. Well, instead of a lady, I see a fellow—he may have been a lineal descendant of Cedric the Saxon. “Where’s the lady?” says I. “Lady?” says he, and stares, and then laughs: “Lady! why,” he jumps over, and points at his beast of a dog, “don’t you know a bitch when you see one?” I

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was in the most ferocious rage! If he hadn't been a big burly bully, down he'd have gone. "Why didn't you say what it was?" I roared. "Why," says he, "the word isn't considered polite!" I gave him a cut there. I said, "I rejoice to be *positively* assured that you uphold the *laws* and *forms* of *civilization*, sir." My belief is he didn't feel it.'

'The thrust sinned in its shrewdness,' remarked Evan, ending a laugh.

'Hem!' went Mr. Raikes, more contentedly: 'after all, what *are* appearances to the man of wit and intellect? Dress, and women will approve you: but I assure you they much prefer the man of wit in his slouched hat and stockings down. I was introduced to the Duke this morning. It is a curious thing that the seduction of a Duchess has always been one of my dreams.'

At this Andrew Cogglesby fell into a fit of laughter.

'Your servant,' said Mr. Raikes, turning to him. And then he muttered, 'Extraordinary likeness! Good Heavens! Powers!'

From a state of depression, Mr. Raikes changed into one of bewilderment. Evan paid no attention to him, and answered none of his hasty undertoned questions. Just then, as they were on the skirts of the company, the band struck up a lively tune, and quite unconsciously, the legs of Raikes, affected, it may be, by supernatural reminiscences, loosely hornpiped. It was but a moment: he remembered himself the next: but in that fatal moment eyes were on him. He never recovered his dignity in Beckley Court: he was fatally mercurial.

'What is the joke against this poor fellow?' asked Evan of Andrew.

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‘Never mind, Van. You’ll roar. Old Tom again. We’ll see by-and-by, after the champagne. He—this young Raikes—ha! ha!—but I can’t tell you.’ And Andrew went away to Drummond, to whom he was more communicative. Then he went to Melville, and one or two others, and the eyes of many became concentrated on Raikes, and it was observed as a singular sign that he was constantly facing about, and flushing the fiercest red. Once he made an effort to get hold of Evan’s arm and drag him away, as one who had an urgent confession to be delivered of, but Evan was talking to Lady Jocelyn, and other ladies, and quietly disengaged his arm without even turning to notice the face of his friend. Then the dinner was announced, and men saw the dinner. The Countess went to shake her brother’s hand, and with a very gratulatory visage, said through her half-shut teeth: ‘If Mama appears, rise up and go away with her, before she has time to speak a word.’ An instant after Evan found himself seated between Mrs. Evremonde and one of the Conley girls. The dinner had commenced. The first half of the battle of the Bull-dogs was as peaceful as any ordinary pic-nic, and promised to the general company as calm a conclusion.

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If it be a distinct point of wisdom to hug the hour that is, then does dinner amount to a highly intellectual invitation to man, for it furnishes the occasion; and

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Britons are the wisest of their race, for more than all others they take advantage of it. In this Nature is undoubtedly our guide, seeing that he who, while feasting his body allows to his soul a thought for the morrow, is in his digestion curst, and becomes a house of evil humours. Now, though the epicure may complain of the cold meats, a dazzling table, a buzzing company, blue sky, and a band of music, are incentives to the forgetfulness of troubles past and imminent, and produce a concentration of the faculties. They may not exactly prove that peace is established between yourself and those who object to your carving of the world, but they testify to an armistice.

Aided by these observations, you will understand how it was that the Countess de Saldar, afflicted and menaced, was inspired, on taking her seat, to give so graceful and stately a sweep to her dress that she was enabled to conceive woman and man alike to be secretly overcome by it. You will not refuse to credit the fact that Mr. Raikes threw care to the dogs, heavy as was that mysterious lump suddenly precipitated on his bosom; and you will think it not impossible that even the springers of the mine about to explode should lose their subterranean countenances. A generous abandonment to one idea prevailed. As for Evan, the first glass of champagne rushed into reckless nuptials with the music in his head, bringing Rose, warm almost as life, on his heart. Sublime are the visions of lovers! He knew he must leave her on the morrow; he feared he might never behold her again; and yet he tasted bliss, for it seemed within the contemplation of the Gods that he should dance with his darling before dark—haply waltz with her! Oh, heaven! he shuts

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his eyes, blinded. The band wheels off meltingly in a tune all cadences, and twirls, and risings and sinkings, and passionate outbursts trippingly consoled. Ah! how sweet to waltz through life with the right partner. And what a singular thing it is to look back on the day when we thought something like it! Never mind: there may be spheres where it is so managed—doubtless the planets have their Hanwell and Bedlam.

I confess that the hand here writing is not insensible to the effects of that first glass of champagne. The poetry of our Countess's achievements waxes rich in manifold colours: I see her by the light of her own pleas to Providence. I doubt almost if the hand be mine which dared to make a hero play second fiddle, and to his beloved. I have placed a bushel over his light, certainly. Poor boy! it was enough that he should have tailordom on his shoulders: I ought to have allowed him to conquer Nature, and so come out of his eclipse. This shall be said of him: that he can play second fiddle without looking foolish, which, for my part, I call a greater triumph than if he were performing the heroics we are more accustomed to. He has steady eyes, can gaze at the right level into the eyes of others, and commands a tongue which is neither struck dumb nor set in a flutter by any startling question. The best instances to be given that he does not lack merit are that the Jocelyns, whom he has offended by his birth, cannot change their treatment of him, and that the hostile women, whatever they may say, do not think Rose utterly insane. At any rate, Rose is satisfied, and her self-love makes her a keen critic. The moment Evan appeared, the sickness produced in her by the Countess passed, and she was ready to brave

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her situation. With no mock humility she permitted Mrs. Shorne to place her in a seat where glances could not be interchanged. She was quite composed, calmly prepared for conversation with any one. Indeed, her behaviour since the hour of general explanation had been so perfectly well-contained, that Mrs. Melville said to Lady Jocelyn:

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‘I am only thinking of the damage to her. It will pass over—this fancy. You can see she is not serious. It is mere spirit of opposition. She eats and drinks just like other girls. You can see that the fancy has not taken such very strong hold of her.’

‘I can’t agree with you,’ replied her ladyship. ‘I would rather have her sit and sigh by the hour, and loathe roast beef. That would look nearer a cure.’

‘She has the notions of a silly country girl,’ said Mrs. Shorne.

‘Exactly,’ Lady Jocelyn replied. ‘A season in London will give her balance.’

So the guests were tolerably happy, or at least, with scarce an exception, open to the influences of champagne and music. Perhaps Juliana was the wretchedest creature present. She was about to smite on both cheeks him she loved, as well as the woman she despised and had been foiled by. Still she had the consolation that Rose, seeing the vulgar mother, might turn from Evan: a poor distant hope, meagre and shapeless like herself. Her most anxious thoughts concerned the means of getting money to lock up Harry’s tongue. She could bear to meet the Countess’s wrath, but not Evan’s offended look. Hark to that Countess!

‘Why *do* you denominate this a pic-nic, Lady Jocelyn? It is in verity a fête!’

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‘I suppose we ought to lie down à la Grecque to come within the term,’ was the reply. ‘On the whole, I prefer plain English for such matters.’

‘But this is assuredly too sumptuous for a pic-nic, Lady Jocelyn. From what I can remember, pic-nic implies contribution from all the guests. It is true I left England a child!’

Mr. George Uploft could not withhold a sharp grimace. The Countess had throttled the inward monitor that tells us when we are lying, so grievously had she practised the habit in the service of her family.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs. Melville, ‘I have heard of that fashion, and very stupid it is.’

‘Extremely vulgar,’ murmured Miss Carrington.

‘Possibly,’ Lady Jocelyn observed; ‘but good fun. I have been to pic-nics, in my day. I invariably took cold pie and claret. I clashed with half-a-dozen, but all the harm we did was to upset the dictum that there can be too much of a good thing. I know for certain that the bottles were left empty.’

‘And this woman,’ thought the Countess, ‘this woman, with a soul so essentially vulgar, claims rank above me!’ The reflection generated contempt of English society, in the first place, and then a passionate desire for self-assertion.

She was startled by a direct attack which aroused her momentarily lulled energies.

A lady, quite a stranger, a dry simpering lady, caught the Countess’s benevolent passing gaze, and leaning forward, said: ‘I hope her ladyship bears her affliction as well as can be expected?’

In military parlance, the Countess was taken in

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flank. Another would have asked—What ladyship? To whom do you allude, may I beg to inquire? The Countess knew better. Rapid as light it shot through her that the relict of Sir Abraham was meant, and this she divined because she was aware that devilish malignity was watching to trip her.

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A little conversation happening to buzz at the instant, the Countess merely turned her chin to an angle, agitated her brows very gently, and crowned the performance with a mournful smile. All that a woman must feel at the demise of so precious a thing as a husband, was therein eloquently expressed: and at the same time, if explanations ensued, there were numerous ladyships in the world, whom the Countess did not mind afflicting, should she be hard pressed.

‘I knew him so well!’ resumed the horrid woman, addressing anybody. ‘It was so sad! so unexpected! but he was so subject to affection of the throat. And I *was* so sorry I could not get down to him in time. I had not seen him since his marriage, when I was a girl!—and to meet one of his children!—But, my dear, in quinsey, I have heard that there is nothing on earth like a good hearty laugh.’

Mr. Raikes hearing this, sucked down the flavour of a glass of champagne, and with a look of fierce jollity, interposed, as if specially charged by Providence to make plain to the persecuted Countess his mission and business there: ‘Then our vocation is at last revealed to us! Quinsey-doctor! I remember when a boy, wandering over the paternal mansion, and envying the life of a tinker, which my mother did not think a good omen in me. But the traps of a Quinsey-

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doctor are even lighter. Say twenty good jokes, and two or three of a practical kind. A man most enviable!

‘It appears,’ he remarked aloud to one of the Conley girls, ‘that quinsey is needed before a joke is properly appreciated.’

‘I like fun,’ said she, but had not apparently discovered it.

What did that odious woman mean by perpetually talking about Sir Abraham? The Countess intercepted a glance between her and the hated Juliana. She felt it was a malignant conspiracy: still the vacuous vulgar air of the woman told her that most probably she was but an instrument, not a confederate, and was only trying to push herself into acquaintance with the great: a proceeding scorned and abominated by the Countess, who longed to punish her for her insolent presumption. The bitterness of her situation stung her tenfold when she considered that she dared not.

Meantime the champagne became as regular in its flow as the Bull-dogs, and the monotonous bass of these latter sounded through the music, like life behind the murmur of pleasure, if you will. The Countess had a not unfeminine weakness for champagne, and old Mr. Bonner’s cellar was well and choicely stocked. But was this enjoyment to the Countess?—this dreary station in the background! ‘May I emerge?’ she as much as implored Providence. The petition was infinitely tender. She thought she might, or it may be that nature was strong, and she could not restrain herself.

Taking wine with Sir John, she said:

‘This bowing! Do you know how amusing it is

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deemed by us Portuguese? Why not embrace? as the dear Queen used to say to me.'

'I am decidedly of Her Majesty's opinion,' observed Sir John, with emphasis, and the Countess drew back into a mingled laugh and blush.

Her fiendish persecutor gave two or three nods. 'And you know the Queen!' she said.

She had to repeat the remark: whereupon the Countess murmured, 'Intimately.'

'Ah, we have lost a staunch old Tory in Sir Abraham,' said the lady, performing lamentation.

What did it mean? Could design lodge in that empty-looking head with its crisp curls, button nose, and diminishing simper? Was this pic-nic to be made as terrible to the Countess by her putative father as the dinner had been by the great Mel? The deep, hard, level look of Juliana met the Countess's smile from time to time, and like flimsy light horse before a solid array of infantry, the Countess fell back, only to be worried afresh by her perfectly unwitting tormentor.

'His last days?—without pain? Oh, I hope so!' came after a lapse of general talk.

'Aren't we getting a little funereal, Mrs. Perkins?' Lady Jocelyn asked, and then rallied her neighbours.

Miss Carrington looked at her vexedly, for the fiendish Perkins was checked, and the Countess in alarm, about to commit herself, was a pleasant sight to Miss Carrington.

'The worst of these indiscriminate meetings is that there is *no* conversation,' whispered the Countess, thanking Providence for the relief.

Just then she saw Juliana bend her brows at another person. This was George Uploft, who shook his head,

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and indicated a shrewd-eyed, thin, middle-aged man, of a lawyer-like cast; and then Juliana nodded, and George Uploft touched his arm, and glanced hurriedly behind for champagne. The Countess's eyes dwelt on the timid young squire most affectionately. You never saw a fortress more unprepared for dread assault.

'Hem!' was heard, terrific. But the proper pause had evidently not yet come, and now to prevent it the Countess strained her energies and tasked her genius intensely. Have you an idea of the difficulty of keeping up the ball among a host of ill-assorted, stupid country people, who have no open topics, and can talk of nothing continuously but scandal of their neighbours, and who, moreover, feel they are not up to the people they are mixing with? Darting upon Seymour Jocelyn, the Countess asked touchingly for news of the partridges. It was like the unlocking of a machine. Seymour was not blythe in his reply, but he was loud and forcible; and when he came to the statistics—oh, then you would have admired the Countess!—for comparisons ensued, braces were enumerated, numbers given were contested, and the shooting of this one jeered at, and another's sure mark respectfully admitted. And how lay the coveys? And what about the damage done by last winter's floods? And was there good hope of the pheasants? Outside this clatter the Countess hovered. Twice the awful 'Hem!' was heard. She fought on. She kept them at it. If it flagged she wished to know this or that, and finally thought that, really, she should like herself to try one shot. The women had previously been left behind. This brought in the women. Lady Jocelyn proposed a female expedition for the morrow.

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'I believe I used to be something of a shot, formerly,' she said.

'You peppered old Tom once, my lady,' remarked Andrew, and her ladyship laughed, and that foolish Andrew told the story, and the Countess, to revive her subject, had to say: 'May I be enrolled to shoot?' though she detested and shrank from fire-arms.

'Here are two!' said the hearty presiding dame. 'Ladies, apply immediately to have your names put down.'

The possibility of an expedition of ladies now struck Seymour vividly, and said he: 'I'll be secretary'; and began applying to the ladies for permission to put down their names. Many declined, with brevity, muttering, either aloud or to themselves, 'unwomanly'; varied by 'unladylike': some confessed cowardice; some a horror of the noise close to their ears; and there was the plea of nerves. But the names of half-a-dozen ladies were collected, and then followed much laughter, and musical hubbub, and delicate banter. So the ladies and gentlemen fell one and all into the partridge pit dug for them by the Countess: and that horrible 'Hem!' equal in force and terror to the roar of artillery preceding the charge of ten thousand dragoons, was silenced—the pit appeared impassable. Did the Countess crow over her advantage? Mark her: the lady's face is entirely given up to partridges. 'English sports are so much envied abroad,' she says: but what she dreads is a reflection, for that leads off from the point. A portion of her mind she keeps to combat them in Lady Jocelyn and others who have the tendency: the rest she divides between internal prayers for succour, and casting about for another

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popular subject to follow partridges. Now, mere talent; as critics say when they are lighting candles round a genius, mere talent would have hit upon pheasants as the natural sequitur, and then diverged to sports—a great theme, for it ensures a chorus of sneers at foreigners, and so on probably to a discussion of birds and beasts best adapted to enrapture the palate of man. Stories may succeed, but they are doubtful, and not to be trusted, coming after cookery. After an exciting subject which has made the general tongue to wag, and just enough heated the brain to cause it to cry out for spiced food—then start your story: taking care that it be mild; for one too marvellous stops the tide, the sense of climax being strongly implanted in all bosoms. So the Countess told an anecdote—one of Mel's. Mr. George Uploft was quite familiar with it, and knew of one passage that would have abashed him to relate 'before ladies.' The sylph-like ease with which the Countess floated over this foul abysm was miraculous. Mr. George screwed his eyelids queerly, and closed his jaws with a report, completely beaten. The anecdote was of the character of an apologue, and pertained to game. This was, as it happened, a misfortune; for Mr. Raikes had felt himself left behind by the subject; and the stuff that was in this young man being naturally ebullient, he lay by to trip it, and take a lead. His remarks brought on him a shrewd cut from the Countess, which made matters worse; for a pun may also breed puns, as doth an anecdote. The Countess's stroke was so neat and perfect that it was something for the gentlemen to think over; and to punish her for giving way to her cleverness and to petty vexation,

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‘Hem!’ sounded once more, and then: ‘May I ask you if the present Baronet is in England?’

Now Lady Jocelyn perceived that some attack was directed against her guest. She allowed the Countess to answer:—

‘The eldest was drowned in the Lisbon waters’:

And then said: ‘But who is it that persists in serving up the funeral baked meats to us?’

Mrs. Shorne spoke for her neighbour: ‘Mr. Farnley’s cousin was the steward of Sir Abraham Harrington’s estates.’

The Countess held up her head boldly. There is a courageous exaltation of the nerves known to heroes and great Generals in action when they feel sure that resources within themselves will spring up to the emergency, and that over simple mortals success is positive.

‘I had a great respect for Sir Abraham,’ Mr. Farnley explained, ‘very great. I heard that this lady’ (bowing to the Countess) ‘was his daughter.’

Lady Jocelyn’s face wore an angry look, and Mrs. Shorne gave her the shade of a shrug and an expression implying, ‘I didn’t!’

Evan was talking to Miss Jenny Graine at the moment rather earnestly. With a rapid glance at him, to see that his ears were closed, the Countess breathed:

‘Not the elder branch!—Cadet!’

The sort of noisy silence produced by half-a-dozen people respirating deeply and moving in their seats was heard. The Countess watched Mr. Farnley’s mystified look, and whispered to Sir John: ‘Est-ce qu’il comprenne le Français, lui?’

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It was the final feather-like touch to her triumph. She saw safety and a clear escape, and much joyful gain, and the pleasure of relating her sufferings in days to come. This vista was before her when, harsh as an execution bell, telling her that she had vanquished man, but that Providence opposed her, 'Mrs. Melchisedec Harrington!' was announced to Lady Jocelyn.

Perfect stillness reigned immediately, as if the picnic had heard its doom.

'Oh! I will go to her,' said her ladyship, whose first thought was to spare the family. 'Andrew, come and give me your arm.'

But when she rose Mrs. Mel was no more than the length of an arm from her elbow.

In the midst of the horrible anguish she was enduring, the Countess could not help criticizing her mother's curtsey to Lady Jocelyn. Fine, but a shade too humble. Still it was fine; all might not yet be lost.

'Mama!' she softly exclaimed, and thanked heaven that she had not denied her parent.

Mrs. Mel did not notice her or any of her children. There was in her bosom a terrible determination to cast a devil out of the one she best loved. For this purpose, heedless of all pain to be given, or of impropriety, she had come to speak publicly, and disgrace and humiliate, that she might save him from the devils that had ruined his father.

'My lady,' said the terrible woman, thanking her in reply to an invitation that she should be seated, 'I have come for my son. I hear he has been playing the lord in your house, my lady. I humbly thank your ladyship for your kindness to him, but he is nothing more than a tailor's son, and is bound a tailor himself

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that his father may be called an honest man. I am come to take him away.'

Mrs. Mel seemed to speak without much effort, though the pale flush of her cheeks showed that she felt what she was doing. Juliana was pale as death, watching Rose. Intensely bright with the gem-like light of her gallant spirit, Rose's eyes fixed on Evan. He met them. The words of Ruth passed through his heart. But the Countess, who had given Rose to Evan, and the Duke to Caroline, where was her supporter? The Duke was entertaining Caroline with no less dexterity, and Rose's eyes said to Evan: 'Feel no shame that I do not feel!' but the Countess stood alone. It is ever thus with genius! to quote the numerous illustrious authors who have written of it.

What mattered it now that in the dead hush Lady Jocelyn should assure her mother that she had been misinformed, and that Mrs. Mel was presently quieted and made to sit with others before the fruits and wines? All eyes were hateful—the very thought of Providence confused her brain. Almost reduced to imbecility, the Countess imagined, as a reality, that Sir Abraham had borne with her till her public announcement of relationship, and that then the outraged ghost would no longer be restrained, and had struck this blow.

The crushed pic-nic tried to get a little air, and made attempts at conversation. Mrs. Mel sat upon the company with the weight of all tailordom.

And now a messenger came for Harry. Everybody was so zealously employed in the struggle to appear comfortable under Mrs. Mel, that his departure was hardly observed. The general feeling for Evan and his sisters, by their superiors in rank, was one of kindly

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pity. Laxley, however, did not behave well. He put up his glass and scrutinized Mrs. Mel, and then examined Evan, and Rose thought that in his interchange of glances with any one there was a lurking revival of the scene gone by. She signalled with her eyebrows for Drummond to correct him, but Drummond had another occupation. Andrew made the diversion. He whispered to his neighbour, and the whisper went round, and the laugh; and Mr. Raikes grew extremely uneasy in his seat, and betrayed an extraordinary alarm. But he also was soon relieved. A messenger had come from Harry to Mrs. Evremonde, bearing a slip of paper. This the lady glanced at, and handed it to Drummond. A straggling pencil had traced these words:

‘Just running by S.W. gates—saw the Captain coming in—couldn’t stop to stop him—tremendous hurry—important.—HARRY J.’

Drummond sent the paper to Lady Jocelyn. After her perusal of it a scout was despatched to the summit of Olympus, and his report proclaimed the advance in the direction of the Bull-dogs of a smart little figure of a man in white hat and white trousers, who kept flicking his legs with a cane.

Mrs. Evremonde rose and conferred with her ladyship an instant, and then Drummond took her arm quietly, and passed round Olympus to the East, and Lady Jocelyn broke up the sitting.

Juliana saw Rose go up to Evan, and make him introduce her to his mother. She turned lividly white, and went to a corner of the park by herself, and cried bitterly.

Lady Jocelyn, Sir Franks, and Sir John, remained by the tables, but before the guests were out of ear-

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shot, the individual signalled from Olympus presented himself.

‘There are times when one can’t see what else to do but to lie,’ said her ladyship to Sir Franks, ‘and when we do lie the only way is to lie intrepidly.’

Turning from her perplexed husband, she exclaimed: ‘Ah! Lawson?’

Captain Evremonde lifted his hat, declining an intimacy.

‘Where is my wife, madam?’

‘Have you just come from the Arctic Regions?’

‘I have come for my wife, madam!’

His unsettled gray eyes wandered restlessly on Lady Jocelyn’s face. The Countess standing near the Duke, felt some pity for the wife of that cropped-headed, tight-skinned lunatic at large, but deeper was the Countess’s pity for Lady Jocelyn, in thinking of the account she would have to render on the Day of Judgement, when she heard her ladyship reply:

‘Evelyn is not here.’

Captain Evremonde bowed profoundly, trailing his broad white hat along the sward.

‘Do me the favour to read this, madam,’ he said, and handed a letter to her.

Lady Jocelyn raised her brows as she gathered the contents of the letter.

‘Ferdinand’s handwriting!’ she exclaimed.

‘I accuse no one, madam,—I make no accusation. I have every respect for you, madam,—you have my esteem. I am sorry to intrude, madam, an intrusion is regretted. My wife runs away from her bed, madam,—and I have the law, madam,—the law is with the husband. No force!’ He lashed his cane sharply

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against his white legs. 'The law, madam. No brute force!' His cane made a furious whirl, cracking again on his legs, as he reiterated, 'The law!'

'Does the law advise you to strike at a tangent all over the country in search for her?' inquired Lady Jocelyn.

Captain Evremonde became ten times more voluble and excited.

Mrs. Mel was heard by the Countess to say: 'Her ladyship does not know how to treat madmen.'

Nor did Sir Franks and Sir John. They began expostulating with him.

'A madman gets madder when you talk reason to him,' said Mrs. Mel.

And now the Countess stepped forward to Lady Jocelyn, and hoped she would not be thought impertinent in offering her opinion as to how this frantic person should be treated. The case indeed looked urgent. Many gentlemen considered themselves bound to approach and be ready in case of need. Presently the Countess passed between Sir Franks and Sir John, and with her hand put up, as if she feared the furious cane, said:

'You will not strike me?'

'Strike a lady, madam?' The cane and hat were simultaneously lowered.

'Lady Jocelyn permits me to fetch for you a gentleman of the law. Or will you accompany me to him?'

In a moment, Captain Evremonde's manners were subdued and civilized, and in perfectly sane speech he thanked the Countess and offered her his arm. The Countess smilingly waved back Sir John, who motioned to attend on her, and away she went with the Captain,

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with all the glow of a woman who feels that she is heaping coals of fire on the heads of her enemies.

Was she not admired now?

'Upon my honour,' said Lady Jocelyn, 'they are a remarkable family,' meaning the Harringtons.

What farther she thought she did not say, but she was a woman who looked to natural gifts more than the gifts of accidents; and Evan's chance stood high with her then. So the battle of the Bull-dogs was fought, and cruelly as the Countess had been assailed and wounded, she gained a victory; yea, though Demogorgon, aided by the vindictive ghost of Sir Abraham, took tangible shape in the ranks opposed to her. True, Lady Jocelyn, forgetting her own recent intrepidity, condemned her as a liar; but the fruits of the Countess's victory were plentiful. Drummond Forth, fearful perhaps of exciting unjust suspicions in the mind of Captain Evremonde, disappeared altogether. Harry was in a mess which threw him almost upon Evan's mercy, as will be related. And, lastly, Ferdinand Laxley, that insufferable young aristocrat, was thus spoken to by Lady Jocelyn.

'This letter, addressed to Lawson, telling him that his wife is here, is in your handwriting, Ferdinand. I don't say you wrote it—I don't think you could have written it. But, to tell you the truth, I have an unpleasant impression about it, and I think we had better shake hands and not see each other for some time.'

Laxley, after one denial of his guilt, disdained to repeat it. He met her ladyship's hand haughtily, and, bowing to Sir Franks, turned on his heel.

So, then, in glorious complete victory, the battle of the Bull-dogs ended!

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Of the close of the pic-nic more remains to be told.

For the present I pause, in observance of those rules which demand that after an exhibition of consummate deeds, time be given to the spectator to digest what has passed before him.

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The dowagers were now firmly planted on Olympus. Along the grass lay the warm strong colours of the evening sun, reddening the pine-stems and yellowing the idle aspen-leaves. For a moment it had hung in doubt whether the pic-nic could survive the two rude shocks it had received. Happily the youthful element was large, and when the band, refreshed by chicken and sherry, threw off half-a-dozen bars of one of those irresistible waltzes that first catch the ear, and then curl round the heart, till on a sudden they invade and will have the legs, a rush up Parnassus was seen, and there were shouts and laughter and commotion, as over other great fields of battle the corn will wave gaily and mark the re-establishment of nature's reign.

How fair the sight! Approach the twirling couples. They talk as they whirl.

'Fancy the run-away tailor!' is the male's remark, and he expects to be admired for it, and is.

'That make-up Countess—his sister, you know—didn't you see her? she turned *green*,' says Creation's second effort, almost occupying the place of a rib.

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'Isn't there a run-away wife, too?'

'Now, you mustn't be naughty!'

They laugh and flatter one another. The power to give and take flattery to any amount is the rare treasure of youth.

Undoubtedly they are a poetical picture; but some poetical pictures talk dreary prose; so we will retire.

Now, while the dancers carried on their business, and distance lent them enchantment, Rose stood by Juliana, near an alder which hid them from the rest.

'I don't accuse you,' she was saying; 'but who could have done this but you? Ah, Juley! you will never get what you want if you plot for it. I thought once you cared for Evan. If he had loved you, would I not have done all that I could for you both? I pardon you with all my heart.'

'Keep your pardon!' was the angry answer. 'I have done more for you, Rose. He is an adventurer, and I have tried to open your eyes and make you respect your family. You may accuse me of what you like, I have my conscience.'

'And the friendship of the Countess,' added Rose.

Juliana's figure shook as if she had been stung.

'Go and be happy—don't stay here and taunt me,' she said, with a ghastly look. 'I suppose he can lie like his sister, and has told you all sorts of tales.'

'Not a word—not a word!' cried Rose. 'Do you think my lover could tell a lie?'

The superb assumption of the girl, and the true portrait of Evan's character which it flashed upon Juliana, were to the latter such intense pain, that she turned like one on the rack, exclaiming:

'You think so much of him? You are so proud of

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him? Then, yes! I love him too, ugly, beastly as I am to look at! Oh, I know what you think! I loved him from the first, and I knew all about him, and spared him pain. I did not wait for him to fall from a horse. I watched every chance of his being exposed. I let them imagine he cared for me. Drummond would have told what he knew long before—only he knew there would not be much harm in a tradesman's son marrying *me*. And I have played into your hands, and now you taunt me!

Rose remembered her fretful unkindness to Evan on the subject of his birth, when her feelings toward him were less warm. Dwelling on that alone, she put her arms round Juliana's stiffening figure, and said: 'I dare say I am much more selfish than you. Forgive me, dear.'

Staring at her, Juliana replied, 'Now you are acting.'

'No,' said Rose, with a little effort to fondle her; 'I only feel that I love you better for loving him.'

Generous as her words sounded, and were, Juliana intuitively struck to the root of them, which was comfortless. For how calm in its fortune, how strong in its love, must Rose's heart be, when she could speak in this unwonted way!

'Go, and leave me, pray,' she said.

Rose kissed her burning cheek. 'I will do as you wish, dear. Try and know me better, and be sister Juley, as you used to be. I know I am thoughtless, and horribly vain and disagreeable sometimes. Do forgive me. I will love you truly.'

Half-melting, Juliana pressed her hand.

'We are friends?' said Rose. 'Good-bye'; and her

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countenance lighted, and she moved away, so changed by her happiness! Juliana was jealous of a love strong as she deemed her own to overcome obstacles. She called to her: 'Rose! Rose, you will not take advantage of what I have told you, and repeat it to any one?'

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Instantly Rose turned with a glance of full contempt over her shoulder.

'To whom?' she asked.

'To any one.'

'To him? He would not love me long if I did!'

Juliana burst into fresh tears, but Rose walked into the sunbeams and the circle of the music.

Mounting Olympus, she inquired whether Ferdinand was within hail, as they were pledged to dance the first dance together. A few hints were given, and then Rose learnt that Ferdinand had been dismissed.

'And where is he?' she cried with her accustomed impetuosity. 'Mama!—of course you did not accuse him—but, Mama! could you possibly let him go with the suspicion that you thought him guilty of writing an anonymous letter?'

'Not at all,' Lady Jocelyn replied. 'Only the handwriting was so extremely like, and he was the only person who knew the address and the circumstances, and who could have a motive—though I don't quite see what it is—I thought it as well to part for a time.'

'But that's sophistry!' said Rose. 'You accuse or you exonerate. Nobody can be half guilty. If you do not hold him innocent you are unjust!'

Lady Jocelyn rejoined: 'Yes? It's singular what a stock of axioms young people have handy for their occasions.'

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Rose loudly announced that she would right this matter.

'I can't think where Rose gets her passion for hot water,' said her mother, as Rose ran down the ledge.

Two or three young gentlemen tried to engage her for a dance. She gave them plenty of promises, and hurried on till she met Evan, and, almost out of breath, told him the shameful injustice that had been done to her friend.

'Mama is such an Epicurean! I really think she is worse than Papa. This disgraceful letter looks like Ferdinand's writing, and she tells him so; and, Evan! will you believe that instead of being certain it's impossible any gentleman could do such a thing, she tells Ferdinand she shall feel more comfortable if she doesn't see him for some time? Poor Ferdinand! He has had so much to bear!'

Too sure of his darling to be envious now of any man she pitied, Evan said, 'I would forfeit my hand on his innocence!'

'And so would I,' echoed Rose. 'Come to him with me, dear. Or no,' she added, with a little womanly discretion, 'perhaps it would not be so well—you're not very much cast down by what happened at dinner?'

'My darling! I think of you.'

'Of me, dear? Concealment is never of any service. What there is to be known people may as well know at once. They'll gossip for a month, and then forget it. Your mother is dreadfully outspoken, certainly; but she has better manners than many ladies—I mean people in a position: you understand me? But suppose, dear, this had happened, and I had said nothing

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to Mama, and then we had to confess? Ah, you'll find I'm wiser than you imagine, Mr. Evan.'

'Haven't I submitted to somebody's lead?'

'Yes, but with a sort of "under protest." I saw it by the mouth. Not quite natural. You have been moody ever since—just a little. I suppose it's our manly pride. But I'm losing time. Will you promise me not to brood over that occurrence? Think of me. Think everything of me. I am yours; and, dearest, if I love you, need you care what anybody else thinks? We will soon change their opinion.'

'I care so little,' said Evan, somewhat untruthfully, 'that till you return I shall go and sit with my mother.'

'Oh, she has gone. She made her dear old antiquated curtsy to Mama and the company. "If my son has not been guilty of deception, I will leave him to your good pleasure, my lady." That's what she said. Mama likes her, I know. But I wish she didn't mouth her words so precisely: it reminds me of—the Countess, Rose checked herself from saying. 'Good-bye. Thank heaven! the worst has happened. Do you know what I should do if I were you, and felt at all distressed? I should keep repeating,' Rose looked archly and deeply up under his eyelids, "I am the son of a tradesman, and Rose loves me," over and over, and then, if you feel ashamed, what is it of?'

She nodded adieu, laughing at her own idea of her great worth; an idea very firmly fixed in her fair bosom, notwithstanding. Mrs. Melville said of her, 'I used to think she had pride.' Lady Jocelyn answered, 'So she has. The misfortune is that it has taken the wrong turning.'

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Evan watched the figure that was to him as that of an angel—no less! She spoke so frankly to them as she passed: or here and there went on with a light laugh. It seemed an act of graciousness that she should open her mouth to one! And, indeed, by virtue of a pride which raised her to the level of what she thought it well to do, Rose was veritably on higher ground than any present. She no longer envied her friend Jenny, who, emerging from the shades, allured by the waltz, dislinked herself from William's arm, and whispered exclamations of sorrow at the scene created by Mr. Harrington's mother. Rose patted her hand, and said: 'Thank you, Jenny dear: but don't be sorry. I'm glad. It prevents a number of private explanations.'

'Still, dear!' Jenny suggested.

'Oh! of course, I should like to lay my whip across the shoulders of the person who arranged the conspiracy,' said Rose. 'And afterwards I don't mind returning thanks to him, or her, or them.'

William cried out, 'I'm always on your side, Rose.'

'And I'll be Jenny's bridesmaid,' rejoined Rose, stepping blithely away from them.

Evan debated whither to turn when Rose was lost to his eyes. He had no heart for dancing. Presently a servant approached, and said that Mr. Harry particularly desired to see him. From Harry's looks at table, Evan judged that the interview was not likely to be amicable. He asked the direction he was to take, and setting out with long strides, came in sight of Raikes, who walked in gloom, and was evidently labouring under one of his mountains of melancholy. He affected to be quite out of the world; but finding

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that Evan took the hint in his usual prosy manner, was reduced to call after him, and finally to run and catch him.

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‘Haven’t you one single spark of curiosity?’ he began.

‘What about?’ said Evan.

‘Why, about my amazing luck! You haven’t asked a question. A matter of course.’

Evan complimented him by asking a question: saying that Jack’s luck certainly was wonderful.

‘Wonderful, you call it,’ said Jack witheringly. ‘And what’s more wonderful is, that I’d give up all for quiet quarters in the Green Dragon. I knew I was prophetic. I knew I should regret that peaceful hostelry. Diocletian, if you like. I beg you to listen. I can’t walk so fast without danger.’

‘Well, speak out, man. What’s the matter with you?’ cried Evan impatiently.

Jack shook his head: ‘I see a total absence of sympathy,’ he remarked. ‘I can’t.’

‘Then stand out of the way.’

Jack let him pass, exclaiming, with cold irony, ‘I will pay homage to a loftier *Nine!*’

Mr. Raikes could not in his soul imagine that Evan was really so little inquisitive concerning a business of such importance as the trouble that possessed him. He watched his friend striding off, incredulously, and then commenced running in pursuit.

‘Harrington, I give in; I surrender; you reduce me to prose. Thy nine have conquered my nine!—pardon me, old fellow. I’m immensely upset. This is the first day in my life that I ever felt what indigestion is. Egad, I’ve got something to derange the best digestion going!

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'Look here, Harrington. What happened to you to-day, I declare I think nothing of. You owe me your assistance, you do, indeed; for if it hadn't been for the fearful fascinations of your sister—that divine Countess—I should have been engaged to somebody by this time, and profited by the opportunity held out to me, and which is now gone. I'm disgraced. I'm known. And the worst of it is, I must face people. I daren't turn tail. Did you ever hear of such a dilemma?'

'Ay,' quoth Evan, 'what is it?'

Raikes turned pale. 'Then you haven't heard of it?'

'Not a word.'

'Then it's all for me to tell. I called on Messrs. Grist. I dined at the Aurora afterwards. Depend upon it, Harrington, we're led by a star. I mean, fellows with anything in them are. I recognized our Fallowfield host, and thinking to draw him out, I told our mutual histories. Next day I went to these Messrs. Grist. They proposed the membership for Fallowfield, five hundred a year, and the loan of a curricule, on condition. It's singular, Harrington; before anybody knew of the condition I didn't care about it a bit. It seemed to me childish. Who would think of minding wearing a tin plate? But now!—the sufferings of Orestes—what are they to mine? He wasn't *tied* to his Furies. They did hover a little above him; but as for me, I'm scorched; and I mustn't say where: my mouth is locked; the social laws which forbid the employment of obsolete words arrest my exclamations of despair. What do you advise?'

Evan stared a moment at the wretched object, whose

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dream of meeting a beneficent old gentleman had brought him to be the sport of a cynical farceur. He had shivers on his own account, seeing something of himself magnified, and he loathed the fellow, only to feel more acutely what a stigma may be.

‘It’s a case I can’t advise in,’ he said, as gently as he could. ‘I should be off the grounds in a hurry.’

‘And then I’m where I was before I met the horrid old brute!’ Raikes moaned.

‘I told him over a pint of port—and noble stuff is that Aurora port!—I told him—I amused him till he was on the point of bursting—I told him I was such a gentleman as the world hadn’t seen—minus money. So he determined to launch me. He said I should lead the life of such a gentleman as the world had not yet seen—on that simple condition, which appeared to me childish, a senile whim; rather an indulgence of his.’

Evan listened to the tribulations of his friend as he would to those of a doll—the sport of some experimental child. By this time he knew something of old Tom Cogglesby, and was not astonished that he should have chosen John Raikes to play one of his farces on. Jack turned off abruptly the moment he saw they were nearing human figures, but soon returned to Evan’s side, as if for protection.

‘Hoy! Harrington!’ shouted Harry, beckoning to him. ‘Come, make haste! I’m in a deuce of a mess.’

The two Wheedles—Susan and Polly—were standing in front of him, and after his call to Evan, he turned to continue some exhortation or appeal to the

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common sense of women, largely indulged in by young men when the mischief is done.

'Harrington, do speak to her. She looks upon you as a sort of parson. I can't make her believe I didn't send for her. Of course, she knows I'm fond of her. My dear fellow,' he whispered, 'I shall be ruined if my grandmother hears of it. Get her away, please. Promise anything.'

Evan took her hand and asked for the child.

'Quite well, sir,' faltered Susan.

'You should not have come here.'

Susan stared, and commenced whimpering: 'Didn't you wish it, sir?'

'Oh, she's always thinking of being made a lady of,' cried Polly. 'As if Mr. Harry was going to do that. It wants a gentleman to do that.'

'The carriage came for me, sir, in the afternoon,' said Susan plaintively, 'with your compliments, and would I come. I thought——'

'What carriage?' asked Evan.

Raikes, who was ogling Polly, interposed grandly, 'Mine!'

'And you sent in my name for this girl to come here?' Evan turned wrathfully on him.

'My dear Harrington, when you hit you knock down. The wise require but one dose of experience. The Countess wished it, and I did dispatch.'

'The Countess!' Harry exclaimed; 'Jove! do you mean to say that the Countess——'

'De Saldar,' added Jack. 'In Britain none were worthy found.'

Harry gave a long whistle.

'Leave at once,' said Evan to Susan. 'Whatever

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you may want send to me for. And when you think you can meet your parents, I will take you to them. Remember that is what you must do.'

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'Make her give up that stupidity of hers, about being made a lady of, Mr. Harrington,' said the inveterate Polly.

Susan here fell a-weeping.

'I would go, sir,' she said. 'I'm sure I would obey you: but I can't. I can't go back to the inn. They're beginning to talk about me, because—because I can't—can't pay them, and I'm ashamed.'

Evan looked at Harry.

'I forgot,' the latter mumbled, but his face was crimson. He put his hands in his pockets. '*Do* you happen to have a note or so?' he asked.

Evan took him aside and gave him what he had; and this amount, without inspection or reserve, Harry offered to Susan. She dashed his hand impetuously from her sight.

'There, give it to me,' said Polly. 'Oh, Mr. Harry! what a young man you are!'

Whether from the rebuff, or the reproach, or old feelings reviving, Harry was moved to go forward, and lay his hand on Susan's shoulder and mutter something in her ear that softened her.

Polly thrust the notes into her bosom, and with a toss of her nose, as who should say, 'Here's nonsense they're at again,' tapped Susan on the other shoulder, and said imperiously: 'Come, Miss!'

Hurrying out a dozen sentences in one, Harry ended by suddenly kissing Susan's cheek, and then Polly bore her away; and Harry, with great solemnity, said to Evan:

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'Pon my honour, I think I ought to! I declare I think I love that girl. What's one's family? Why shouldn't you button to the one that just suits you? That girl, when she's dressed, and in good trim, by Jove! nobody'd know her from a born lady. And as for grammar, I'd soon teach her that.'

Harry began to whistle: a sign in him that he was thinking his hardest.

'I confess to being considerably impressed by the maid Wheedle,' said Raikes.

'Would you throw yourself away on her?' Evan inquired.

Apparently forgetting how he stood, Mr. Raikes replied:

'You ask, perhaps, a little too much of me. One owes consideration to one's position. In the world's eyes a matrimonial slip outweighs a peccadillo. No. To much the maid might wheedle me, but to Hymen! She's decidedly fresh and pert—the most delicious little fat lips and cocky nose; but cease we to dwell on her, or of us two, lo! one will be undone.'

Harry burst into a laugh: 'Is this the T. P. for Fallowfield?'

'M.P. I think you mean,' quoth Raikes serenely; but a curious glance being directed on him, and pursuing him pertinaciously, it was as if the pediment of the lofty monument he topped were smitten with violence. He stammered an excuse, and retreated somewhat as it is the fashion to do from the presence of royalty, followed by Harry's roar of laughter, in which Evan cruelly joined.

'Gracious powers!' exclaimed the victim of ambition,

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'I'm laughed at by the son of a tailor!' and he edged once more into the shade of trees.

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It was a strange sight for Harry's relatives to see him arm-in-arm with the man he should have been kicking, challenging, denouncing, or whatever the code prescribes: to see him talking to this young man earnestly, clinging to him affectionately, and when he separated from him, heartily wringing his hand. Well might they think that there was something extraordinary in these Harringtons. Convicted of Tailor-dom, these Harringtons appeared to shine with double lustre. How was it? They were at a loss to say. They certainly could say that the Countess was egregiously affected and vulgar; but who could be altogether complacent and sincere that had to fight so hard a fight? In this struggle with society I see one of the instances where success is entirely to be honoured and remains a proof of merit. For however boldly antagonism may storm the ranks of society, it will certainly be repelled, whereas affinity cannot be resisted; and they who, against obstacles of birth, claim and keep their position among the educated and refined, have that affinity. It is, on the whole, rare, so that society is not often invaded. I think it will have to front Jack Cade again before another Old Mel and his progeny shall appear. You refuse to believe in Old Mel? You know not nature's cunning.

Mrs. Shorne, Mrs. Melville, Miss Carrington, and many of the guests who observed Evan moving from place to place, after the exposure, as they called it, were amazed at his audacity. There seemed such a quietly superb air about him. He would not look out of his element; and this, knowing what they knew,

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was his offence. He deserved some commendation for still holding up his head, but it was love and Rose who kept the fires of his heart alive.

The sun had sunk. The figures on the summit of Parnassus were seen bobbing in happy placidity against the twilight sky. The sun had sunk, and many of Mr. Raikes' best things were unspoken. Wandering about in his gloom, he heard a feminine voice :

'Yes, I will trust you.'

'You will not repent it,' was answered.

Recognizing the Duke, Mr. Raikes cleared his throat.

'A-hem, your Grace! This is how the days should pass. I think we should diurnally station a good London band on high, and play his Majesty to bed—the sun. My opinion is, it would improve the crops. I am not, as yet, a landed proprietor——'

The Duke stepped aside with him, and Raikes addressed no one for the next twenty minutes. When he next came forth Parnassus was half deserted. It was known that old Mrs. Bonner had been taken with a dangerous attack, and under this third blow the pic-nic succumbed. Simultaneously with the messenger that brought the news to Lady Jocelyn, one approached Evan, and informed him that the Countess de Saldar urgently entreated him to come to the house without delay. He also wished to speak a few words to her, and stepped forward briskly. He had no prophetic intimations of the change this interview would bring upon him.

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The Countess was not in her dressing-room when Evan presented himself. She was in attendance on Mrs. Bonner, Conning said; and the primness of Conning was a thing to have been noticed by any one save a dreamy youth in love. Conning remained in the room, keeping distinctly aloof. Her duties absorbed her, but a presiding thought mechanically jerked back her head from time to time: being the mute form of, 'Well, I never!' in Conning's rank of life and intellectual capacity. Evan remained quite still in a chair, and Conning was certainly a number of paces beyond suspicion, when the Countess appeared, and hurling at the maid one of those feminine looks which contain huge quartos of meaning, vented the cold query:

'Pray, why did you not come to me, as you were commanded?'

'I was not aware, my lady,' Conning drew up to reply, and performed with her eyes a lofty rejection of the volume cast at her, and a threat of several for offensive operations, if need were.

The Countess spoke nearer to what she was implying: 'You know I object to this: it is not the first time.'

'Would your ladyship please to say what your ladyship means?'

In return for this insolent challenge to throw off the

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mask, the Countess felt justified in punishing her by being explicit. 'Your irregularities are not of yesterday,' she said, kindly making use of a word of double signification still.

'Thank you, my lady.' Conning accepted the word in its blackest meaning. 'I am obliged to you. If your ladyship is to be believed, my character is not worth much. But I *can* make distinctions, my lady.'

Something very like an altercation was continued in a sharp, brief undertone; and then Evan, waking up to the affairs of the hour, heard Conning say:

'I shall not ask your ladyship to give me a character.'

The Countess answering with pathos: 'It would, indeed, be to *give* you one.'

He was astonished that the Countess should burst into tears when Conning had departed, and yet more so that his effort to console her should bring a bolt of wrath upon himself.

'Now, Evan, now see what you have done for us—do, and rejoice at it. The very menials insult us. You heard what that creature said? She can make *distinctions*. Oh! I could beat her. They know it: all the servants know it: I can see it in their faces. I feel it when I pass them. The insolent wretches treat us as impostors; and this Conning—to defy me! Oh! it comes of my devotion to you. I am properly chastized. I passed Rose's maid on the stairs, and her reverence was barely perceptible.'

Evan murmured that he was very sorry, adding, foolishly: 'Do you really care, Louisa, for what servants think and say?'

The Countess sighed deeply: 'Oh! you are too
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thick-skinned! Your mother from top to toe! It is too dreadful! What have I done to deserve it? Oh, Evan, Evan!

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Her head dropped in her lap. There was something ludicrous to Evan in this excess of grief on account of such a business; but he was tender-hearted and wrought upon to declare that, whether or not he was to blame for his mother's intrusion that afternoon, he was ready to do what he could to make up to the Countess for her sufferings: whereat the Countess sighed again: asked him what he possibly could do, and doubted his willingness to accede to the most trifling request.

'No; I do in verity believe that were I to desire you to do aught for your own good alone, you would demur, Van.'

He assured her that she was mistaken.

'We shall see,' she said.

'And if once or twice, I have run counter to you, Louisa——'

'Abominable language!' cried the Countess, stopping her ears like a child. 'Do not excruciate me so. You laugh! My goodness! what will you come to!'

Evan checked his smile, and, taking her hand, said: 'I must tell you, that, on the whole, I see nothing to regret in what has happened to-day. You *may* notice a change in the manners of the servants and some of the country squires, but I find none in the bearing of the real ladies, the true gentlemen, to me.'

'Because the change is too fine for you to perceive it,' interposed the Countess.

'Rose, then, and her mother, and her father!' Evan cried impetuously.

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‘As for Lady Jocelyn!’ the Countess shrugged: ‘And Sir Franks!’ her head shook: ‘and Rose, Rose is simply self-willed; a “she will” or “she won’t” sort of little person. No criterion! Henceforth the world is against us. We have to struggle with it: it does not rank us of it!’

‘Your feeling on the point is so exaggerated, my dear Louisa,’ said Evan, ‘one can’t bring reason to your ears. The tattle we shall hear we shall outlive. I care extremely for the good opinion of men, but I prefer my own; and I do not lose it because my father was in trade.’

‘And your own name, Evan Harrington, is on a shop,’ the Countess struck in, and watched him severely from under her brow, glad to mark that he could still blush.

‘Oh, heaven!’ she wailed to increase the effect, ‘on a shop! a brother of mine!’

‘Yes, Louisa. It may not last. . . . I did it—is it not better that a son should blush, than cast dishonour on his father’s memory?’

‘Ridiculous boy-notion!’

‘Rose has pardoned it, Louisa—cannot you? I find that the naturally vulgar and narrow-headed people, and cowards who never forego mean advantages, are those only who would condemn me and my conduct in that.’

‘And you have joy in your fraction of the world left to you!’ exclaimed his female-elder.

Changing her manner to a winning softness, she said: ‘Let me also belong to the very small party! You have been really romantic, and most generous and noble; only the shop smells! But, never mind, promise me you will not enter it.’

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‘I hope not,’ said Evan.

‘You do hope that you will not officiate? Oh, Evan! the eternal contemplation of gentlemen’s legs! think of that! Think of yourself sculptured in that attitude!’ Innumerable little prickles and stings shot over Evan’s skin.

‘There—there, Louisa!’ he said impatiently; ‘spare your ridicule. We go to London to-morrow, and when there I expect to hear that I have an appointment, and that this engagement is over.’ He rose and walked up and down the room.

‘I shall not be prepared to go to-morrow,’ remarked the Countess, drawing her figure up stiffly.

‘Oh! well, if you can stay, Andrew will take charge of you, I dare say.’

‘No, my dear, Andrew will not—a nonentity cannot—you must.’

‘Impossible, Louisa,’ said Evan, as one who imagines he is uttering a thing of little consequence. ‘I promised Rose.’

‘You promised Rose that you would abdicate and retire? Sweet, loving girl!’

Evan made no answer.

‘You will stay with me, Evan.’

‘I really can’t,’ he said in his previous careless tone.

‘Come and sit down,’ cried the Countess imperiously. ‘The first trifle is refused. It does not astonish me. I will honour you now by talking seriously to you. I have treated you hitherto as a child. Or, no——’ she stopped her mouth; ‘it is enough if I tell you, dear, that poor Mrs. Bonner is dying, and that she desires my attendance on her to refresh her spirit with readings on the Prophecies, and Scriptural

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converse. No other soul in the house can so soothe her.'

'Then, stay,' said Evan.

'Unprotected in the midst of enemies! Truly!'

'I think, Louisa, if you can call Lady Jocelyn an enemy, you must read the Scriptures by a false light.'

'The woman is an utter heathen!' interjected the Countess. 'An infidel can be no friend. She is therefore the reverse. Her opinions embitter her mother's last days. But now you will consent to remain with me, dear Van!'

An implacable negative responded to the urgent appeal of her eyes.

'By the way,' he said, for a diversion, 'did you know of a girl stopping at an inn in Fallowfield?'

'Know a barmaid?' the Countess's eyes and mouth were wide at the question.

'Did you send Raikes for her to-day?'

'Did Mr. Raikes—ah, Evan! that creature reminds me, you have no sense of contrast. For a Brazilian ape—he resembles, if he is not truly one—what contrast is he to an English gentleman! His proximity and acquaintance—rich as he may be—disfigure you. Study contrast!'

Evan had to remind her that she had not answered him: whereat she exclaimed: 'One would really think you had never been abroad. Have you not evaded me, rather?'

The Countess commenced fanning her languid brows, and then pursued: 'Now, my dear brother, I may conclude that you will acquiesce in my moderate wishes. You remain. My venerable friend cannot last three days. She is on the brink of a better world! I will

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confide to you that it is of the utmost importance we should be here, on the spot, until the sad termination! That is what I summoned you for. You are now at liberty. Ta-ta, as soon as you please.'

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She had baffled his little cross-examination with regard to Raikes, but on the other point he was firm. She would listen to nothing: she affected that her mandate had gone forth, and must be obeyed; tapped with her foot, fanned deliberately, and was a consummate queen, till he turned the handle of the door, when her complexion deadened, she started up, trembling, and tripping towards him, caught him by the arm, and said: 'Stop! After all that I have sacrificed for you! As well try to raise the dead as a Dawley from the dust he grovels in! Why did I consent to visit this place? It was for you. I came, I heard that you had disgraced yourself in drunkenness at Fallowfield, and I toiled to eclipse that, and I did. Young Jocelyn thought you were what you are: I could spit the word at you! and I dazzled him to give you time to win this minx, who will spin you like a top if you get her. That Mr. Forth knew it as well, and that vile young Laxley. They are gone! Why are they gone? Because they thwarted me—they crossed your interests—I said they should go. George Uploft is going to-day. The house is left to us; and I believe firmly that Mrs. Bonner's will contains a memento of the effect of our frequent religious conversations. So you would leave now? I suspect nobody, but we are all human, and Wills would not have been tampered with for the first time. Besides,' and the Countess's imagination warmed till she addressed her brother as a confederate, 'we shall then see to

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whom Beckley Court is bequeathed. Either way it may be yours. Yours! and you suffer their plots to drive you forth. Do you not perceive that Mama was brought here to-day on purpose to shame us and cast us out? We are surrounded by conspiracies, but if our faith is pure who can hurt us? If I had not that consolation—would that you had it, too!—would it be endurable to me to see those menials whispering and showing their forced respect. As it is, I am fortified to forgive them. I breathe another atmosphere. Oh, Evan! you did not attend to Mr. Parsley's beautiful last sermon. The Church should have been your vocation.'

From vehemence the Countess had subsided to a mournful gentleness. She had been too excited to notice any changes in her brother's face during her speech, and when he turned from the door, and still eyeing her fixedly, led her to a chair, she fancied from his silence that she had subdued and convinced him. A delicious sense of her power, succeeded by a weary reflection that she had constantly to employ it, occupied her mind, and when presently she looked up from the shade of her hand, it was to agitate her head pitifully at her brother.

'All this you have done for me, Louisa,' he said.

'Yes, Evan,—all!' she fell into his tone.

'And you are the cause of Laxley's going? Did you know anything of that anonymous letter?'

He was squeezing her hand—with grateful affection, as she was deluded to imagine.

'Perhaps, dear,—a little,' her conceit prompted her to admit.

'Did you write it?'

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He gazed intently into her eyes, and as the question shot like a javelin, she tried ineffectually to disengage her fingers; her delusion waned; she took fright, but it was too late; he had struck the truth out of her before she could speak. Her spirit writhed like a snake in his hold. Innumerable things she was ready to say, and strove to; the words would not form on her lips.

‘I will be answered, Louisa.’

The stern manner he had assumed gave her no hope of eluding him. With an inward gasp, and a sensation of nakedness altogether new to her, dismal, and alarming, she felt that she could not lie. Like a creature forsaken of her staunchest friend, she could have flung herself to the floor. The next instant her natural courage restored her. She jumped up and stood at bay.

‘Yes. I did.’

And now he was weak, and she was strong, and used her strength.

‘I wrote it to save you. Yes. Call on your Creator, and be my judge, if you dare. Never, never will you meet a soul more utterly devoted to you, Evan. This Mr. Forth, this Laxley, I said, should go, because they were resolved to ruin you, and make you base. They are gone. The responsibility I take on myself. Nightly—during the remainder of my days—I will pray for pardon.’

He raised his head to ask sombrely: ‘Is your handwriting like Laxley’s?’

‘It seems so,’ she answered, with a pitiful sneer for one who could arrest her exaltation to inquire about minutiae. ‘Right or wrong, it is done, and if you choose to be my judge, think whether your own

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conscience is clear. Why did you come here? Why did you stay? You have your free will,—do you deny that? Oh, I will take the entire blame, but you must not be a hypocrite, Van. You know you were *aware*. We had no confidences. I was obliged to treat you like a child; but for you to pretend to suppose that roses grow in your path—oh, that is paltry! You are a hypocrite or an imbecile, if that is your course.'

Was he not something of the former? The luxurious mist in which he had been living, dispersed before his sister's bitter words, and, as she designed he should, he felt himself her accomplice. But, again, reason struggled to enlighten him; for surely he would never have done a thing so disproportionate to the end to be gained! It was the unconnected action of his brain that thus advised him. No thoroughly-fashioned, clear-spirited man conceives wickedness impossible to him: but wickedness so largely mixed with folly, the best of us may reject as not among our temptations. Evan, since his love had dawned, had begun to talk with his own nature, and though he knew not yet how much it would stretch or contract, he knew that he was weak and could not perform moral wonders without severe struggles. The cynic may add, if he likes—or without potent liquors.

Could he be his sister's judge? It is dangerous for young men to be too good. They are so sweeping in their condemnations, so sublime in their conceptions of excellence, and the most finished Puritan cannot out-do their demands upon frail humanity. Evan's momentary self-examination saved him from this, and he told the Countess, with a sort of cold compassion, that he himself dared not blame her.

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His tone was distinctly wanting in admiration of her, but she was somewhat over-wrought, and leaned her shoulder against him, and became immediately his affectionate, only too-zealous, sister; dearly to be loved, to be forgiven, to be prized: and on condition of inserting a special petition for pardon in her orisons, to live with a calm conscience, and to be allowed to have her own way with him during the rest of her days.

It was a happy union—a picture that the Countess was lured to admire in the glass.

Sad that so small a murmur should destroy it for ever!

‘What?’ cried the Countess, bursting from his arm.

‘Go?’ she emphasized with the hardness of determined unbelief, as if plucking the words, one by one, out of her reluctant ears. ‘Go to Lady Jocelyn, and tell her I *wrote* the letter?’

‘You can do no less, I fear,’ said Evan, eyeing the floor and breathing a deep breath.

‘Then I did hear you correctly? Oh, you must be mad—idiotic! There, pray go away, Evan. Come in the morning. You are too much for my nerves.’

Evan rose, putting out his hand as if to take hers and plead with her. She rejected the first motion, and repeated her desire for him to leave her; saying cheerfully:

‘Good night, dear; I dare say we sha’n’t meet till the morning.’

‘You can’t let this injustice continue a single night, Louisa?’ said he.

She was deep in the business of arranging a portion of her attire.

‘Go—go; please,’ she responded.

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Lingering, he said: 'If I go, it will be straight to Lady Jocelyn.'

She stamped angrily.

'*Only go!*' and then she found him gone, and she stooped lower to the glass, to mark if the recent agitation were observable under her eyes. There, looking at herself, her heart dropped heavily in her bosom. She ran to the door and hurried swiftly after Evan, pulling him back speechlessly.

'Where are you going, Evan?'

'To Lady Jocelyn.'

The unhappy victim of her devotion stood panting.

'If you go, I—I take poison!'

It was for him now to be struck; but he was suffering too strong an anguish to be susceptible to mock tragedy. The Countess paused to study him. She began to fear her brother. 'I will!' she reiterated wildly, without moving him at all. And the quiet inflexibility of his face forbade the ultimate hope which lies in giving men a dose of hysterics when they are obstinate. She tried by taunts and angry vituperations to make him look fierce, if but an instant, to precipitate her into an exhibition she was so well prepared for.

'Evan! what! after all my love, my confidence in you—I need not have told you—to expose us! Brother? would you? Oh!'

'I will not let this last another hour,' said Evan firmly, at the same time seeking to caress her. She spurned his fruitless affection, feeling, nevertheless, how cruel was her fate; for, with any other save a brother, she had arts at her disposal to melt the manliest resolutions. The glass showed her that her

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face was pathetically pale; the tones of her voice were rich and harrowing. What did they avail with a brother?

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‘Promise me,’ she cried eagerly, ‘promise me to stop here—on this spot—till I return.’

The promise was extracted. The Countess went to fetch Caroline.

Evan did not count the minutes. One thought was mounting in his brain—the scorn of Rose. He felt that he had lost her. Lost her when he had just won her! He felt it, without realizing it. The first blows of an immense grief are dull, and strike the heart through wool, as it were. The belief of the young in their sorrow has to be flogged into them, on the good old educational principle. Could he do less than this he was about to do? Rose had wedded her noble nature to him, and it was as much her spirit as his own that urged him thus to forfeit her, to be worthy of her by assuming unworthiness. There he sat neither conning over his determination nor the cause for it, revolving Rose’s words about Laxley, and nothing else. The words were so sweet and so bitter; every now and then the heavy smiting on his heart set it quivering and leaping, as the whip starts a jaded horse.

Meantime the Countess was participating in a witty conversation in the drawing-room with Sir John and the Duke, Miss Current, and others; and it was not till after she had displayed many graces, and, as one or two ladies presumed to consider, marked effrontery, that she rose and drew Caroline away with her. Returning to her dressing-room, she found that Evan had faithfully kept his engagement; he was on the exact spot where she had left him.



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Caroline came to him swiftly, and put her hand to his forehead that she might the better peruse his features, saying, in her mellow caressing voice: 'What is this, dear Van, that you will do? Why do you look so wretched?'

'Has not Louisa told you?'

'She has told me something, dear, but I don't know what it is. That you are going to expose us? What further exposure do we need? I'm sure, Van, my pride—what I had—is gone. I have none left!'

Evan kissed her brows warmly. An explanation, full of the Countess's passionate outcries of justification, necessity, and innocence in higher than fleshly eyes, was given, and then the three were silent.

'But, Van,' Caroline commenced deprecatingly, 'my darling! of what use—now! Whether right or wrong, why should you, why should you, when the thing is done, dear?—think!'

'And you, too, would let another suffer under an unjust accusation?' said Evan.

'But, dearest, it is surely your duty to think of your family first. Have we not been afflicted enough? Why should you lay us under this fresh burden?'

'Because it's better to bear all now than a life of remorse,' answered Evan.

'But this Mr. Laxley—I cannot pity him; he has behaved so insolently to you throughout! Let him suffer.'

'Lady Jocelyn,' said Evan, 'has been unintentionally unjust to him, and after her kindness—apart from the right or wrong—I will not—I can't allow her to continue so.'

'After her kindness!' echoed the Countess, who

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had been fuming at Caroline's weak expostulations. 'Kindness! Have I not done ten times for these Jocelyns what they have done for us? O mio Deus! why, I have bestowed on them the membership for Fallowfield: I have saved her from being a convicted liar this very day. Worse! for what would have been talked of the morals of the house, supposing the scandal. Oh! indeed I was tempted to bring that horrid mad Captain into the house face to face with his flighty doll of a wife, as I, perhaps, should have done, acting by the dictates of my conscience. I lied for Lady Jocelyn, and handed the man to a lawyer, who withdrew him. And this they owe to me! Kindness? They have given us bed and board, as the people say. I have repaid them for that.'

'Pray be silent, Louisa,' said Evan, getting up hastily, for the sick sensation Rose had experienced came over him. His sister's plots, her untruth, her coarseness, clung to him and seemed part of his blood. He now had a personal desire to cut himself loose from the wretched entanglement revealed to him, whatever it cost.

'Are you really, truly going?' Caroline exclaimed, for he was near the door.

'At a quarter to twelve at night!' sneered the Countess, still imagining that he, like herself, must be partly acting.

'But, Van, is it—dearest, think! is it manly for a brother to go and tell of his sister? And how would it look?'

Evan smiled. 'Is it that that makes you unhappy? Louisa's name will not be mentioned—be sure of that.'

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Caroline was stooping forward to him. Her figure straightened: 'Good Heaven, Evan! you are not going to take it on yourself? Rose!—she will hate you.'

'God help me!' he cried internally.

'Oh, Evan, darling! consider, reflect!' She fell on her knees, catching his hand. 'It is worse for us that you should suffer, dearest! Think of the dreadful meanness and baseness of what you will have to acknowledge.'

'Yes,' sighed the youth, and his eyes, in his extreme pain, turned to the Countess reproachfully.

'Think, dear,' Caroline hurried on, 'he gains nothing for whom you do this—you lose all. It is not your deed. You will have to speak an untruth. Your ideas are wrong—wrong, I know they are. You will have to lie. But if you are silent, the little, little blame that may attach to us will pass away, and we shall be happy in seeing our brother happy.'

'You are talking to Evan as if he had religion,' said the Countess, with steady sedateness. And at that moment, from the sublimity of his pagan virtue, the young man groaned for some pure certain light to guide him: the question whether he was about to do right made him weak. He took Caroline's head between his two hands, and kissed her mouth. The act brought Rose to his senses insufferably, and she—his Goddess of truth and his sole guiding light—spurred him afresh.

'My family's dishonour is mine, Caroline. Say nothing more—don't think of me. I go to Lady Jocelyn to-night. To-morrow we leave, and there's the end. Louisa, if you have any new schemes for my welfare, I beg you to renounce them.'

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'Gratitude I never expected from a Dawley!' the Countess retorted.

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'Oh, Louisa! he is going!' cried Caroline; 'kneel to him with me: stop him: Rose loves him, and he is going to make her hate him.'

'You can't talk reason to one who's mad,' said the Countess, more like the Dawley she sprang from than it would have pleased her to know.

'My darling! My own Evan! it will kill me,' Caroline exclaimed, and passionately imploring him, she looked so hopelessly beautiful, that Evan was agitated, and caressed her, while he said, softly: 'Where our honour is not involved I would submit to your smallest wish.'

'It involves my life — my destiny!' murmured Caroline.

Could he have known the double meaning in her words, and what a saving this sacrifice of his was to accomplish, he would not have turned to do it feeling abandoned of heaven and earth.

The Countess stood rigidly as he went forth. Caroline was on her knees, sobbing.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A Pagan Sacrifice

Three steps from the Countess's chamber door, the knot of Evan's resolution began to slacken. The clear light of his simple duty grew cloudy and complex. His pride would not let him think that he was shrinking, but cried out in him, 'Will you be believed?'

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and whispered that few would believe *him* guilty of such an act. Yet, while something said that full surely Lady Jocelyn would not, a vague dread that Rose might, threw him back on the luxury of her love and faith in him. He found himself hoping that his statement would be laughed at. Then why make it?

No: that was too blind a hope. Many would take him at his word; all—all save Lady Jocelyn! Rose the first! Because he stood so high with her now he feared the fall. Ah, dazzling pinnacle! our darlings shoot us up on a wondrous juggler's pole, and we talk familiarly to the stars, and are so much above everybody, and try to walk like creatures with two legs, forgetting that we have but a pin's point to stand on up there. Probably the absence of natural motion inspires the prophecy that we must ultimately come down: our unused legs wax morbidly restless. Evan thought it good that Rose should lift her head to look at him; nevertheless he knew that Rose would turn from him the moment he descended from his superior station. Nature is wise in her young children, though they wot not of it, and are always trying to rush away from her. They escape their wits sooner than their instincts.

But was not Rose involved in him, and part of him? Had he not sworn never to renounce her? What was this but a betrayal?

Go on, young man: fight your fight. The little imps pluck at you: the big giant assails you: the seductions of the soft-mouthed siren are not wanting. Slacken the knot an instant, and they will all have play. And the worst is, that you may be wrong, and they may be right! For is it, can it be proper for you to

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stain the silvery whiteness of your skin by plunging headlong into yonder pitch-bath? Consider the defilement! Contemplate your hideous aspect on issuing from that black baptism!

As to the honour of your family, Mr. Evan Harrington, pray, of what sort of metal consists the honour of a tailor's family?

One little impertinent imp ventured upon that question on his own account. The clever beast was torn back and strangled instantaneously by his experienced elders, but not before Evan's pride had answered him. Exalted by Love, he could dread to abase himself and strip off his glittering garments; lowered by the world, he fell back upon his innate worth.

Yes, he was called on to prove it; he was on his way to prove it. Surrendering his dearest and his best, casting aside his dreams, his desires, his aspirations, for this stern duty, he at least would know that he made himself doubly worthy of her who abandoned him, and the world would scorn him by reason of his absolute merit. Coming to this point, the knot of his resolve tightened again; he hugged it with the furious zeal of a martyr.

Religion, the lack of which in him the Countess deplored, would have guided him and silenced the internal strife. But do not despise a virtue purely Pagan. The young who can act readily up to the Christian light are happier, doubtless: but they are led, they are passive: I think they do not make such capital Christians subsequently. They are never in such danger, we know; but some in the flock are more than sheep. The heathen ideal it is not so very easy

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to attain, and those who mount from it to the Christian have, in my humble thought, a firmer footing.

So Evan fought his hard fight from the top of the stairs to the bottom. A Pagan, which means our poor unsupported flesh, is never certain of his victory. Now you will see him kneeling to his Gods, and anon drubbing them; or he makes them fight for him, and is complacent at the issue. Evan had ceased to pick his knot with one hand and pull it with the other: but not finding Lady Jocelyn below, and hearing that she had retired for the night, he mounted the stairs, and the strife recommenced from the bottom to the top. Strange to say, he was almost unaware of any struggle going on within him. The suggestion of the foolish little imp alone was loud in the heart of his consciousness; the rest hung more in his nerves than in his brain. He thought: 'Well, I will speak it out to her in the morning'; and thought so sincerely, while an ominous sigh of relief at the reprieve rose from his over-burdened bosom.

Hardly had the weary deep breath taken flight, when the figure of Lady Jocelyn was seen advancing along the corridor, with a lamp in her hand. She trod heavily, in a kind of march, as her habit was; her large fully-open gray eyes looking straight a-head. She would have passed him, and he would have let her pass, but seeing the unusual pallor on her face, his love for this lady moved him to step forward and express a hope that she had no present cause for sorrow.

Hearing her mother's name, Lady Jocelyn was about to return a conventional answer. Recognizing Evan, she said:

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'Ah! Mr. Harrington! Yes, I fear it's as bad as it can be. She can scarcely outlive the night.'

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Again he stood alone: his chance was gone. How could he speak to her in her affliction? Her calm sedate visage had the beauty of its youth, when lighted by the animation that attends meetings or farewells. In her bow to Evan, he beheld a lovely kindness more unique, if less precious, than anything he had ever seen on the face of Rose. Half exultingly, he reflected that no opportunity would be allowed him now to teach that noble head and truest of human hearts to turn from him: the clear-eyed morrow would come: the days of the future would be bright as other days!

Wrapped in the comfort of his cowardice, he started to see Lady Jocelyn advancing to him again.

'Mr. Harrington,' she said, 'Rose tells me you leave us early in the morning. I may as well shake your hand now. We part very good friends. I shall always be glad to hear of you.'

Evan pressed her hand, and bowed. 'I thank you, madam,' was all he could answer.

'It will be better if you don't write to Rose.'

Her tone was rather that of a request than an injunction.

'I have no right to do so, my lady.'

'She considers that you have: I wish her to have a fair trial.'

His voice quavered. The philosophic lady thought it time to leave him.

'So good-bye. I can trust you without extracting a promise. If you ever have need of a friend, you know you are at liberty to write to me.'

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‘You are tired, my lady?’ He put this question more to dally with what he ought to be saying.

‘Tolerably. Your sister, the Countess, relieves me in the night. I fancy my mother finds her the better nurse of the two.’

Lady Jocelyn’s face lighted in its gracious pleasant way, as she just inclined her head: but the mention of the Countess and her attendance on Mrs. Bonner had nerved Evan: the contrast of her hypocrisy and vile scheming with this most open, noble nature, acted like a new force within him. He begged Lady Jocelyn’s permission to speak with her in private. Marking his fervid appearance, she looked at him seriously.

‘Is it really important?’

‘I cannot rest, madam, till it is spoken.’

‘I mean, it doesn’t pertain to the delirium? We may sleep upon that.’

He divined her sufficiently to answer: ‘It concerns a piece of injustice done by you, madam, and which I can help you to set right.’

Lady Jocelyn stared somewhat. ‘Follow me into my dressing-room,’ she said, and led the way.

Escape was no longer possible. He was on the march to execution, and into the darkness of his brain danced John Raikes, with his grotesque tribulations. It was the harsh savour of reality that conjured up this flighty being, who probably never felt a sorrow or a duty. The farce Jack lived was all that Evan’s tragic bitterness could revolve, and seemed to be the only light in his mind. You might have seen a smile on his mouth when he was ready to ask for a bolt from heaven to crush him.

‘Now,’ said her ladyship, and he found that

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the four walls enclosed them, 'what have I been doing?'

She did not bid him be seated. Her brevity influenced him to speak to the point.

'You have dismissed Mr. Laxley, my lady: he is innocent.'

'How do you know that?'

'Because,'—a whirl of sensations beset the wretched youth,—'because I am guilty.'

His words had run a-head of his wits; and in answer to Lady Jocelyn's singular exclamation he could but simply repeat them.

Her head drew back; her face was slightly raised; she looked, as he had seen her sometimes look at the Countess, with a sort of speculative amazement.

'And why do you come to tell me?'

'For the reason that I cannot allow you to be unjust, madam.'

'What on earth was your motive?'

Evan stood silent, flinching from her frank eyes.

'Well, well, well!' Her ladyship dropped into a chair, and thumped her knees.

There was lawyer's blood in Lady Jocelyn's veins: she had the judicial mind. A confession was to her a confession. She tracked actions up to a motive; but one who came voluntarily to confess needed no sifting. She had the habit of treating things spoken as facts.

'You absolutely wrote that letter to Mrs. Evremonde's husband!'

Evan bowed, to avoid hearing his own lie.

'You discovered his address and wrote to him, and imitated Mr. Laxley's handwriting, to effect the purpose you may have had?'

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Her credulity did require his confirmation of it, and he repeated: 'It is my deed.'

'Hum! And you sent that premonitory slip of paper to her?'

'To Mrs. Evremonde?'

'Somebody else was the author of that, perhaps?'

'It is all on me.'

'In that case, Mr. Harrington, I can only say that it's quite right you should quit this house to-morrow morning.'

Her ladyship commenced rocking in her chair, and then added: 'May I ask, have you madness in your family? No? Because when one *can't* discern a motive, it's natural to ascribe certain acts to madness. Had Mrs. Evremonde offended you? or Ferdinand—but one only hears of such practices towards fortunate rivals, and now you have come to undo what you did! I must admit, that taking the monstrousness of the act and the inconsequence of your proceedings together, the whole affair becomes more incomprehensible to me than it was before. Would it be unpleasant to you to favour me with explanations?'

She saw the pain her question gave him, and, passing it, said:

'Of course you need not be told that Rose must hear of this?'

'Yes,' said Evan, 'she must hear it.'

'You know what that's equivalent to? But, if you like, I will not speak to her till you have left us.'

'Instantly,' cried Evan. 'Now—to-night! I would not have her live a minute in a false estimate of me.'

Had Lady Jocelyn's intellect been as penetrating as
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it was masculine, she would have taken him and turned him inside out in a very short time; for one who would bear to see his love look coldly on him rather than endure a minute's false estimate of his character, and who could yet stoop to concoct a vile plot, must either be mad or simulating the baseness for some reason or other. She perceived no motive for the latter, and she held him to be sound in the head, and what was spoken from the mouth she accepted. Perhaps, also, she saw in the complication thus offered an escape for Rose, and was the less inclined to elucidate it herself. But if her intellect was baffled, her heart was unerring. A man proved guilty of writing an anonymous letter would not have been allowed to stand long in her room. She would have shown him to the door of the house speedily; and Evan was aware in his soul that he had not fallen materially in her esteem. He had puzzled and confused her, and partly because she had the feeling that this young man was entirely trustworthy, and because she never relied on her feelings, she let his own words condemn him, and did not personally discard him. In fact, she was a veritable philosopher. She permitted her fellows to move the world on as they would, and had no other passions in the contemplation of the show than a cultured audience will usually exhibit.

'Strange,—most strange! I thought I was getting old!' she said, and eyed the culprit as judges generally are not wont to do. 'It will be a shock to Rose. I must tell you that I can't regret it. I would not have employed force with her, but I should have given her as strong a taste of the world as it was in my power to give. Girls get their reason from society. But,

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come! if you think you can make your case out better to her, you shall speak to her first yourself.'

'No, my lady,' said Evan softly.

'You would rather not?'

'I could not.'

'But, I suppose, she'll want to speak to you when she knows it.'

'I can take death from her hands, but I cannot slay myself.'

The language was natural to his condition, though the note was pitched high. Lady Jocelyn hummed till the sound of it was over, and an idea striking her, she said:

'Ah, by the way, have you any tremendous moral notions?'

'I don't think I have, madam.'

'People act on that mania sometimes, *I believe*. Do you think it an outrage on decency for a wife to run away from a mad husband whom they won't shut up, and take shelter with a friend? Is that the cause? Mr. Forth is an old friend of mine. I would trust my daughter with him in a desert, and stake my hand on his honour.'

'Oh, Lady Jocelyn!' cried Evan. 'Would to God you might ever have said that of me! Madam, I love you. I shall never see you again. I shall never meet one to treat me so generously. I leave you, blackened in character—you cannot think of me without contempt. I can never hope that this will change. But, for your kindness let me thank you.'

And as speech is poor where emotion is extreme—and he knew his own to be especially so—he took her hand with petitioning eyes, and dropping on one knee, reverentially kissed it.

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Lady Jocelyn was human enough to like to be appreciated. She was a veteran Pagan, and may have had the instinct that a peculiar virtue in this young one was the spring of his conduct. She stood up and said: 'Don't forget that you have a friend here.'

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The poor youth had to turn his head from her.

'You wish that I should tell Rose what you have told me at once, Mr. Harrington?'

'Yes, my lady; I beg that you will do so.'

'Well!'

And the queer look Lady Jocelyn had been wearing dimpled into absolute wonder. A stranger to Love's cunning, she marvelled why he should desire to witness the scorn Rose would feel for him.

'If she's not asleep, then, she shall hear it now,' said her ladyship. 'You understand that it will be mentioned to no other person.'

'Except to Mr. Laxley, madam, to whom I shall offer the satisfaction he may require. But I will undertake that.'

'Just as you think proper on that matter,' remarked her philosophical ladyship, who held that man was a fighting animal, and must not have his nature repressed.

She lighted him part of the way, and then turned off to Rose's chamber.

Would Rose believe it of him? Love combated his dismal foreboding. Strangely, too, now that he had plunged into his pitch-bath, the guilt seemed to cling to him, and instead of hoping serenely, or fearing steadily, his spirit fell in a kind of abject supplication to Rose, and blindly trusted that she would still love even if she believed him base. In his weakness he



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fell so low as to pray that she might love that crawling reptile who could creep into a house and shrink from no vileness to win her.

CHAPTER XXXV

Rose wounded

The light of morning was yet cold along the passages of the house when Polly Wheedle, hurrying to her young mistress, met her loosely dressed and with a troubled face.

‘What’s the matter, Polly? I was coming to you.’

‘O, Miss Rose! and I was coming to you. Miss Bonner’s gone back to her convulsions again. She’s had them all night. Her hair won’t last till thirty, if she keeps on giving way to temper, as I tell her: and I know that from a barber.’

‘Tush, you stupid Polly! Does she want to see me?’

‘You needn’t suspect that, Miss. But you quiet her best, and I thought I’d come to you. But, gracious!’

Rose pushed past her without vouchsafing any answer to the look in her face, and turned off to Juliana’s chamber, where she was neither welcomed nor repelled. Juliana said she was perfectly well, and that Polly was foolishly officious: whereupon Rose ordered Polly out of the room, and said to Juliana kindly: ‘You have not slept, dear, and I have not either. I am so unhappy.’

Whether Rose intended by this communication to make Juliana eagerly attentive, and to distract her

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from her own affair, cannot be said, but something of the effect was produced.

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‘You care for him, too,’ cried Rose impetuously. ‘Tell me, Juley: do you think him capable of any base action? Do you think he would do what any gentleman would be ashamed to own? Tell me.’

Juliana looked at Rose intently, but did not reply.

Rose jumped up from the bed. ‘You hesitate, Juley? What? *Could* you think so?’

Young women after a common game are shrewd. Juliana may have seen that Rose was not steady on the plank she walked, and required support.

‘I don’t know,’ she said, turning her cheek to her pillow.

‘What an answer!’ Rose exclaimed. ‘Have you no opinion? What did you say yesterday? It’s silent as the grave with me: but if you do care for him, you must think one thing or the other.’

‘I suppose not, then—no,’ said Juliana.

Repeating the languid words bitterly, Rose continued: ‘What is it to love without having faith in him you love? You make my mind easier.’

Juliana caught the implied taunt, and said fretfully: ‘I’m ill. You’re so passionate. You don’t tell me what it is. How can I answer you?’

‘Never mind,’ said Rose, moving to the door, wondering why she had spoken at all: but when Juliana sprang forward, and caught her by the dress to stop her, and with a most unwonted outburst of affection, begged of her to tell her all, the wound in Rose’s breast began to bleed, and she was glad to speak.

‘Juley, do you—can you believe that he wrote that letter which poor Ferdinand was accused of writing?’

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Juliana appeared to muse, and then responded: 'Why should he do such a thing?'

'O my goodness, what a girl!' Rose interjected.

'Well, then, to please you, Rose, of course I think he is too honourable.'

'You do think so, Juley? But if he himself confessed it—what then? You would not believe him, would you?'

'Oh, then I can't say. Why should he condemn himself?'

'But you would know—you would know that he was a man to suffer death rather than be guilty of the smallest baseness. His birth—what is that!' Rose flapped her fingers: 'But his acts—what he is himself you would be sure of, would you not? Dear Juley! Oh, for heaven's sake, speak out plainly to me.'

A wily look had crept over Juliana's features.

'Certainly,' she said, in a tone that belied it, and drawing Rose to her bosom, the groan she heard there was passing sweet to her.

'He has confessed it to Mama,' sobbed Rose. 'Why did he not come to me first? He has confessed it—the abominable thing has come out of his own mouth. He went to her last night. . . .'

Juliana patted her shoulders regularly as they heaved. When words were intelligible between them, Juliana said: 'At least, dear, you must admit that he has redeemed it.'

'Redeemed it? Could he do less?' Rose dried her eyes vehemently, as if the tears shamed her. 'A man who could have let another suffer for his crime—I could never have lifted my head again. I think I would have cut off this hand that plighted itself to

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him! As it is, I hardly dare look at myself. But you don't think it, dear? You know it to be false! false! false!

'Why should Mr. Harrington confess it?' said Juliana.

'Oh, don't speak his name!' cried Rose.

'Her cousin smiled. 'So many strange things happen,' she said, and sighed.

'Don't sigh: I shall think you believe it!' cried Rose.

An appearance of constrained repose was assumed. Rose glanced up, studied for an instant, and breathlessly uttered: 'You do, you do believe it, Juley?'

For answer, Juliana hugged her with much warmth, and recommenced the patting.

'I dare say it's a mistake,' she remarked. 'He may have been jealous of Ferdinand. You know I have not seen the letter. I have only heard of it. In love, they say, you ought to excuse. . . . And the want of religious education! His sister. . . .'

Rose interrupted her with a sharp shudder. Might it not be possible that one who had the same blood as the Countess would stoop to a momentary vileness.

How changed was Rose from the haughty damsel of yesterday!

'Do you think my lover could tell a lie?' 'He—would not love me long if *I* did!'

These phrases arose and rang in Juliana's ears while she pursued the task of comforting the broken spirit that now lay prone on the bed, and now impetuously paced the room. Rose had come thinking the moment Juliana's name was mentioned, that here was the one to fortify her faith in Evan: one who, because she

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loved, could not doubt him. She moaned in a terror of distrust, loathing her cousin: not asking herself why she needed support. And indeed she was too young for much clear self-questioning, and her blood was flowing too quickly for her brain to perceive more than one thing at a time.

‘Does your mother believe it?’ said Juliana, evading a direct assault.

‘Mama? She never doubts what you speak,’ answered Rose disconsolately.

‘She does?’

‘Yes.’

Whereat Juliana looked most grave, and Rose felt that it was hard to breathe.

She had grown very cold and calm, and Juliana had to be expansive unprovoked.

‘Believe nothing, dear, till you hear it from his own lips. If he can look in your face and say that he did it . . . well, then! But of course he cannot. It must be some wonderful piece of generosity to his rival.’

‘So I thought, Juley! so I thought,’ cried Rose, at the new light, and Juliana smiled contemptuously, and the light flickered and died, and all was darker than before in the bosom of Rose. She had borne so much that this new drop was poison.

‘Of course it must be that, if it is anything,’ Juliana pursued. ‘You were made to be happy, Rose. And consider, if it is true, people of very low birth, till they have lived long with other people, and if they have no religion, are so very likely to do things. You do not judge them as you do *real* gentlemen, and one must not be too harsh—I only wish to prepare you for the worst.’

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A dim form of that very idea had passed through Rose, giving her small comfort.

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'Let him tell you with his own lips that what he has told your mother is true, and then, and not till then, believe him,' Juliana concluded, and they kissed kindly, and separated. Rose had suddenly lost her firm step, but no sooner was Juliana alone than she left the bed, and addressed her visage to the glass with brightening eyes, as one who saw the glimmer of young hope therein.

'*She* love him! Not if he told me so ten thousand times would I believe it! and before he has said a syllable she doubts him. Asking me in that frantic way! as if I couldn't see that she wanted me to help her to her faith in him, as she calls it. Not name his name? Mr. Harrington! I may call him Evan: some day!'

Half-uttered, half-mused, the unconscious exclamations issued from her, and for many a weary day since she had dreamed of love, and studied that which is said to attract the creature, she had not been so glowingly elated or looked so much farther in the glass than its pale reflection.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Before breakfast

Cold through the night the dark-fringed stream had whispered under Evan's eyes, and the night breeze voiced 'Fool, fool!' to him, not without a distant echo in his heart. By symbols and sensations he

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knew that Rose was lost to him. There was no moon : the water seemed aimless, passing on carelessly to oblivion. Now and then, the trees stirred and talked, or a noise was heard from the pastures. He had slain the life that lived in them, and the great glory they were to bring forth, and the end to which all things moved. Had less than the loss of Rose been involved, the young man might have found himself looking out on a world beneath notice, and have been sighing for one more worthy of his clouded excellence : but the immense misery present to him in the contemplation of Rose's sad restrained contempt, saved him from the silly elation which is the last, and generally successful, struggle of human nature in those who can so far master it to commit a sacrifice. The loss of that brave high young soul—Rose, who had lifted him out of the mire with her own white hands : Rose, the image of all that he worshipped : Rose, so closely wedded to him that to be cut away from her was to fall like pallid clay from the soaring spirit : surely he was stunned and senseless when he went to utter the words to her mother ! Now that he was awake, and could feel his self-inflicted pain, he marvelled at his rashness and foolishness, as perhaps numerous mangled warriors have done for a time, when the battle-field was cool, and they were weak, and the uproar of their jarred nerves has beset them, lying uncherished.

By degrees he grew aware of a little consolatory touch, like the point of a needle, in his consciousness. Laxley would certainly insult him ! In that case he would not refuse to fight him. The darkness broke and revealed this happy prospect, and Evan held to it an hour, and could hardly reject it when better

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thoughts conquered. For would it not be sweet to make the strength of his arm respected? He took a stick, and ran his eye musingly along the length, trifling with it grimly. The great Mel had been his son's instructor in the chivalrous science of fence, and a *maitre d'armes* in Portugal had given him polish. In Mel's time duels with swords had been occasionally fought, and Evan looked on the sword as the weapon of combat. Face to face with his adversary—what then were birth or position? Action!—action!—he sighed for it, as I have done since I came to know that his history must be morally developed. A glow of bitter pleasure exalted him when, after hot passages, and parryings and thrusts, he had disarmed Ferdinand Laxley, and bestowing on him his life, said: 'Accept this worthy gift of the son of a tailor!' and he wiped his sword, haply bound up his wrist, and stalked off the ground, the vindicator of man's natural dignity. And then he turned upon himself with laughter, discovering a most wholesome power, barely to be suspected in him yet; but of all the children of glittering Mel and his solid mate, Evan was the best mixed compound of his parents.

He put the stick back in its corner and eyed his wrist, as if he had really just gone through the pretty scene he had just laughed at. It was nigh upon reality, for it suggested the employment of a handkerchief, and he went to a place and drew forth one that had the stain of his blood on it, and the name of Rose at one end. The beloved name was half-blotted by the dull-red mark, and at that sight a strange tenderness took hold of Evan. His passions became dead and of old date. This, then, would be his for ever! Love, for

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whom earth had been too small, crept exultingly into a nut-shell. He clasped the treasure on his breast, and saw a life beyond his parting with her.

Strengthened thus, he wrote by the morning light to Laxley. The letter was brief, and said simply that the act of which Laxley had been accused, Evan Harrington was responsible for. The latter expressed regret that Laxley should have fallen under a false charge, and, at the same time, indicated that if Laxley considered himself personally aggrieved, the writer was at his disposal.

A messenger had now to be found to convey it to the village-inn. Footmen were stirring about the house, and one meeting Evan close by his door, observed with demure grin, that he could not find the gentleman's nether-garments. The gentleman, it appeared, was Mr. John Raikes, who according to report, had been furnished with a bed at the house, because of a discovery, made at a late period overnight, that farther the gentleman could not go. Evan found him sleeping soundly. How much the poor youth wanted a friend! Fortune had given him instead a born buffoon; and it is perhaps the greatest evil of a position like Evan's, that, with cultured feelings, you are likely to meet with none to know you. Society does not mix well in money-pecking spheres. Here, however, was John Raikes, and Evan had to make the best of him.

'Eh?' yawned Jack, awakened; 'I was dreaming I was Napoleon Bonaparte's right-hand man.'

'I want you to be mine for half-an-hour,' said Evan.

Without replying, the distinguished officer jumped out of bed at a bound, mounted a chair, and peered

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on tip-toe over the top, from which, with a glance of self-congratulation, he pulled the missing piece of apparel, sighed dejectedly as he descended, while he exclaimed:

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‘Safe! but no distinction can compensate a man for this state of intolerable suspicion of everybody. I assure you, Harrington, I wouldn’t be Napoleon himself—and I have always been his peculiar admirer—to live and be afraid of my valet! I believe it will develop cancer sooner or later in me. I feel singular pains already. Last night, after crowning champagne with ale, which produced a sort of French Revolution in my interior—by the way, that must have made me dream of Napoleon!—last night, with my lower members in revolt against my head, I had to sit and cogitate for hours on a hiding-place for these—call them what you will. Depend upon it, Harrington, this world is no such funny affair as we fancy.’

‘Then it is true, that you could let a man play pranks on you,’ said Evan. ‘I took it for one of your jokes.’

‘Just as I can’t believe that you’re a tailor,’ returned Jack. ‘It’s not a bit more extraordinary.’

‘But, Jack, if you cause yourself to be contemptible——’

‘Contemptible!’ cried Jack. ‘This is not the tone I like. Contemptible! why it’s my eccentricity among my equals. If I dread the profane vulgar, that only proves that I’m above them. *Odi*, etc. Besides, Achilles had his weak point, and egad, it was when he faced about! By Jingo! I wish I’d had that idea yesterday. I should have behaved better.’

Evan could see that the creature was beginning to rely desperately on his humour.

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‘Come,’ he said, ‘be a man to-day. Throw off your motley. When I met you that night so oddly, you had been acting like a worthy fellow, trying to earn your bread in the best way you could——’

‘And precisely because I met you, of all men, I’ve been going round and round ever since,’ said Jack. ‘A clown or pantaloan would have given me balance. Say no more. You couldn’t help it. We met because we were the two extremes.’

Sighing, ‘What a jolly old inn!’ Raikes rolled himself over in the sheets, and gave two or three snug jolts indicative of his determination to be comfortable while he could.

‘Do you intend to carry on this folly, Jack?’

‘Say, sacrifice,’ was the answer. ‘I feel it as much as you possibly could, Mr. Harrington. Hear the facts,’ Jack turned round again. ‘Why did I consent to this absurdity? Because of my ambition. That old fellow, whom I took to be a clerk of Messrs. Grist, said: “You want to cut a figure in the world—you’re armed now.” A sort of Fortunatus’s joke. It was his way of launching me. But did he think I intended this for more than a lift? I his puppet? He, sir, was my tool! Well, I came. All my efforts were strained to shorten the period of penance. I had the best linen, and put on captivating manners. I should undoubtedly have won some girl of station, and cast off my engagement like an old suit, but just mark!—now mark how Fortune tricks us! After the pic-nic yesterday, the domestics of the house came to clear away, and the band being there, I stopped them and bade them tune up, and at the same time seizing the maid Wheedle, away we flew. We danced, we whirled, we twirled. Ale upon

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this! My head was lost. "Why don't it last for ever?" says I. "I wish it did," says she. The *naïveté* enraptured me. "Oooo!" I cried, hugging her, and then, you know, there was no course open to a man of honour but to offer marriage and make a lady of her. I proposed: she accepted me, and here I am, eternally tied to this accursed insignia, if I'm to keep my promise! Isn't that a sacrifice, friend H.? There's no course open to me. The poor girl is madly in love. She called me a "rattle!" As a gentleman, I cannot recede.'

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Evan got up and burst into damnable laughter at this burlesque of himself. Telling the fellow the service he required, and receiving a groaning assurance that the letter should, without loss of time, be delivered in proper style, the egoist, as Jack heartily thought him, fell behind his knitted brows, and after musing abstractedly, went forth to light upon his fate.

But a dread of meeting had seized both Rose and Evan. She had exhausted her first sincerity of unbelief in her interview with Juliana: and he had begun to consider what he could say to her. More than the three words 'I did it,' would not be possible; and if she made him repeat them, facing her truthful eyes, would he be man enough to strike her bared heart twice? And, ah! the sullen brute he must seem, standing before her dumb, hearing her sigh, seeing her wretched effort not to show how unwillingly her kind spirit despised him. The reason for the act—she would ask for that! Rose would not be so philosophic as her mother. She would grasp at every chance to excuse the deed. He cried out against his

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scheming sister in an agony, and while he did so, encountered Miss Carrington and Miss Bonner in deep converse. Juliana pinched her arm, whereupon Miss Carrington said: 'You look merry this morning, Mr. Harrington': for he was unawares smiling at the image of himself in the mirror of John Raikes. That smile, transformed to a chuckling grimace, travelled to Rose before they met.

Why did she not come to him?

A soft voice at his elbow made his blood stop. It was Caroline. She kissed him, answering his greeting: 'Is it good morning?'

'Certainly,' said he. 'By the way, don't forget that the coach leaves early.'

'My darling Evan! you make me so happy. For it was really a mistaken sense of honour. For what can at all excuse a falsehood, you know, Evan!'

Caroline took his arm, and led him into the sun, watching his face at times. Presently she said: 'I want just to be assured that you thought more wisely than when you left us last night.'

'More wisely?' Evan turned to her with a playful smile.

'My dear brother! you did not do what you said you would do?'

'Have you ever known me not to do what I said I would do?'

'Evan! Good heaven! you did it? Then how can you remain here an instant? Oh, no, no!—say no, darling!'

'Where is Louisa?' he inquired.

'She is in her room. She will never appear at breakfast, if she knows this.'

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'Perhaps more solitude would do her good,' said Evan.

'Remember, if this should prove true, think how you punish her!'

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On that point Evan had his own opinion.

'Well, I shall never have to punish you in this way, my love,' he said fondly, and Caroline dropped her eyelids.

'Don't think that I am blaming her,' he added, trying to feel as honestly as he spoke. 'I was mad to come here. I see it all now. Let us keep to our place. We are all the same before God till we disgrace ourselves.'

Possibly with that sense of shame which some young people have who are not professors of sounding sentences, or affected by missionary zeal, when they venture to breathe the holy name, Evan blushed, and walked on humbly silent. Caroline murmured: 'Yes, yes! oh, brother!' and her figure drew to him as if for protection. Pale, she looked up.

'Shall you always love me, Evan?'

'Whom else have I to love?'

'But always—always? Under any circumstances?'

'More and more, dear. I always have, and shall. I look to you now. I have no home but in your heart now.'

She was agitated, and he spoke warmly to calm her.

The throb of deep emotion rang in her rich voice. 'I will live any life to be worthy of your love, Evan,' and she wept.

To him they were words and tears without a history.

Nothing further passed between them. Caroline went to the Countess: Evan waited for Rose. The sun was getting high. The face of the stream glowed like metal. Why did she not come? She believed

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him guilty from the mouth of another? If so, there was something less for him to lose. And now the sacrifice he had made did whisper a tale of mortal magnificence in his ears: feelings that were not his noblest stood up exalted. He waited till the warm meadow-breath floating past told that the day had settled into heat, and then he waited no more, but quietly walked into the house with the strength of one who has conquered more than human scorn.

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Never would the Countess believe that brother of hers, idiot as by nature he might be, and heir to unnumbered epithets, would so far forget what she had done for him, as to drag her through the mud for nothing: and so she told Caroline again and again, vehemently.

It was about ten minutes before the time for descending to the breakfast-table. She was dressed, and sat before the glass, smoothing her hair, and applying the contents of a pot of cold cream to her forehead betweenwhiles. With perfect sincerity she repeated that she could not believe it. She had only trusted Evan once since their visit to Beckley; and that this once he should, when treated as a man, turn traitor to their common interests, and prove himself an utter baby, was a piece of nonsense her great intelligence indignantly rejected.

‘Then, if true,’ she answered Caroline’s assurances finally, ‘if true, he is not his father’s son!’

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By which it may be seen that she had indeed taken refuge in the Castle of Negation against the whole army of facts.

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‘He is acting, Carry. He is acting the ideas of his ridiculous empty noddle!’

‘No,’ said Caroline mournfully, ‘he is not. I have never known Evan to lie.’

‘Then you must forget the whipping he once had from his mother—little dolt! little selfish pig! He obtains his reputation entirely from his abominable selfishness, and then stands tall, and asks us to admire him. He bursts with vanity. But if *you* lend your credence to it, Carry, how, in the name of goodness, *are* you to appear at the breakfast?’

‘I was going to ask you whether you would come,’ said Caroline coldly.

‘If I can get my hair to lie flat by any means at all, of course!’ returned the Countess. ‘This dreadful horrid country pomade! Why did we not bring a larger stock of the Andaluçian Regenerator? Upon my honour, my dear, you use a most enormous quantity; I must really tell you that.’

Conning here entered to say that Mr. Evan had given orders for the boxes to be packed and everything got ready to depart by half-past eleven o’clock, when the fly would call for them and convey them to Fallowfield in time to meet the coach for London.

The Countess turned her head round to Caroline like an astonished automaton.

‘Given orders!’ she interjected.

‘I have very little to get ready,’ remarked Caroline.

‘Be so good as to wait outside the door one instant,’ said the Countess to Conning, with particular urbanity.

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Conning heard a great deal of vigorous whispering within, and when summoned to re-appear, a note was handed to her to convey to Mr. Harrington immediately. He was on the lawn, read it, and wrote back three hasty lines in pencil.

‘Louisa. You have my commands to quit this house at the hour named, this day. You will go with me.—E. H.’

Conning was again requested to wait outside the Countess’s door. She was the bearer of another note. Evan read it likewise; tore it up, and said that there was no answer.

The Castle of Negation held out no longer. Ruthless battalions poured over the walls, blew up the Countess’s propriety, made frightful ravages in her complexion. Down fell her hair.

‘You cannot possibly go to breakfast,’ said Caroline.

‘I must! I must!’ cried the Countess. ‘Why, my dear, if he has done it—wretched creature! don’t you perceive that, by withholding our presences, we become implicated with him?’ And the Countess, from a burst of frenzy, put this practical question so shrewdly, that Caroline’s wits succumbed to her.

‘But he has not done it; he is acting!’ she pursued, restraining her precious tears for higher purposes, as only true heroines can. ‘Thinks to frighten *me* into submission!’

‘Do you not think Evan is right in wishing us to leave, after—after——’ Caroline humbly suggested.

‘Say, before my venerable friend has departed this life,’ the Countess took her up. ‘No, I do not. If he is a fool, I am not. No, Carry: *I* do not jump into ditches for nothing. I will have something tangible

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for all that I have endured. We are now *tailors* in this place, remember. If that stigma is affixed to us, let us at least be remunerated for it. Come.'

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Caroline's own hard struggle demanded all her strength: yet she appeared to hesitate. 'You will surely not disobey Evan, Louisa?'

'Disobey?' The Countess amazedly dislocated the syllables. 'Why, the boy will be telling you next that he will not permit the Duke to visit you! Just your English order of mind, that cannot—brutes!—conceive of friendship between high-born men and beautiful women. Beautiful as you truly are, Carry, five years more will tell on you. But perhaps my dearest is in a hurry to return to her Maxwell? At least he thwacks well!'

Caroline's arm was taken. The Countess loved an occasional rhyme when a point was to be made, and went off nodding and tripping till the time for stateliness arrived, near the breakfast-room door. She indeed was acting. At the bottom of her heart there was a dismal rage of passions: hatred of those who would or might look tailor in her face: terrors concerning the possible re-visitation of the vengeful Sir Abraham: dread of Evan and the efforts to despise him: the shocks of many conflicting elements. Above it all her countenance was calmly, sadly sweet: even as you may behold some majestic lighthouse glimmering over the tumult of a midnight sea.

An unusual assemblage honoured the breakfast that morning. The news of Mrs. Bonner's health was more favourable. How delighted was the Countess to hear that! Mrs. Bonner was the only firm ground she stood on there, and after receiving and giving gentle

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salutes, she talked of Mrs. Bonner, and her night-watch by the sick bed, in a spirit of doleful hope. This passed off the moments till she could settle herself to study faces. Decidedly, every lady present looked glum, with the single exception of Miss Current. Evan was by Lady Jocelyn's side. Her ladyship spoke to him; but the Countess observed that no one else did. To herself, however, the gentlemen were as attentive as ever. Evan sat three chairs distant from her.

If the traitor expected his sister to share in his disgrace, by noticing him, he was in error. On the contrary, the Countess joined the conspiracy to exclude him, and would stop a mild laugh if perchance he looked up. Presently Rose entered. She said 'Good morning' to one or two, and glided into a seat.

That Evan was under Lady Jocelyn's protection soon became generally apparent, and also that her ladyship was angry: an exhibition so rare with her that it was the more remarked. Rose could see that she was a culprit in her mother's eyes. She glanced from Evan to her. Lady Jocelyn's mouth shut hard. The girl's senses then perceived the something that was afloat at the table; she thought with a pang of horror: 'Has Juliana told?' Juliana smiled on her; but the aspect of Mrs. Shorne, and of Miss Carrington, spoke for their knowledge of that which must henceforth be the perpetual reproof to her headstrong youth.

'At what hour do you leave us?' said Lady Jocelyn to Evan.

'When I leave the table, my lady. The fly will call for my sisters at half-past eleven.'

'There is no necessity for you to start in advance?'

'I am going over to see my mother.'

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Rose burned to speak to him now. Oh! why had she delayed! Why had she swerved from her good rule of open, instant explanations? But Evan's heart was stern to his love. Not only had she, by not coming, shown her doubt of him,—she had betrayed him!

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Between the Countess, Melville, Sir John, and the Duke, an animated dialogue was going on, over which Miss Current played like a lively iris. They could not part with the Countess. Melville said he should be left stranded, and numerous pretty things were uttered by other gentlemen: by the women not a word. Glancing from certain of them lingeringly to her admirers, the Countess smiled her thanks, and then Andrew, pressed to remain, said he was willing and happy, and so forth; and it seemed that her admirers had prevailed over her reluctance, for the Countess ended her little protests with a vanquished bow. Then there was a gradual rising from table. Evan pressed Lady Jocelyn's hand, and turning from her bent his head to Sir Franks, who, without offering an exchange of cordialities, said, at arm's length: 'Good-bye, sir.' Melville also gave him that greeting stiffly. Harry was perceived to rush to the other end of the room, in quest of a fly apparently. Poor Caroline's heart ached for her brother, to see him standing there in the shadow of many faces. But he was not left to stand alone. Andrew quitted the circle of Sir John, Seymour Jocelyn, Mr. George Uploft, and others, and linked his arm to Evan's. Rose had gone. While Evan looked for her despairingly to say his last word and hear her voice once more, Sir Franks said to his wife:

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‘See that Rose keeps upstairs.’

‘I want to speak to her,’ was her ladyship’s answer, and she moved to the door.

Evan made way for her, bowing.

‘You will be ready at half-past eleven, Louisa,’ he said, with calm distinctness, and passed from that purgatory.

Now honest Andrew attributed the treatment Evan met with to the exposure of yesterday. He was frantic with democratic disgust.

‘Why the devil don’t they serve me like that, eh? ’Cause I got a few coppers! There, Van! I’m a man of peace; but if you’ll call any man of ’em out I’ll stand your second—’pon my soul, I will. They must be cowards, so there isn’t much to fear. Confound the fellows, I tell ’em every day I’m the son of a cobbler, and egad, they grow civiller. What do they mean? Are cobblers ranked over tailors?’

‘Perhaps that’s it,’ said Evan.

‘Hang your gentlemen!’ Andrew cried.

‘Let us have breakfast first,’ uttered a melancholy voice near them in the passage.

‘Jack!’ said Evan. ‘Where have you been?’

‘I didn’t know the breakfast-room,’ Jack returned, ‘and the fact is, my spirits are so down, I couldn’t muster up courage to ask one of the footmen. I delivered your letter. Nothing hostile took place. I bowed fiercely to let him know what he might expect. That generally stops it. You see, I talk prose. I shall never talk anything else!’

Andrew recommenced his jests of yesterday with Jack. The latter bore them patiently, as one who had endured worse.

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'She has rejected me!' he whispered to Evan. 'Talk of the ingratitude of women! Ten minutes ago I met her. She perked her eyebrows at me!—tried to run away. "Miss Wheedle": I said. "If you please, I'd rather not," says she. To cut it short, the sacrifice I made to her was the cause. It's all over the house. She gave the most excruciating hint. Those low-born females are so horribly indelicate. I stood confounded.'

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Commending his new humour, Evan persuaded him to breakfast immediately, and hunger being one of Jack's solitary incitements to a sensible course of conduct, the disconsolate gentleman followed its dictates. 'Go with him, Andrew,' said Evan. 'He is here as my friend, and may be made uncomfortable.'

'Yes, yes,—ha! ha! I'll follow the poor chap,' said Andrew. 'But what is it all about? Louisa won't go, you know. Has the girl given you up because she saw your mother, Van? I thought it was all right. Why the deuce are you running away?'

'Because I've just seen that I ought never to have come, I suppose,' Evan replied, controlling the wretched heaving of his chest.

'But Louisa *won't* go, Van.'

'Understand, my dear Andrew, that I know it to be quite imperative. Be ready yourself with Caroline. Louisa will then make her choice. Pray help me in this. We must not stay a minute more than is necessary in this house.'

'It's an awful duty,' breathed Andrew, after a pause. 'I see nothing but hot water at home. Why—but it's no use asking questions. My love to your mother. I say, Van,—now isn't Lady Jocelyn a trump?'

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‘God bless her!’ said Evan. And the moisture in Andrew’s eyes affected his own.

‘She’s the staunchest piece of woman-goods I ever — I know a hundred cases of her!’

‘I know one, and that’s enough,’ said Evan.

Not a sign of Rose! Can Love die without its dear farewell on which it feeds, away from the light, dying by bits? In Evan’s heart Love seemed to die, and all the pangs of a death were there as he trod along the gravel and stepped beneath the gates of Beckley Court.

Meantime the gallant Countess was not in any way disposed to retreat on account of Evan’s defection. The behaviour toward him at the breakfast-table proved to her that he had absolutely committed his egregious folly, and as no General can have concert with a fool, she cut him off from her affections resolutely. Her manifest disdain at his last speech, said as much to everybody present. Besides, the lady was in her element here, and compulsion is required to make us relinquish our element. Lady Jocelyn certainly had not expressly begged of her to remain: the Countess told Melville so, who said that if she required such an invitation she should have it, but that a guest to whom they were so much indebted, was bound to spare them these formalities.

‘What am I to do?’

The Countess turned piteously to the diplomatist’s wife.

She answered retiringly: ‘Indeed I cannot say.’

Upon this, the Countess accepted Melville’s arm, and had some thoughts of punishing the woman.

They were seen parading the lawn. Mr. George Uploft chuckled singularly.

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'Just the old style,' he remarked, but corrected the inadvertence with a 'hem!' committing himself more shamefully the instant after. 'I'll wager she has the old Dip. down on his knee before she cuts.'

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'Bet can't be taken,' observed Sir John Loring. 'It requires a spy.'

Harry, however, had heard the remark, and because he wished to speak to her, let us hope, and reproach her for certain things when she chose to be disengaged, he likewise sallied out, being forlorn as a youth whose sweet vanity is much hurt.

The Duke had paired off with Mrs. Strike. The lawn was fair in sunlight where they walked. The air was rich with harvest smells, and the scent of autumnal roses. Caroline was by nature luxurious and soft. The thought of that drilled figure to which she was returning in bondage, may have thrown into bright relief the polished and gracious nobleman who walked by her side, shadowing forth the chances of a splendid freedom. Two lovely tears fell from her eyes. The Duke watched them quietly.

'Do you know, they make me jealous?' he said.

Caroline answered him with a faint smile.

'Reassure me, my dear lady; you are not going with your brother this morning?'

'Your Grace, I have no choice!'

'May I speak to you as your warmest friend? From what I hear, it appears to be right that your brother should not stay. To the best of my ability I will provide for him: but I sincerely desire to disconnect you from those who are unworthy of you. Have you not promised to trust in me? Pray, let me be your guide.'

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Caroline replied to the heart of his words: 'I dare not.'
'What has changed you?'

'I am not changed, but awakened,' said Caroline.

The Duke paced on in silence.

'Pardon me if I comprehend nothing of such a change,' he resumed. 'I asked you to sacrifice much; all that I could give in return I offered. Is it the world you fear?'

'What is the world to such as I am?'

'Can you consider it a duty to deliver yourself bound to that man again?'

'Heaven pardon me, my lord, I think of that too little!'

The Duke's next question: 'Then what can it be?' stood in his eyes.

'Oh!' Caroline's touch quivered on his arm, 'Do not suppose me frivolous, ungrateful, or—or cowardly. For myself you have offered more happiness than I could have hoped for. To be allied to one so generous, I could bear anything. Yesterday you had my word: give it me back to-day!'

Very curiously the Duke gazed on her, for there was evidence of internal torture across her forehead.

'I may at least beg to know the cause for this request?'

She quelled some throbbing in her bosom. 'Yes.'

He waited, and she said: 'There is one—if I offended him, I could not live. If now I followed my wishes, he would lose his faith in the last creature that loves him. He is unhappy. I could bear what is called disgrace, my lord—I shudder to say it—I could sin against heaven; but I dare not do what would make him despise me.'

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She was trembling violently; yet the nobleman, in his surprise, could not forbear from asking who this person might be, whose influence on her righteous actions was so strong.

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‘It is my brother, my lord,’ she said.

Still more astonished, ‘Your brother!’ the Duke exclaimed. ‘My dearest lady, I would not wound you; but is not this a delusion? We are so placed that we must speak plainly. Your brother I have reason to feel sure is quite unworthy of you.’

‘Unworthy? My brother Evan? Oh, he is noble,—he is the best of men!’

‘And how, between yesterday and to-day, has he changed you?’

‘It is that yesterday I did not know him, and to-day I do.’

Her brother, a common tradesman, a man guilty of forgery and the utmost baseness—all but kicked out of the house! The Duke was too delicate to press her further. Moreover, Caroline had emphasized the ‘yesterday’ and ‘to-day,’ showing that the interval which had darkened Evan to everybody else, had illumined him to her. He employed some courtly eloquence, better unrecorded; but if her firm resolution perplexed him, it threw a strange halo round the youth from whom it sprang.

The hour was now eleven, and the Countess thought it full time to retire to her entrenchment in Mrs. Bonner’s chamber. She had great things still to do: vast designs were in her hand awaiting the sanction of Providence. Alas! that little idle promenade was soon to be repented. She had joined her sister, thinking it safer to have her upstairs till they were

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quit of Evan. The Duke and the diplomatist loitering in the rear, these two fair women sailed across the lawn, conscious, doubtless, over all their sorrows and schemes, of the freight of beauty they carried.

What meant that gathering on the steps? It was fortuitous, like everything destined to confound us. There stood Lady Jocelyn with Andrew, fretting his pate. Harry leant against a pillar, Miss Carrington, Mrs. Shorne, and Mrs. Melville, supported by Mr. George Uploft, held watchfully by. Juliana, with Master Alec and Miss Dorothy, were in the background.

Why did our General see herself cut off from her stronghold, as by a hostile band? She saw it by that sombre light in Juliana's eyes, which had shown its ominous gleam whenever disasters were on the point of unfolding.

Turning to Caroline, she said: 'Is there a back way?'

Too late! Andrew called.

'Come along, Louisa. Just time, and no more. Carry, are you packed?'

This in reality was the first note of the retreat from Beckley; and having blown it, the hideous little trumpeter burst into scarlet perspirations, mumbling to Lady Jocelyn: 'Now, my lady, mind you stand by me.'

The Countess walked straight up to him.

'Dear Andrew! this sun is too powerful for you. I beg you, withdraw into the shade of the house.'

She was about to help him with all her gentleness.

'Yes, yes. All right, Louisa,' rejoined Andrew. 'Come, go and pack. The fly'll be here, you know—'

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too late for the coach, if you don't mind, my lass. Ain't you packed yet?'

The horrible fascination of vulgarity impelled the wretched lady to answer: 'Are we herrings?' And then she laughed, but without any accompaniment.

'I am now going to dear Mrs. Bonner,' she said, with a tender glance at Lady Jocelyn.

'My mother is sleeping,' her ladyship remarked.

'Come, Carry, my darling!' cried Andrew.

Caroline looked at her sister. The Countess divined Andrew's shameful trap.

'I was under an engagement to go and canvass this afternoon,' she said.

'Why, my dear Louisa, we've settled that in here this morning,' said Andrew. 'Old Tom only stuck up a puppet to play with. We've knocked him over, and march in victorious—eh, my lady?'

'Oh!' exclaimed the Countess, 'if Mr. Raikes shall indeed have listened to my inducements!'

'Deuce a bit of inducements!' returned Andrew. 'The fellow's ashamed of himself—ha! ha! Now then, Louisa.'

While they talked, Juliana had loosed Dorothy and Alec, and these imps were seen rehearsing a remarkable play, in which the damsel held forth a hand and the cavalier advanced and kissed it with a loud smack, being at the same time reproached for his lack of grace.

'You are so English!' cried Dorothy, with perfect languor, and a malicious twitter passed between two or three. Mr. George spluttered indiscreetly.

The Countess observed the performance. Not to convert the retreat into a total rout, she, with that

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dark flush which was her manner of blushing, took formal leave of Lady Jocelyn, who, in return, simply said: 'Good-bye, Countess.' Mrs. Strike's hand she kindly shook.

The few digs and slaps and thrusts at gloomy Harry and prim Miss Carrington and boorish Mr. George, wherewith the Countess, torn with wrath, thought it necessary to cover her retreat, need not be told. She struck the weak alone: Juliana she respected. Masterly tactics, for they showed her power, gratified her vengeance, and left her unassailed. On the road she had Andrew to tear to pieces. O delicious operation! And O shameful brother to reduce her to such joys! And, O Providence! may a poor desperate soul, betrayed through her devotion, unremunerated for her humiliation and absolute hard work, accuse thee? The Countess would have liked to. She felt it to be the instigation of the devil, and decided to remain on the safe side still.

Happily for Evan, she was not ready with her packing by half-past eleven. It was near twelve when he, pacing in front of the inn, observed Polly Wheedle, followed some yards in the rear by John Raikes, advancing towards him. Now Polly had been somewhat delayed by Jack's persecutions, and Evan declining to attend to the masked speech of her mission, which directed him to go at once down a certain lane in the neighbourhood of the park, some minutes were lost.

'Why, Mr. Harrington,' said Polly, 'it's Miss Rose: she's had leave from her Ma. Can you stop away, when it's quite proper?'

Evan hesitated. Before he could conquer the dark

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spirit, lo, Rose appeared, walking up the village street. Polly and her adorer fell back.

Timidly, unlike herself, Rose neared him.

‘I have offended you, Evan. You would not come to me: I have come to you.’

‘I am glad to be able to say good-bye to you, Rose,’ was his pretty response.

Could she have touched his hand then, the blood of these lovers rushing to one channel must have made all clear. At least he could hardly have struck her true heart with his miserable lie. But that chance was lost: they were in the street, where passions have no play.

‘Tell me, Evan,—it is not true.’

He, refining on his misery, thought, She would not ask it if she trusted me: and answered her: ‘You have heard it from your mother, Rose.’

‘But I will not believe it from any lips but yours, Evan. Oh, speak, speak!’

It pleased him to think: How could one who loved me believe it even then?

He said: ‘It can scarcely do good to make me repeat it, Rose.’

And then, seeing her dear bosom heave quickly, he was tempted to fall on his knees to her with a wild outcry of love. The chance was lost. The inexorable street forbade it.

There they stood in silence, gasping at the barrier that divided them.

Suddenly a noise was heard. ‘Stop! stop!’ cried the voice of John Raikes. ‘When a lady and gentleman are talking together, sir, do you lean your long ears over them—ha?’

Looking round, Evan beheld Laxley a step behind,

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and Jack rushing up to him, seizing his collar, and instantly undergoing ignominious prostration for his heroic defence of the privacy of lovers.

‘Stand aside,’ said Laxley imperiously. ‘Rosey! so you’ve come for me. Take my arm. You are under my protection.’

Another forlorn ‘Is it true?’ Rose cast toward Evan with her eyes. He wavered under them.

‘Did you receive my letter?’ he demanded of Laxley.

‘I decline to hold converse with you,’ said Laxley, drawing Rose’s hand on his arm.

‘You will meet me to-day or to-morrow?’

‘I am in the habit of selecting my own company.’

Rose disengaged her hand. Evan grasped it. No word of farewell was uttered. Her mouth moved, but her eyes were hard shut, and nothing save her hand’s strenuous pressure, equalling his own, told that their parting had been spoken, the link violently snapped.

Mr. John Raikes had been picked up and pulled away by Polly. She now rushed to Evan: ‘Good-bye, and God bless you, dear Mr. Harrington. I’ll find means of letting you know how she is. And he sha’n’t have her, mind!’

Rose was walking by Laxley’s side, but not leaning on his arm. Evan blessed her for this. Ere she was out of sight the fly rolled down the street. She did not heed it, did not once turn her head. Ah, bitter unkindness!

When Love is hurt, it is self-love that requires the opiate. Conning gave it him in the form of a note in a handwriting not known to him. It said:—

‘I do not believe it, and nothing will ever make me.

‘JULIANA.’

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Evan could not forget these words. They coloured his farewell to Beckley: the dear old downs, the hop-gardens, the long gray farms walled with clipped yew, the home of his lost love! He thought of them through weary nights when the ghostly image with the hard shut eyelids and the quivering lips would rise and sway irresolutely in air till a shape out of the darkness extinguished it. Pride is the God of Pagans. Juliana had honoured his God. The spirit of Juliana seemed to pass into the body of Rose, and suffer for him as that ghostly image visibly suffered.

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So ends the fourth act of our comedy.

After all her heroism and extraordinary efforts, after, as she feared, offending Providence—after facing Tailor-dom—the Countess was rolled away in a dingy fly: unrewarded even by a penny, for what she had gone through. For she possessed eminently the practical nature of her sex; and though she would have scorned, and would have declined to handle coin so base, its absence was upbraidingly mentioned in her spiritual outcries. Not a penny!

Nor was there, as in the miseries of retreat she affected indifferently to imagine, a Duke fished out of the ruins of her enterprise, to wash the mud off her garments and edge them with radiance. Caroline, it became clear to her, had been infected by Evan's folly. Caroline, she subsequently learnt, had likewise been

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a fool. Instead of marvelling at the genius that had done so much in spite of the pair of fools that were the right and left wing of her battle array, the simple-minded lady wept. She wanted success, not genius. Admiration she was ever ready to forfeit for success.

Nor did she say to the tailors of earth: 'Weep, for I sought to emancipate you from opprobrium by making one of you a gentleman; I fought for a great principle and have failed.' Heroic to the end, she herself shed all the tears; took all the sorrow!

Where was consolation? Would any Protestant clergyman administer comfort to her? Could he?—might he do so? He might listen, and quote texts; but he would demand the harsh rude English for everything; and the Countess's confessional thoughts were all innuendoish, ærial; too delicate to live in our shameless tongue. Confession by implication, and absolution; she could know this to be what she wished for, and yet not think it. She could see a haven of peace in that picture of the little brown box with the sleekly reverend figure bending his ear to the kneeling Beauty outside, thrice ravishing as she half-lifts the veil of her sins and her visage!—yet she started alarmed to hear it whispered that the fair penitent was the Countess de Saldar; urgently she prayed that no disgraceful brother might ever drive her to that!

Never let it be a Catholic priest!—she almost fashioned her petition into words. Who was to save her? Alas! alas! in her dire distress—in her sense of miserable pennilessness, she clung to Mr. John Raikes, of the curricule, the mysteriously rich young gentleman; and on that picture, with Andrew roguishly contemplating it, and Evan, with feelings regarding his

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sister that he liked not to own, the curtain commiseratingly drops.

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As in the course of a stream you come upon certain dips, where, but here and there, a sparkle or a gloom of the full flowing water is caught through deepening foliage, so the history that concerns us wanders out of day for a time, and we must violate the post and open written leaves to mark the turn it takes.

First we have a letter from Mr. Goren to Mrs. Mel, to inform her that her son has arrived and paid his respects to his future instructor in the branch of science practised by Mr. Goren.

‘He has arrived *at last*,’ says the worthy tradesman. ‘His appearance in the shop will be highly gentlemanly, and when he looks a little more pleasing, and grows fond of it, nothing will be left to be desired. The ladies, his sisters, have not thought proper to call. I had hopes of the custom of Mr. Andrew Cogglesby. Of course you wish him to learn tailoring thoroughly?’

Mrs. Mel writes back, thanking Mr. Goren, and saying that she had shown the letter to inquiring creditors, and that she does wish her son to learn his business from the root. This produces a second letter from Mr. Goren, which imparts to her that at the root of the tree of tailoring the novitiate must sit no less than six hours a day with his legs crossed and doubled under him, cheerfully plying needle and thread; and that, without this probation, to undergo which the son resolutely objects, all hope of his climbing to the top of the lofty tree, and viewing mankind from an eminence, must be surrendered.

‘If you do not *insist*, my dear Mrs. Harrington, I tell

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you candidly, your son may have a shop, but he will be *no tailor.*'

Mrs. Mel understands her son and his state of mind well enough not to insist, and is resigned to the melancholy consequence.

Then Mr. Goren discovers an extraordinary resemblance between Evan and his father: remarking merely that the youth is not the gentleman his father was in a shop, while he admits, that had it been conjoined to business habits, he should have envied his departed friend.

He has soon something fresh to tell; and it is that young Mr. Harrington is treating him cavalierly. That he should penetrate the idea or appreciate the merits of Mr. Goren's Balance was hardly to be expected *at present*: the world did not, and Mr. Goren blamed no young man for his ignorance. Still a proper attendance was requisite. Mr. Goren thought it very singular that young Mr. Harrington should demand all the hours of the day for his own purposes,—up to half-past four. He found it difficult to speak to him as a master, and begged that Mrs. Harrington would, as a mother.

The reply of Mrs. Mel is dashed with a trifle of cajolery. She has heard from her son, and seeing that her son takes all that time from his *right studies*, to earn money wherewith to pay debts of which Mr. Goren is cognizant, she trusts that their oldest friend will overlook it.

Mr. Goren rejoins that he considers that he need not have been excluded from young Mr. Harrington's confidence. Moreover, it is a grief to him that the young gentleman should refrain from accepting any of

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his suggestions as to the propriety of requesting *some*, at least, of his rich and titled acquaintance to confer on him the favour of their patronage.

‘Which they would not repent,’ adds Mr. Goren, ‘and might learn to be very much obliged to him for, in return for kindnesses extended to him.’

Notwithstanding all my efforts, you see, the poor boy is thrust into the shop. There he is, without a doubt. He sleeps under Mr. Goren’s roof: he (since one cannot be too positive in citing the punishment of such a Pagan) stands behind a counter: he (and, oh! choke, young loves, that have hovered around him! shrink from him in natural horror, gentle ladies!) handles the shears. It is not my fault. He would be a Pagan.

If you can think him human enough still to care to know how he feels it, I must tell you that he feels it hardly at all. After a big blow, a very little one scarcely counts. What are outward forms and social ignominies to him whose heart has been struck to the dust? His Gods have fought for him, and there he is! He deserves no pity.

But he does not ask it of you, the callous Pagan! Despise him, if you please, and rank with the Countess, who despises him most heartily.

Dipping further into the secrets of the post, we discover a brisk correspondence between Juliana Bonner and Mrs. Strike.

‘A thousand thanks to you, my dear Miss Bonner,’ writes the latter lady. ‘The unaffected interest you take in my brother touches me deeply. I *know* him to be worthy of your *good opinion*. Yes, I will open my

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heart to you, dearest Juliana; and it shall, as you wish, be *quite secret* between us. Not to a soul!

‘He is quite alone. My sisters Harriet and Louisa will not see him, and I can only do so by stealth. His odd little friend sometimes drives me out on Sundays, to a place where I meet him; and the Duke of Belfield kindly lends me his carriage. Oh, that we might never part! I am only happy with him!

‘Ah, do not doubt him, Juliana, for anything he does! You say, that now the Duke has obtained for him the Secretaryship to my husband’s Company, he should not stoop to that other thing, and you do not understand why. I will tell you. Our poor father died in debt, and Evan receives money which enables him by degrees to liquidate these debts, on condition that he consents to be what *I* dislike as much as you *can*. He bears it; you can have no idea of his pride! He is too proud to own to himself that it debases him—too proud to complain. It is a tangle—a net that drags him down to it: but whatever he is outwardly, he is the noblest human being in the world to me, *and but for him, oh, what should I be?* Let me beg you to forgive it, if you can. My darling has no friends. Is his temper as sweet as ever? I can answer that. Yes, only he is silent, and looks—when you look into his eyes—colder, as men look when they will not bear much from other men.

‘He has not mentioned her name. I am *sure* she has not written.

‘Pity him, and pray for him.’

Juliana then makes a communication, which draws forth the following:—

‘Mistress of all the Beckley property—dearest,

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dearest Juliana! Oh! how sincerely I congratulate you! The black on the letter alarmed me so, I could hardly open it, my fingers trembled so; for I esteem you all at Beckley; but when I had opened and read it, I was recompensed. You say you are sorry for Rose. But surely what your Grandmama has done is *quite right*. It is *just*, in every sense. But why am I not to tell Evan? I am certain it would make him very happy, and happiness of any kind he needs so much! I will obey you, of course, but I cannot see why. Do you know, my dear child, you are extremely mysterious, and puzzle me. Evan takes a pleasure in speaking of you. You and Lady Jocelyn are his great themes. Why is he to be kept ignorant of your good fortune? The spitting of blood is bad. You *must* winter in a warm climate. I do think that London is far better for you in the late Autumn than Hampshire. May I ask my sister Harriet to invite you to reside with her for some weeks? Nothing, I know, would give her greater pleasure.'

Juliana answers this—

'If you love me—I sometimes hope that you do—but the feeling of being loved is so strange to me that I can only believe it at times—but, Caroline—there, I have mustered up courage to call you by your Christian name at last—Oh, dear Caroline! if you do love me, do not tell Mr. Harrington. I go on my knees to you to beg you not to tell him a word. I have no reasons indeed—not any; but I implore you again *never* even to *hint* that I am anything but the person he knew at Beckley.

'Rose has gone to Elburne House, where Ferdinand, her *friend*, is to meet her. She rides and sings the same, and *keeps all her colour*.

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‘She may not, as you imagine, have much sensibility. Perhaps not enough. I am afraid that Rose is turning into a very worldly woman!

‘As to what you kindly say about inviting me to London, I should like it, and I am my own mistress. Do you know, I think I am *older* than your brother! I am *twenty-three*. Pray, when you write, tell me if he is older than that. But should I not be a dreadful burden to you? Sometimes I have to keep to my chamber whole days and days. When that happens now, I think of you entirely. See how I open my heart to *you*. You say that you do to me. I wish I could really think it.’

A postscript begs Caroline ‘not to forget about the *ages*.’

In this fashion the two ladies open their hearts, and contrive to read one another perfectly in their mutual hypocrisies.

Some letters bearing the signatures of Mr. John Raikes, and Miss Polly Wheedle, likewise pass. Polly inquires for detailed accounts of the health and doings of Mr. Harrington. Jack replies with full particulars of her own proceedings, and mild corrections of her grammar. It is to be noted that Polly grows much humbler to him on paper, which being instantly perceived by the mercurial one, his caressing condescension to her is very beautiful. She is taunted with Mr. Nicholas Frim, and answers, after the lapse of a week, that the aforesaid can be nothing to her, as he ‘went in a passion to church last Sunday and got married.’ It appears that they had quarrelled, ‘because I danced with you that night.’ To this Mr. Raikes rejoins in a style that would be signified by ‘ahem!’ in

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language, and an arrangement of the shirt collar before the looking-glass, in action.

CHAPTER XXXIX

In the Domain of Tailordom

There was peace in Mr. Goren's shop. Badgered Ministers, bankrupt merchants, diplomatists with a headache—any of our modern grandees under difficulties, might have envied that peace over which Mr. Goren presided: and he was an enviable man. He loved his craft, he believed that he had not succeeded the millions of antecedent tailors in vain; and, excepting that trifling coquetry with shirt-fronts, viz., the red crosses, which a shrewd rival had very soon eclipsed by representing nymphs triangularly posed, he devoted himself to his business from morning to night; as rigid in demanding respect from those beneath him, as he was profuse in lavishing it on his patrons. His public boast was, that he owed no man a farthing; his secret comfort, that he possessed two thousand pounds in the Funds. But Mr. Goren did not stop here. Behind these external characteristics he nursed a passion. Evan was astonished and pleased to find in him an enthusiastic fern-collector. Not that Mr. Harrington shared the passion, but the sight of these brown roots spread out, ticketed, on the stained paper, after supper, when the shutters were up and the house defended from the hostile outer world; the old man poring over them, and naming this and that spot where, during his solitary Saturday afternoon and Sunday

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excursions, he had lighted on the rare samples exhibited: this contrast of the quiet evening with the sordid day humanized Mr. Goren to him. He began to see a spirit in the rigid tradesman not so utterly dissimilar to his own, and he fancied that he, too, had a taste for ferns. Round Beckley how they abounded!

He told Mr. Goren so, and Mr. Goren said:—

‘Some day we’ll jog down there together, as the saying goes.’

Mr. Goren spoke of it as an ordinary event, likely to happen in the days to come: not as an incident the mere mention of which, as being probable, stopped the breath and made the pulses leap.

For now Evan’s education taught him to feel that he was at his lowest degree. Never now could Rose stoop to him. He carried the shop on his back. She saw the brand of it on his forehead. Well! and what was Rose to him, beyond a blissful memory, a star that he had once touched? Self-love kept him strong by day, but in the darkness of night came his misery; wakening from tender dreams, he would find his heart sinking under a horrible pressure, and then the fair fresh face of Rose swam over him; the hours of Beckley were revived; with intolerable anguish he saw that she was blameless—that he alone was to blame. Yet worse was it when his closed eyelids refused to conjure up the sorrowful lovely nightmare, and he lay like one in a trance, entombed—wretched Pagan! feeling all that had been blindly; when the Past lay beside him like a corpse that he had slain.

These nightly torments helped him to brave what the morning brought. Insensibly also, as Time hardened his sufferings, Evan asked himself what the

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shame of his position consisted in. He grew stiff-necked. His Pagan virtues stood up one by one to support him. Andrew, courageously evading the interdiction that forbade him to visit Evan, would meet him by appointment at City taverns, and flatly offered him a place in the Brewery. Evan declined it, on the pretext that, having received old Tom's money for the year, he must at least work out that term according to the conditions. Andrew fumed and sneered at Tailordom. Evan said that there was peace in Mr. Goren's shop. His sharp senses discerned in Andrew's sneer a certain sincerity, and he revolted against it. Mr. John Raikes, too, burlesqued Society so well, that he had the satisfaction of laughing at his enemy occasionally. The latter gentleman was still a pensioner, flying about town with the Countess de Saldar, in deadly fear lest that fascinating lady should discover the seat of his fortune; happy, notwithstanding. In the mirror of Evan's little world, he beheld the great one from which he was banished.

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Now the dusk of a winter's afternoon was closing over London, when a carriage drew up in front of Mr. Goren's shop, out of which, to Mr. Goren's chagrin, a lady stepped, with her veil down. The lady entered, and said that she wished to speak to Mr. Harrington. Mr. Goren made way for her to his pupil; and was amazed to see her fall into his arms, and hardly gratified to hear her say: 'Pardon me, darling, for coming to you in this place.'

Evan asked permission to occupy the parlour.

'My place,' said Mr. Goren, with humble severity, over his spectacles, 'is very poor. Such as it is, it is at the lady's service.'

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Alone with her, Evan was about to ease his own feelings by remarking to the effect that Mr. Goren was human like the rest of us, but Caroline cried, with unwonted vivacity:—

‘Yes, yes, I know; but I thought only of you. I have such news for you! You will and must pardon my coming—that’s my first thought, sensitive darling that you are!’ She kissed him fondly. ‘Juliana Bonner is in town, staying with us!’

‘Is that your news?’ asked Evan, pressing her against his breast.

‘No, dear love—but still! You have no idea what her fortune—Mrs. Bonner has died and left her—but I mustn’t tell you. Oh, my darling! how she admires you! She—she could recompense you; if you would! We will put that by, for the present. Dear! the Duke has begged you, through me, to accept—I think it’s to be a sort of bailiff to his estates—I don’t know rightly. It’s a very honourable post, that gentlemen take: and the income you are to have, Evan, will be near a thousand a year. Now, what do I deserve for my news?’

She put up her mouth for another kiss, out of breath.

‘True?’ looked Evan’s eyes.

‘True!’ she said, smiling, and feasting on his bewilderment.

After the bubbling in his brain had a little subsided, Evan breathed as a man on whom fresh air is blown. Were not these tidings of release? His ridiculous pride must nevertheless inquire whether Caroline had been begging this for him.

‘No, dear—indeed!’ Caroline asserted with more

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than natural vehemence. 'It's something that you yourself have done that has pleased him. I don't know what. Only he says, he believes you are a man to be trusted with the keys of anything—and so you are. You are to call on him to-morrow. Will you?'

While Evan was replying, her face became white. She had heard the Major's voice in the shop. His military step advanced, and Caroline, exclaiming, 'Don't let me see him!' bustled to a door. Evan nodded, and she slipped through. The next moment he was facing the stiff marine.

'Well, young man,' the Major commenced, and, seating himself, added, 'be seated. I want to talk to you seriously, sir. You didn't think fit to wait till I had done with the Directors to-day. You're devilishly out in your discipline, whatever you are at two and two. I suppose there's no fear of being intruded on here? None of your acquaintances likely to be introducing themselves to me?'

'There is not one that I would introduce to you,' said Evan.

The Major nodded a brief recognition of the compliment, and then, throwing his back against the chair, fired out: 'Come, sir, is this your doing?'

In military phrase, Evan now changed front. His first thought had been that the Major had come for his wife. He perceived that he himself was the special object of his visitation.

'I must ask you what you allude to,' he answered.

'You are not at your office, but you will speak to me as if there was some distinction between us,' said the Major. 'My having married your sister does not reduce me to the ranks, I hope.'

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The Major drummed his knuckles on the table, after this impressive delivery.

‘Hem!’ he resumed. ‘Now, sir, understand, before you speak a word, that I can see through any number of infernal lies. I see that you’re prepared for prevarication. By George! it shall come out of you, if I get it by main force. The Duke compelled me to give you that appointment in my Company. Now, sir, did you, or did you not, go to him and deliberately state to him that you believed the affairs of the Company to be in a bad condition—infamously handled, likely to involve his honour as a gentleman? I ask you, sir, did you do this, or did you not do it?’

Evan waited till the sharp rattle of the Major’s close had quieted.

‘If I am to answer the wording of your statement, I may say that I did not.’

‘Very good; very good; that will do. Are you aware that the Duke has sent in his resignation as a Director of our Company?’

‘I hear of it first from you.’

‘Confound your familiarity!’ cried the irritable officer, rising. ‘Am I always to be told that I married your sister? Address me, sir, as becomes your duty.’

Evan heard the words ‘beggarly tailor’ mumbled: ‘out of the gutters,’ and ‘cursed connection.’ He stood in the attitude of attention, while the Major continued:—

‘Now, young man, listen to these facts. You came to me this day last week, and complained that you did not comprehend some of our transactions and affairs. I explained them to your damned stupidity. You went away. Three days after that, you had an interview

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with the Duke. Stop, sir! What the devil do you mean by daring to speak while I am speaking? You saw the Duke, I say. Now, what took place at that interview?’

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The Major tried to tower over Evan powerfully, as he put this query. They were of a common height, and to do so, he had to rise on his toes, so that the effect was but momentary.

‘I think I am not bound to reply,’ said Evan.

‘Very well, sir; that will do.’ The Major’s fingers were evidently itching for an absent rattan. ‘Confess it or not, you are dismissed from your post. Do you hear? You are kicked in the street. A beggarly tailor you were born, and a beggarly tailor you will die.’

‘I must beg you to stop, now,’ said Evan. ‘I told you that I was not bound to reply: but I will. If you will sit down, Major Strike, you shall hear what you wish to know.’

This being presently complied with, though not before a glare of the Major’s eyes had shown his doubt whether it might not be construed into insolence, Evan pursued:

‘I came to you and informed you that I could not reconcile the cash-accounts of the Company, and that certain of the later proceedings appeared to me to jeopardize its prosperity. Your explanations did not satisfy me. I admit that you enjoined me to be silent. But the Duke, as a Director, had as strong a right to claim me as his servant, and when he questioned me as to the position of the Company, I told him what I thought, just as I had told you.’

‘You told him we were jobbers and swindlers, sir!’

‘The Duke inquired of me whether I would, under

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the circumstances, while proceedings were going on which I did not approve of, take the responsibility of allowing my name to remain——’

‘Ha! ha! ha!’ the Major burst out. This was too good a joke. The name of a miserable young tailor! —‘Go on, sir, go on!’ He swallowed his laughter like oil on his rage.

‘I have said sufficient.’

Jumping up, the Major swore by the Lord, that he *had* said sufficient.

‘Now, look you here, young man.’ He squared his finger before Evan, eyeing him under a hard frown, ‘You have been playing your game again, as you did down at that place in Hampshire. I heard of it—deserved to be shot, by heaven! You think you have got hold of the Duke, and you throw me over. You imagine, I dare say, that I will allow my wife to be talked about to further your interests—you self-seeking young dog! As long as he lent the Company his name, I permitted a great many things. Do you think me a blind idiot, sir? But now she must learn to be satisfied with people who’ve got no titles, or carriages, and who can’t give hundred guinea compliments. You’re all of a piece—a set of . . .’

The Major paused, for half a word was on his mouth which had drawn lightning to Evan’s eyes.

Not to be baffled, he added: ‘But look you, sir. I may be ruined. I dare say the Company will go to the dogs—every ass will follow a Duke. But, mark, this goes on no more. I will be no woman’s cully. Mind, sir, I take excellent care that you don’t traffic in your sister!’

The Major delivered this culminating remark with

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a well-timed deflection of his forefinger, and slightly turned aside when he had done.

You might have seen Evan's figure rocking, as he stood with his eyes steadily levelled on his sister's husband.

The Major, who, whatever he was, was physically no coward, did not fail to interpret the look, and challenge it.

Evan walked to the door, opened it, and said, between his teeth, 'You must go at once.'

'Eh, sir, eh? what's this?' exclaimed the warrior: but the door was open, Mr. Goren was in the shop; the scandal of an assault in such a house, and the consequent possibility of his matrimonial alliance becoming bruited in the newspapers, held his arm after it had given an involuntary jerk. He marched through with becoming dignity, and marched out into the street; and if necks unelastic and heads erect may be taken as the sign of a proud soul and of nobility of mind, my artist has the Major for his model.

Evan displayed no such presence. He returned to the little parlour, shut and locked the door to the shop, and forgetting that one was near, sat down, covered his eyes, and give way to a fit of tearless sobbing. With one foot in the room Caroline hung watching him. A pain that she had never known wrung her nerves. His whole manhood seemed to be shaken, as if by regular pulsations of intensest misery. She stood in awe of the sight till her limbs failed her, and then staggering to him she fell on her knees, clasping his, passionately kissing them.

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Mr. Raikes and his friend Frank Remand, surnamed Franko, to suit the requirements of metre, in which they habitually conversed, were walking arm-in-arm along the drive in Society's Park on a fine frosty Sunday afternoon of midwinter. The quips and jokes of Franko were lively, and he looked into the carriages passing, as if he knew that a cheerful countenance is not without charms for their inmates. Raikes' face, on the contrary, was barren and bleak. Being of that nature that when a pun was made he must perforce outstrip it, he fell into Franko's humour from time to time, but albeit aware that what he uttered was good, and by comparison transcendent, he refused to enjoy it. Nor when Franko started from his arm to declaim a passage, did he do other than make limp efforts to unite himself to Franko again. A further sign of immense depression in him was that instead of the creative, it was the critical faculty he exercised, and rather than reply to Franko in his form of speech, he scanned occasional lines and objected to particular phrases. He had clearly exchanged the sanguine for the bilious temperament, and was fast stranding on the rocky shores of prose. Franko bore this very well, for he, like Raikes in happier days, claimed all the glances of lovely woman as his own, and on his right there flowed a stream of Beauties. At last he was compelled to observe: 'This change is sudden: wherefore so downcast? With tigrine claw thou

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manglest my speech, thy cheeks are like December's pippin, and thy tongue most sour!

'Then of it make a farce!' said Raikes, for the making of farces was Franko's profession. 'Wherefore so downcast! What a line! There! let's walk on. Let us the left foot forward stout advance. I care not for the herd.'

'Tis love!' cried Franko.

'Ay, an' it be!' Jack gloomily returned.

'For ever cruel is the sweet Saldar?'

Raikes winced at this name.

'A truce to banter, Franko!' he said sternly: but the subject was opened, and the wound.

'Love!' he pursued, mildly groaning. 'Suppose you adored a fascinating woman, and she knew—positively knew—your manly weakness, and you saw her smiling upon everybody, and she told you to be happy, and egad, when you came to reflect, you found that after three months' suit you were nothing better than her errand-boy? A thing to boast of, is it not, quotha?'

'Love's yellow-fever, jealousy, methinks,' Franko commenced in reply; but Raikes spat at the emphasized word.

'Jealousy!—who's jealous of clergymen and that crew? Not I, by Pluto! I carried five messages to one fellow with a coat-tail straight to his heels, last week. She thought I should drive my curricule—I couldn't afford an omnibus! I had to run. When I returned to her I was dirty. She made remarks!'

'Thy sufferings are severe—but such is woman!' said Franko. 'Gad, it's a good idea, though.' He took out a note-book and pencilled down a point or two. Raikes watched the process sardonically.

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‘My tragedy is, then, thy farce!’ he exclaimed. ‘Well, be it so! I believe I shall come to song-writing again myself shortly—beneath the shield of Catnach I’ll a nation’s ballads frame. I’ve spent my income in four months, and now I’m living on my curricule. I underlet it. It’s like trade—it’s as bad as poor old Harrington, by Jove! But that isn’t the worst, Franko!’ Jack dropped his voice: ‘I believe I’m furiously loved by a poor country wench.’

‘Morals!’ was Franko’s most encouraging reproof.

‘Oh, I don’t think I’ve even kissed her,’ rejoined Raikes, who doubted because his imagination was vivid. ‘It’s my intellect that dazzles her. I’ve got letters—she calls me clever. By Jove! since I gave up driving I’ve had thoughts of rushing down to her and making her mine in spite of home, family, fortune, friends, name, position—everything! I have, indeed.’

Franko looked naturally astonished at this amount of self-sacrifice. ‘The Countess?’ he shrewdly suggested.

‘I’d rather be my Polly’s prince,
Than yon great lady’s errand-boy!’

Raikes burst into song.

He stretched out his hand, as if to discard all the great ladies who were passing. By the strangest misfortune ever known, the direction taken by his fingers was toward a carriage wherein, beautifully smiling opposite an elaborately reverend gentleman of middle age, the Countess de Saldar was sitting. This great lady is not to be blamed for deeming that her errand-boy was pointing her out vulgarly on a public promenade. Ineffable disdain curled off her sweet olive visage. She turned her head.

‘I’ll go down to that girl to-night,’ said Raikes, with

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compressed passion. And then he hurried Franko along to the bridge, where, behold, the Countess alighted with the gentleman, and walked beside him into the gardens.

‘Follow her,’ said Raikes, in agitation. ‘Do you see her? by yon long-tailed raven’s side? Follow her, Franko! See if he kisses her hand—anything! and meet me here in half an hour. I’ll have evidence!’

Franko did not altogether like the office, but Raikes’ dinners, singular luck, and superiority in the encounter of puns, gave him the upper hand with his friend, and so Franko went.

Turning away from the last glimpse of his Countess, Raikes crossed the bridge, and had not strolled far beneath the bare branches of one of the long green walks, when he perceived a gentleman with two ladies leaning on him.

‘Now, there,’ moralized this youth; ‘now, what do you say to that? Do you call that fair? *He* can’t be happy, and it’s not in nature for *them* to be satisfied. And yet, if I went up and attempted to please them *all* by taking *one* away, the probabilities are that he would knock *me* down. Such is life! We *won’t* be made comfortable!’

Nevertheless, he passed them with indifference, for it was merely the principle he objected to; and, indeed, he was so wrapped in his own conceptions, that his name had to be called behind him twice before he recognized Evan Harrington, Mrs. Strike, and Miss Bonner. The arrangement he had previously thought good, was then spontaneously adopted. Mrs. Strike reposed her fair hand upon his arm, and Juliana, with a timid glance of pleasure, walked ahead in

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Evan's charge. Close neighbourhood between the couples was not kept. The genius of Mr. Raikes was wasted in manœuvres to lead his beautiful companion into places where he could be seen with her, and envied. It was, perhaps, more flattering that she should betray a marked disposition to prefer solitude in his society. But this idea illumined him only near the moment of parting. Then he saw it; then he groaned in soul, and besought Evan to have one more promenade, saying, with characteristic cleverness in the masking of his real thoughts: 'It gives us an appetite, you know.'

In Evan's face and Juliana's there was not much sign that any protraction of their walk together would aid this beneficent process of nature. He took her hand gently, and when he quitted it, it dropped.

'The Rose, the Rose of Beckley Court!' Raikes sang aloud. 'Why, this is a day of meetings. Behold John Thomas in the rear—a tower of plush and powder! Shall I rush—shall I pluck her from the aged stem?'

On the gravel-walk above them Rose passed with her aristocratic grandmother, muffled in furs. She marched deliberately, looking coldly before her. Evan's face was white, and Juliana, whose eyes were fixed on him, shuddered.

'I'm chilled,' she murmured to Caroline. 'Let us go.'

Caroline eyed Evan with a meaning sadness.

'We will hurry to our carriage,' she said.

They were seen to make a little circuit so as not to approach Rose; after whom, thoughtless of his cruelty, Evan bent his steps slowly, halting when she reached

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her carriage. He believed—rather, he knew that she had seen him. There was a consciousness in the composed outlines of her face as she passed: the indifference was too perfect. Let her hate him if she pleased. It recompensed him that the air she wore should make her appearance more womanly; and that black dress and crape-bonnet, in some way, touched him to mournful thoughts of her that helped a partial forgetfulness of wounded self.

Rose had driven off. He was looking at the same spot, where Caroline's hand waved from her carriage. Juliana was not seen. Caroline requested her to nod to him once, but she would not. She leaned back hiding her eyes, and moving a petulant shoulder at Caroline's hand.

'Has he offended you, my child?'

Juliana answered harshly:

'No—no.'

The wheels rolled on, and Caroline tried other subjects, knowing possibly that they would lead Juliana back to this of her own accord.

'You saw how she treated him?' the latter presently said, without moving her hand from before her eyes.

'Yes, dear. He forgives her, and will forget it.'

'Oh!' she clenched her long thin hand, 'I pray that I may not die before I have made her repent it. She shall!'

Juliana looked glitteringly in Caroline's face, and then fell a-weeping, and suffered herself to be folded and caressed. The storm was long subsiding.

'Dearest! you are better now?' said Caroline.

She whispered: 'Yes.'

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‘My brother has only to know you, dear——’

‘Hush! That’s past.’ Juliana stopped her: and, on a deep breath that threatened to break to sobs, she added in a sweeter voice than was common to her, ‘Ah, why—why did you tell him about the Beckley property?’

Caroline vainly strove to deny that she had told him. Juliana’s head shook mournfully at her; and now Caroline knew what Juliana meant when she begged so earnestly that Evan should be kept ignorant of her change of fortune.

Some days after this the cold struck Juliana’s chest, and she sickened. The three sisters held a sitting to consider what it was best to do with her. Caroline proposed to take her to Beckley without delay. Harriet was of opinion that the least they could do was to write to her relatives and make them instantly aware of her condition.

But the Countess said ‘No,’ to both. Her argument was, that Juliana being independent, they were by no means bound to ‘bundle’ her, in her state, back to a place where she had been so shamefully maltreated: that here she would live, while there she would certainly die: that absence of excitement was her medicine, and that here she had it. Mrs. Andrew, feeling herself responsible as the young lady’s hostess, did not acquiesce in the Countess’s views till she had consulted Juliana; and then apologies for giving trouble were breathed on the one hand; sympathy, condolences, and professions of esteem, on the other. Juliana said, she was but slightly ill, would soon recover. Entreated not to leave them before she was

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thoroughly re-established, and to consent to be looked on as one of the family, she sighed, and said it was the utmost she could hope. Of course the ladies took this compliment to themselves, but Evan began to wax in importance. The Countess thought it nearly time to acknowledge him, and supported the idea by a citation of the doctrine, that to forgive is Christian. It happened, however, that Harriet, who had less art and more will than her sisters, was inflexible. She, living in a society but a few steps above Tailor-dom, however magnificent in expenditure and resources, abhorred it solemnly. From motives of prudence, as well as personal disgust, she continued firm in declining to receive her brother. She would not relent when the Countess pointed out a dim, a dazzling prospect, growing out of Evan's proximity to the heiress of Beckley Court; she was not to be moved when Caroline suggested that the specific for the frail invalid was Evan's presence. As to this, Juliana was sufficiently open, though, as she conceived, her art was extreme.

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'Do you know why I stay to vex and trouble you?' she asked Caroline. 'Well, then, it is that I may see your brother united to you all: and *then* I shall go, happy.'

The pretext served also to make him the subject of many conversations. Twice a week a bunch of the best flowers that could be got were sorted and arranged by her, and sent namelessly to brighten Evan's chamber.

'I may do such a thing as this, you know, without incurring blame,' she said.

The sight of a love so humble in its strength and affluence, sent Caroline to Evan on a fruitless errand.

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What availed it, that accused of giving lead to his pride in refusing the heiress, Evan should declare that he did not love her? He did not, Caroline admitted as possible, but he might. He might learn to love her, and therefore he was wrong in wounding her heart. She related flattering anecdotes. She drew tearful pictures of Juliana's love for him; and noticing how he seemed to prize his bouquet of flowers, said:

‘Do you love them for themselves, or the hand that sent them?’

Evan blushed, for it had been a struggle for him to receive them, as he thought, from Rose in secret. The flowers lost their value; the song that had arisen out of them, ‘Thou livest in my memory,’ ceased. But they came still. How many degrees from love gratitude may be, I have not reckoned. I rather fear it lies on the opposite shore. From a youth to a girl, it may yet be very tender; the more so, because their ages commonly exclude such a sentiment, and nature seems willing to make a transition stage of it. Evan wrote to Juliana. Incidentally he expressed a wish to see her. Juliana was under doctor's interdict: but she was not to be prevented from going when Evan wished her to go. They met in the park, as before, and he talked to her five minutes through the carriage window.

‘Was it worth the risk, my poor child?’ said Caroline pityingly.

Juliana cried: ‘Oh! I would give anything to live!’

A man might have thought that she made no direct answer.

‘Don't you think I *am* patient? Don't you think I am *very* patient?’ she asked Caroline winningly, on their way home.

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Caroline could scarcely forbear from smiling at the feverish anxiety she showed for a reply that should confirm her words and hopes.

‘So we must all be!’ she said, and that commonplace remark caused Juliana to exclaim: ‘Prisoners have lived in a dungeon, on bread and water, for years!’

Whereat Caroline kissed her so tenderly that Juliana tried to look surprised, and failing, her thin lips quivered; she breathed a soft ‘hush,’ and fell on Caroline’s bosom.

She was transparent enough in one thing; but the flame which burned within her did not light her through. Others, on other matters, were quite as transparent to her. Caroline never knew that she had as much as told her the moral suicide Evan had committed at Beckley; so cunningly had she been probed at intervals with little casual questions; random interjections, that one who loved him could not fail to meet; petty doubts requiring elucidations. And the Countess, kind as her sentiments had grown toward the afflicted creature, was compelled to proclaim her densely stupid in material affairs. For the Countess had an itch of the simplest feminine curiosity to know whether the dear child had any notion of accomplishing a certain holy duty of the perishable on this earth, who might possess worldly goods; and no hints—not even plain speaking, would do. Julia did not understand her at all.

The Countess exhibited a mourning-ring on her finger, Mrs. Bonner’s bequest to her.

‘How fervent is my gratitude to my excellent departed friend for this! A legacy, however trifling, embalms our dear lost ones in the memory!’

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It was of no avail. Juliana continued densely stupid. Was she not worse? The Countess could not, 'in decency,' as she observed, reveal to her who had prompted Mrs. Bonner so to bequeath the Beckley estates as to 'ensure sweet Juliana's future'; but ought not Juliana to divine it?—Juliana at least had hints sufficient.

Cold Spring winds were now blowing. Juliana had resided no less than two months with the Cogglesbys. She was entreated still to remain, and she did. From Lady Jocelyn she heard not a word of remonstrance; but from Miss Carrington and Mrs. Shorne she received admonishing letters. Finally, Mr. Harry Jocelyn presented himself. In London, and without any of that needful subsistence which a young gentleman feels the want of in London more than elsewhere, Harry began to have thoughts of his own, without any instigation from his aunts, about devoting himself to business. So he sent his card up to his cousin, and was graciously met in the drawing-room by the Countess, who ruffled him and smoothed him, and would possibly have distracted his soul from business had his circumstances been less straitened. Juliana was declared to be too unwell to see him that day. He called a second time, and enjoyed a similar greeting. His third visit procured him an audience alone with Juliana, when, at once, despite the warnings of his aunts, the frank fellow plunged, *medias res*. Mrs. Bonner had left him totally dependent on his parents and his chances.

'A desperate state of things, isn't it, Juley? I think I shall go for a soldier—common, you know.'

Instead of shrieking out against such a debasement

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of his worth and gentility, as was to be expected, Juliana said:

‘That’s what Mr. Harrington thought of doing.’

‘He! If he’d had the pluck he would.’

‘His duty forbade it, and he did not.’

‘Duty! a confounded tailor! What fools we were to have him at Beckley!’

‘Has the Countess been unkind to you, Harry?’

‘I haven’t seen her to-day, and don’t want to. It’s my little dear old Juley I came for.’

‘Dear Harry!’ she thanked him with eyes and hands.

‘Come often, won’t you?’

‘Why, ain’t you coming back to us, Juley?’

‘Not yet. They are very kind to me here. How is Rose?’

‘Oh, quite jolly. She and Ferdinand are thick again. Balls every night. She dances like the deuce. They want me to go; but I ain’t the sort of figure for those places, and besides, I sha’n’t dance till I can lead you out.’

A spur of laughter at Harry’s generous nod brought on Juliana’s cough. Harry watched her little body shaken and her reddened eyes. Some real emotion—perhaps the fear which healthy young people experience at the sight of deadly disease—made Harry touch her arm with the softness of a child’s touch.

‘Don’t be alarmed, Harry,’ she said. ‘It’s nothing—only Winter. I’m determined to get well.’

‘That’s right,’ quoth he, recovering. ‘I know you’ve got pluck, or you wouldn’t have stood that operation.’

‘Let me see: when was that?’ she asked slyly.

Harry coloured, for it related to a time when he had not behaved prettily to her.

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'There, Juley, that's all forgotten. I was a fool—a scoundrel, if you like. I'm sorry for it now.'

'Do you want money, Harry?'

'Oh, money!'

'Have you repaid Mr. Harrington yet?'

'There—no, I haven't. Bother it! that fellow's name's always on your tongue. I'll tell you what, Juley—but it's no use. He's a low, vulgar adventurer.'

'Dear Harry,' said Juliana softly; 'don't bring your aunts with you when you come to see me.'

'Well, then I'll tell you, Juley. It's enough that he's a beastly tailor.'

'Quite enough,' she responded; 'and he is neither a fool nor a scoundrel.'

Harry's memory for his own speech was not quick. When Juliana's calm glance at him called it up, he jumped from his chair, crying: 'Upon my honour, I'll tell you what, Juley! If I had money to pay him to-morrow, I'd insult him on the spot.'

Juliana meditated, and said: 'Then all your friends must wish you to continue poor.'

This girl had once been on her knees to him. She had looked up to him with admiring love, and he had given her a crumb or so occasionally, thinking her something of a fool, and more of a pest; but now he could not say a word to her without being baffled in an elderly-sisterly tone, exasperating him so far that he positively wished to marry her, and coming to the point, offered himself with downright sincerity, and was rejected. Harry left in a passion. Juliana confided the secret to Caroline, who suggested interested motives, which Juliana would not hear of.

'Ah,' said the Countess, when Caroline mentioned

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the case to her, 'of course the poor thing cherishes her first offer. She would believe a curate to be disinterested! But mind that Evan has due warning when she is to meet him. Mind that he is dressed becomingly.'

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Caroline asked why.

'Because, my dear, she is enamoured of his person. These little unhealthy creatures are always attracted by the person. She thinks it to be Evan's qualities. I know better: it is his person. Beckley Court may be lost by a shabby coat!'

The Countess had recovered from certain spiritual languors into which she had fallen after her retreat. Ultimate victory hung still in the balance. Oh! if Evan would only marry this little sufferer, who was so sure to die within a year! or, if she lived (for marriage has often been as a resurrection to some poor female invalids), there was Beckley Court, a splendid basis for future achievements. Reflecting in this fashion, the Countess pardoned her brother. Glowing hopes hung fresh lamps in her charitable breast. She stepped across the threshold of Tailor-dom, won Mr. Goren's heart by her condescension, and worked Evan into a sorrowful mood concerning the invalid. Was not Juliana his only active friend? In return, he said things which only required a little colouring to be very acceptable to her. The game waxed exciting again. The enemy (the Jocelyn party), was alert, but powerless. The three sisters were almost wrought to perform a sacrifice far exceeding Evan's. They nearly decided to summon him to the house: but the matter being broached at table one evening, Major Strike objected to it so angrily that

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they abandoned it, with the satisfactory conclusion that if they did wrong it was the Major's fault.

Meantime Juliana had much on her conscience. She knew Evan to be innocent, and she allowed Rose to think him guilty. Could she bring her heart to join them? That was not in her power: but desiring to be lulled by a compromise, she devoted herself to make his relatives receive him; and on days of bitter winds she would drive out to meet him, answering all expostulations with—'I should not go if he were here.'

The game waxed hot. It became a question whether Evan should be admitted to the house in spite of the Major. Juliana now made an extraordinary move. Having the Count with her in the carriage one day, she stopped in front of Mr. Goren's shop, and Evan had to come out. The Count returned home extremely mystified. Once more the unhappy Countess was obliged to draw bills on the fabulous; and as she had recommenced the system, which was not without its fascinations to her, Juliana, who had touched the spring, had the full benefit of it. The Countess had deceived her before—what of that? She spoke things sweet to hear. Who could be false that gave her heart food on which it lived?

One night Juliana returned from her drive alarmingly ill. She was watched through the night by Caroline and the Countess alternately. In the morning the sisters met.

'She has consented to let us send for a doctor,' said Caroline.

'Her chief desire seems to be a lawyer,' said the Countess.

'Yes, but the doctor must be sent for first.'

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‘Yes, indeed! But it behoves us to prewise that the doctor does not kill her before the lawyer comes.’

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Caroline looked at Louisa, and said: ‘Are you ignorant?’

‘No—what?’ cried the Countess eagerly.

‘Evan has written to tell Lady Jocelyn the state of her health, and——’

‘And that naturally has aggravated her malady!’ The Countess cramped her long fingers. ‘The child heard it from him yesterday! Oh, I could swear at that brother!’

She dropped into a chair and sat rigid and square-jawed, a sculpture of unutterable rage.

In the afternoon Lady Jocelyn arrived. The doctor was there—the lawyer had gone. Without a word of protest Juliana accompanied her ladyship to Beckley Court. Here was a blow!

But Andrew was preparing one more mighty still. What if the Cogglesby Brewery proved a basis most unsound? Where must they fall then? Alas! on that point whence they sprang. If not to Perdition—Tailordom!

CHAPTER XLI

Reveals an Abominable Plot of the Brothers Cogglesby

A lively April day, with strong gusts from the South-west, and long sweeping clouds, saluted the morning coach from London to Lymport. Thither Tailordom triumphant was bearing its victim at a rattling pace, to

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settle him, and seal him for ever out of the ranks of gentlemen: Society, meantime, howling exclusion to him in the background: 'Out of our halls, degraded youth: The smiles of turbaned matrons: the sighs of delicate maids; genial wit, educated talk, refined scandal, vice in harness, dinners sentineled by stately plush: these, the flavour of life, are not for you, though you stole a taste of them, wretched impostor! Pay for it with years of remorse!'

The coach went rushing against the glorious high wind. It stirred his blood, freshened his cheeks, gave a bright tone of zest to his eyes, as he cast them on the young green country. Not banished from the breath of heaven, or from self-respect, or from the appetite for the rewards that are to follow duties done! Not banished from the help that is always reached to us when we have fairly taken the right road: and that for him is the road to Lymport. Let the kingdom of Gilt Gingerbread howl as it will! We are no longer children, but men: men who have bitten hard at experience, and know the value of a tooth: who have had our hearts bruised, and cover them with armour: who live not to feed, but look to food that we may live! What matters it that yonder high-spiced kingdom should excommunicate such as we are? We have rubbed off the gilt, and have assumed the command of our stomachs. We are men from this day!

Now, you would have thought Evan's companions, right and left of him, were the wretches under sentence, to judge from appearances. In contrast with his look of insolent pleasure, Andrew, the moment an eye was on him, exhibited the cleverest impersonation of the dumps ever seen: while Mr. Raikes was from head to

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foot nothing better than a moan made visible. Nevertheless, they both agreed to rally Evan, and bid him be of good cheer.

'Don't be down, Van; don't be down, my boy,' said Andrew, rubbing his hands gloomily.

'I? do I look it?' Evan answered, laughing.

'Capital acting!' exclaimed Raikes. 'Try and keep it up.'

'Well, I hope you're acting too,' said Evan.

Raikes let his chest fall like a collapsing bellows.

At the end of five minutes, he remarked: 'I've been sitting on it the whole morning! There's violent inflammation, I'm persuaded. Another hour, and I jump slap from the summit of the coach!'

Evan turned to Andrew.

'Do you think he'll be let off?'

'Mr. Raikes? Can't say. You see, Van, it depends upon how Old Tom has taken his bad luck. Ahem! Perhaps he'll be all the stricter; and as a man of honour, Mr. Raikes, you see, can't very well——'

'By Jove! I wish I wasn't a man of honour!' Raikes interposed heavily.

'You see, Van, Old Tom's circumstances'—Andrew ducked, to smother a sort of laughter—'are now such that he'd be glad of the money to let him off, no doubt; but Mr. Raikes has spent it, I can't lend it, and you haven't got it, and there we all are. At the end of the year he's free, and he—ha! ha! I'm not a bit the merrier for laughing, I can tell you.'

Catching another glimpse of Evan's serious face, Andrew fell into louder laughter; checking it with doleful solemnity.

Up hill and down hill, and past little homesteads

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shining with yellow crocuses; across wide brown heaths, whose outlines raised in Evan's mind the night of his funeral walk, and tossed up old feelings dead as the whirling dust. At last Raikes called out:

'The towers of Fallowfield,—heigho!'

And Andrew said:

'Now then, Van: if old Tom's anywhere, he's here. You get down at the Dragon, and don't you talk to me, but let me go in. It'll be just the hour he dines in the country. Isn't it a shame of him to make me face every man of the creditors—eh?'

Evan gave Andrew's hand an affectionate squeeze, at which Andrew had to gulp down something—reciprocal emotion, doubtless.

'Hark,' said Raikes, as the horn of the guard was heard. 'Once that sound used to set me caracoling before an abject multitude. I did wonders. All London looked on me! It had more effect on me than champagne. Now I hear it—the whole charm has vanished! I can't see a single old castle. Would you have thought it possible that a small circular bit of tin on a man's person could produce such changes in him?'

'You are a donkey to wear it,' said Evan.

'I pledged my word as a gentleman, and thought it small for the money!' said Raikes. 'This is the first coach I ever travelled on, without making the old whip burst with laughing. I'm not myself. I'm haunted. I'm somebody else.'

The three passengers having descended, a controversy commenced between Evan and Andrew as to which should pay. Evan had his money out; Andrew dashed it behind him; Evan remonstrated.

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'Well, you mustn't pay for us two, Andrew. I would have let you do it once, but——'

'Stuff!' cried Andrew. '*I ain't paying—it's the creditors of the estate, my boy!*'

Evan looked so ingenuously surprised and hurt at his lack of principle, that Andrew chucked a sixpence at a small boy, saying,—

'If you don't let me have my own way, Van, I'll shy my purse after it. What do you mean, sir, by treating me like a beggar?'

'Our friend Harrington *can't* humour us,' quoth Raikes. 'For myself, I candidly confess I prefer being paid for'; and he leaned contentedly against one of the posts of the inn till the filthy dispute was arranged to the satisfaction of the ignobler mind. There Andrew left them, and went to Mrs. Sockley, who, recovered from her illness, smiled her usual placid welcome to a guest.

'You know me, ma'am?'

'Oh, yes! The London Mr. Cogglesby!'

'Now, ma'am, look here. I've come for my brother. Don't be alarmed. No danger as yet. But, mind! if you attempt to conceal him from his lawful brother, I'll summon here the myrmidons of the law.'

Mrs. Sockley showed a serious face.

'You know his habits, Mr. Cogglesby; and one doesn't go against any one of his whimsies, or there's consequences: but the house is open to you, sir. *I don't wish to hide him.*'

Andrew accepted this intelligent evasion of Tom Cogglesby's orders as sufficient, and immediately proceeded upstairs. A door shut on the first landing. Andrew went to this door and knocked. No answer.

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'You may laugh, Mr. Tom,' said Andrew; 'but if poor Harry should find me out, deuce a bit more home for me.'

Old Tom looked at him keenly, and rapped the table. 'Swear you did it, Nan.'

'You promise you 'll keep the secret,' said Andrew.

'Never make promises.'

'Then there's a pretty life for me! I did it for that poor dear boy. You were only up to one of your jokes—I see that. Confound you, Old Tom, you've been making a fool of me.'

The flattering charge was not rejected by Old Tom, who now had his brother to laugh at as well. Andrew affected to be indignant and desperate.

'If you'd had a heart, Tom, you'd have saved the poor fellow without any bother at all. What do you think? When I told him of our smash—ha! ha! it isn't such a bad joke—well, I went to him, hanging my head, and he offered to arrange our affairs—that is——'

'Damned meddlesome young dog!' cried Old Tom, quite in a rage.

'There—you're up in a twinkling,' said Andrew. 'Don't you see he *believed* it, you stupid Old Tom? Lord! to hear him say how sorry he was, and to see how glad he looked at the chance of serving us!'

'Serving us!' Tom sneered.

'Ha!' went Andrew. 'Yes. There. You're a deuced deal prouder than fifty peers. You're an upside-down old despot!'

No sharper retort rising to Old Tom's lips, he permitted his brother's abuse of him to pass, declaring that bandying words was not his business, he not being a Parliament man.

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'How about the Major, Nan? He coming down, too?'

'Major!' cried Andrew. 'Lucky if he keeps his commission. Coming down? No. He's off to the Continent.'

'Find plenty of scamps there to keep him company,' added Tom. 'So he's broke—eh? ha! ha!'

'Tom,' said Andrew seriously, 'I'll tell you all about it, if you'll swear not to split on me, because it would really upset poor Harry so. She'd think me such a beastly hypocrite, I couldn't face her afterwards.'

'Lose what pluck you have—eh?' Tom jerked out his hand, and bade his brother continue.

Compelled to trust in him without a promise, Andrew said: 'Well, then, after we'd arranged it, I went back to Harry, and begged her to have poor Van at the house: told her what I hoped you'd do for him about getting him into the Brewery. She's very kind, Tom, 'pon my honour she is. She was willing, only——'

'Only—eh?'

'Well, she was so afraid it'd hurt her sisters to see him there.'

Old Tom saw he was in for excellent fun, and wouldn't spoil it for the world.

'Yes, Nan?'

'So I went to Caroline. She was easy enough; and she went to the Countess.'

'Well, and she——?'

'She was willing too, till Lady Jocelyn came and took Miss Bonner home to Beckley, and because Evan had written to my lady to fetch her, the Countess—she was angry. That was all. Because of that, you

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know. But yet she agreed. But when Miss Bonner had gone, it turned out that the Major was the obstacle. They were all willing enough to have Evan there, but the Major refused. I didn't hear him. I wasn't going to ask *him*. I mayn't be a match for three women, but man to man, eh, Tom? You'd back me there? So Harry said the Major'd make Caroline miserable, if his wishes were disrespected. By George, I wish I'd known, ^{er} then. Don't ^{er} you think it odd, Tom, now? There's a Duke of Belfield the fellow had hooked into his Company; and—through Evan I heard—the Duke had his name struck off. After that, the Major swore at the ^{er} Duke once or twice, and said Caroline wasn't to go out with him. Suddenly, he insists that she *shall* go. Days the poor thing kept crying! One day, he *makes* her go. She hasn't the spirit of my Harry or the Countess. By good luck, Van, who was hunting ferns for some friends of his, met them on Sunday in Richmond Park, and Van took her away from the Duke. But, Tom, think of Van seeing a fellow watching her wherever she went, and hearing the Duke's coachman tell that fellow he had orders to drive his master and a lady hard on to the sea that night. I don't believe it—it wasn't Caroline! But what do you think of our finding out that beast of a spy to be in the Major's pay? We did. Van put a constable on his track; we found him out, and he confessed it. A fact, Tom! That decided me. If it was only to get rid of a brute, I determined I'd do it, and I did. Strike came to me to get my name for a bill that night. 'Gad, he looked blanker than his bill when he heard of us two bankrupt. I showed him one or two documents I'd got ready. Says he: "Never mind; it'll only be a

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couple of hundred more in the schedule." Stop, Tom! he's got some of our blood. I don't think he meant it. He *is* hard pushed. Well, I gave him a twentier, and he was off the next night. You'll soon see all about the Company in the papers.'

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At the conclusion of Andrew's recital, Old Tom thrummed and looked on the floor under a heavy frown. His mouth worked dubiously, and, from moment to moment, he plucked at his waistcoat, and pulled it down, throwing back his head and glaring.

'I've knocked that fellow over once,' he said. 'Wish he hadn't got up again.'

Andrew nodded.

'One good thing, Nan. He never boasted of our connection. Much obliged to him.'

'Yes,' said Andrew, who was gladly watching Old Tom's change of mood with a quiescent aspect.

'Um!—must keep it quiet from his poor old mother.'

Andrew again affirmated his senior's remarks. That his treatment of Old Tom was sound, he presently had proof of. The latter stood up, and after sniffing in an injured way for about a minute, launched out his right leg, and vociferated that he would like to have it in his power to kick all the villains out of the world: a modest demand Andrew at once chimed in with; adding that, were such a faculty extended to him, he would not object to lose the leg that could benefit mankind so infinitely, and consented to its following them. Then, Old Tom, who was of a practical turn, meditated, swung his foot, and gave one grim kick at the imaginary bundle of villains, discharged them headlong straight into space. Andrew, naturally imitative, and seeing that he had now to

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kick them flying, attempted to excel Old Tom in the vigour of his delivery. No wonder that the efforts of both were heating: they were engaged in the task of ridding the globe of the larger half of its inhabitants. Tom perceived Andrew's useless emulation, and with a sound translated by 'yack,' sent his leg out a long way. Not to be outdone, Andrew immediately, with a still louder 'yack,' committed himself to an effort so violent that the alternative between his leg coming off, or his being taken off his leg, was propounded by nature, and decided by the laws of gravity in a trice. Joyful grunts were emitted by Old Tom at the sight of Andrew prostrate, rubbing his pate. But Mrs. Sockley, to whom the noise of Andrew's fall had suggested awful fears of a fratricidal conflict upstairs, hurried forthwith to announce to them that the sovereign remedy for human ills, the promoter of concord, the healer of feuds, the central point of man's destiny in the flesh—Dinner, was awaiting them.

To the dinner they marched.

Of this great festival be it simply told that the supply was copious and of good quality—much too good and copious for a bankrupt host: that Evan and Mr. John Raikes were formally introduced to Old Tom before the repast commenced, and welcomed some three minutes after he had decided the flavour of his first glass; that Mr. Raikes in due time preferred his petition for release from a dreadful engagement, and furnished vast amusement to the company under Old Tom's hand, until, by chance, he quoted a scrap of Latin, at which the brothers Cogglesby, who would have faced peers and princes without being disconcerted or performing mental genuflexions, shut their

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mouths and looked injured, unhappy, and in the presence of a superior: Mr. Raikes not being the man to spare them. Moreover, a surprise was afforded to Evan. Andrew stated to Old Tom that the hospitality of Main Street, Lympport, was open to him. Strange to say, Old Tom accepted it on the spot, observing, 'You're master of the house—can do what you like, if you're man enough,' and adding that he thanked him, and would come in a day or two. The case of Mr. Raikes was still left uncertain, for as the bottle circulated, he exhibited such a faculty for apt, but to the brothers totally incomprehensible quotation, that they fled from him without leaving him time to remember what special calamity was on his mind, or whether this earth was other than an abode conceived in great jollity for his life-long entertainment.

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Juliana

The sick night-light burned steadily in Juliana's chamber. On a couch, beside her bed, Caroline lay sleeping, tired with a long watch. Two sentences had been passed on Juliana: one on her heart: one on her body: 'Thou art not loved'; and, 'Thou must die.' The frail passion of her struggle against her destiny was over with her. Quiet as that quiet which Nature was taking her to, her body reposed. Calm as the solitary night-light before her open eyes, her spirit was wasting away. 'If I am not loved, then let me die!' In such a sense she bowed to her fate.

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At an hour like this, watching the round of light on the ceiling, with its narrowing inner rings, a sufferer from whom pain has fled looks back to the shores she is leaving, and would be well with them who walk there. It is false to imagine that schemers and workers in the dark are destitute of the saving gift of conscience. They have it, and it is perhaps made livelier in them than with easy people; and therefore, they are imperatively spurred to hoodwink it. Hence, their self-delusion is deep and endures. They march to their object, and gaining or losing it, the voice that calls to them is the voice of a blind creature, whom any answer, provided that the answer is ready, will silence. And at an hour like this, when finally they snatch their minute of sight on the threshold of black night, their souls may compare with yonder shining circle on the ceiling, which, as the light below gasps for air, contracts, and extends but to mingle with the darkness. They would be nobler, better, boundlessly good to all;—to those who have injured them;—to those whom they have injured. Alas! for any definite deed the limit of their circle is immovable, and they must act within it. The trick they have played themselves imprisons them. Beyond it, they cease to be.

Lying in this utter stillness, Juliana thought of Rose; of her beloved by Evan. The fever that had left her blood, had left it stagnant, and her thoughts were quite emotionless. She looked faintly on a far picture. She saw Rose blooming with pleasures in Elburne House, sliding as a boat borne by the river's tide to sea, away from her living joy. The breast of Rose was lucid to her, and in that hour of insight she had clear knowledge of her cousin's heart; how it scoffed

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at its base love, and unwittingly betrayed the power on her still, by clinging to the world and what it would give her to fill the void; how externally the lake was untroubled, and a mirror to the passing day; and how within there pressed a flood against an iron dam. Evan, too, she saw. The Countess was right in her judgement of Juliana's love. Juliana looked very little to his qualities. She loved him when she thought him guilty, which made her conceive that her love was of a diviner cast than Rose was capable of. Guilt did not spoil his beauty to her; his gentleness and glowing manhood were unchanged; and when she knew him as he was, the revelation of his high nature simply confirmed her impression of his physical perfections. She had done him a wrong; at her death news would come to him, and it might be that he would bless her name. Because she sighed no longer for those dear lips and strong arms to close about her tremulous frame, it seemed to her that she had quite surrendered him. Generous to Evan, she would be just to Rose. Beneath her pillow she found pencil and paper, and with difficulty, scarce seeing her letters in the brown light, she began to trace lines of farewell to Rose. Her conscience dictated to her thus, 'Tell Rose that she was too ready to accept his guilt; and that in this as in all things, she acted with the precipitation of her character. Tell her that you always trusted, and that now you know him innocent. Give her the proofs you have. Show that he did it to shield his intriguing sister. Tell her that you write this only to make her just to him. End with a prayer that Rose may be happy.'

Ere Juliana had finished one sentence, she resigned

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the pencil. Was it not much, even at the gates of death, to be the instrument to send Rose into his arms? The picture swayed before her, helping her weakness. She found herself dreaming that he had kissed her once. Dorothy, she remembered, had danced up to her one day, to relate what the maids of the house said of the gentlemen—(at whom, it is known, they look with the licence of cats toward kings); and Dorothy's fresh careless mouth had told how one observant maid, amorously minded, proclaimed of Evan, to a companion of her sex, that, 'he was the only gentleman who gave you an idea of how he would look when he was kissing you.' Juliana cherished that vision likewise. Young ladies are not supposed to do so, if menial maids are; but Juliana did cherish it, and it possessed her fancy. Bear in your recollection that she was not a healthy person. Diseased little heroines may be made attractive, and are now popular; but strip off the cleverly woven robe which is fashioned to cover them, and you will find them in certain matters bearing a resemblance to menial maids.

While the thoughts of his kiss lasted, she could do nothing; but lay with her two hands out on the bed, and her eyelids closed. Then waking, she took the pencil again. It would not move: her bloodless fingers fell from it.

'If they do not meet, and he never marries, I may claim him in the next world,' she mused.

But conscience continued uneasy. She turned her wrist and trailed a letter from beneath the pillow. It was from Mrs. Shorne. Juliana knew the contents. She raised it unopened as high as her faltering hands

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permitted, and read like one whose shut eyes read syllables of fire on the darkness.

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'Rose has at last definitely engaged herself to Ferdinand, you will be glad to hear, and we may now treat her as a woman.'

Having absorbed these words, Juliana's hand found strength to write, with little difficulty, what she had to say to Rose. She conceived it to be neither sublime nor generous: not even good; merely her peculiar duty. When it was done, she gave a long, low sigh of relief.

Caroline whispered, 'Dearest child, are you awake?'

'Yes,' she answered.

'Sorrowful, dear?'

'Very quiet.'

Caroline reached her hand over to her, and felt the paper.

'What is this?'

'My good-bye to Rose. I want it folded now.'

Caroline slipped from the couch to fulfil her wish. She enclosed the pencilled scrap of paper, sealed it, and asked, 'Is that right?'

'Now unlock my desk,' Juliana uttered feebly. 'Put it beside a letter addressed to a law-gentleman. Post both the morning I am gone.'

Caroline promised to obey, and coming to Juliana to mark her looks, observed a faint pleased smile dying away, and had her hand gently squeezed. Juliana's conscience had preceded her contentedly to its last sleep; and she, beneath that round of light on the ceiling, drew on her counted breaths in peace till dawn.

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Have you seen a young audacious spirit smitten to the earth? It is a singular study; and, in the case of young women, a trap for inexperienced men. Rose, who had commanded and managed every one surrounding her since infancy, how humble had she now become!—how much more womanly in appearance, and more child-like at heart! She was as wax in Lady Elburne's hands. A hint of that veiled episode, the Beckley campaign, made Rose pliant, as if she had woven for herself a rod of scorpions. The high ground she had taken; the perfect trust in one; the scorn of any judgement, save her own; these had vanished from her. Rose, the tameless heroine who had once put her mother's philosophy in action, was the easiest filly that turbaned matron ever yet drove into the straight road of the world. It even surprised Lady Jocelyn to see how wonderfully she had been broken in by her grandmother. Her ladyship wrote to Drummond to tell him of it, and Drummond congratulated her, saying, however:—'Changes of this sort don't come of conviction. Wait till you see her at home. I think they have been sticking pins into the sore part.'

Drummond knew Rose well. In reality there was no change in her. She was only a suppliant to be spared from ridicule: spared from the application of the scourge she had woven for herself.

And, ah! to one who deigned to think warmly still

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of such a disgraced silly creature, with what gratitude she turned! He might well suppose love alone could pour that profusion of jewels at his feet.

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Ferdinand, now Lord Laxley, understood the merits of his finger-nails better than the nature of young women: but he is not to be blamed for presuming that Rose had learnt to adore him. Else why did she like his company so much? He was not mistaken in thinking she looked up to him. She seemed to beg to be taken into his noble serenity. In truth she sighed to feel as he did, above everybody!—she that had fallen so low! Above everybody!—born above them, and therefore superior by grace divine! To this Rose Jocelyn had come—she envied the mind of Ferdinand.

He, you may be sure, was quite prepared to accept her homage. Rose he had always known to be just the girl for him; spirited, fresh, and with fine teeth; and once tied to you safe to be staunch. They walked together, rode together, danced together. Her soft humility touched him to eloquence. Say she was a little hypocrite, if you like, when the blood came to her cheeks under his eyes. Say she was a heartless minx for allowing it to be bruited that she and Ferdinand were betrothed. I can but tell you that her blushes were blushes of gratitude to one who could devote his time to such a disgraced silly creature, and that she, in her abject state, felt a secret pleasure in the protection Ferdinand's name appeared to extend over her, and was hardly willing to lose it.

So far Lady Elburne's tact and discipline had been highly successful. One morning, in May, Ferdinand, strolling with Rose down the garden made a positive appeal to her common sense and friendly feeling; by

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which she understood that he wanted her consent to his marriage with her.

Rose answered :

‘ Who would have me ? ’

Ferdinand spoke pretty well, and ultimately got possession of her hand. She let him keep it, thinking him noble for forgetting that another had pressed it before him.

Some minutes later the letters were delivered. One of them contained Juliana’s dark-winged missive.

‘ Poor, poor Juley ! ’ said Rose, dropping her head, after reading all that was on the crumpled leaf with an inflexible face. And then, talking on, long low sighs lifted her bosom at intervals. She gazed from time to time with a wistful conciliatory air on Ferdinand. Rushing to her chamber, the first cry her soul framed was : ‘ He did not kiss me ! ’

The young have a superstitious sense of something incontestably true in the final protestations of the dead. Evan guiltless ! she could not quite take the meaning this revelation involved. That which had been dead was beginning to move within her ; but blindly : and now it stirred and troubled ; now sank. Guiltless ?—all she had thought him ! Oh ! she knew she could not have been deceived. But why, why had he hidden his sacrifice from her ?

‘ It is better for us both, of course, ’ said Rose, speaking the world’s wisdom, parrot-like, and bursting into tears the next minute. Guiltless, and gloriously guiltless ! but nothing—nothing to her !

She tried to blame him. It would not do. She tried to think of that grovelling loathsome position painted to her by Lady Elburne’s graphic hand. Evan dis-

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persed the gloomy shades like sunshine. Then in a sort of terror she rejoiced to think she was partially engaged to Ferdinand, and found herself crying again with exultation, that he had not kissed her: for a kiss on her mouth was to Rose a pledge and a bond.

The struggle searched her through: bared her weakness, probed her strength; and she, seeing herself, suffered grievously in her self-love. Am I such a coward, inconstant, cold? she asked. Confirmatory answers coming, flung her back under the shield of Ferdinand: if for a moment her soul stood up armed and defiant, it was Evan's hand she took.

To whom do I belong? was another terrible question. In her ideas, if Evan was not chargeable with that baseness which had sundered them he might claim her yet, if he would. If he did, what then? Must she go to him?

Impossible: she was in chains. Besides, what a din of laughter there would be to see her led away by him. Twisting her joined hands: weeping for her cousin, as she thought, Rose passed hours of torment over Juliana's legacy to her.

'Why did I doubt him?' she cried, jealous that any soul should have known and trusted him better. Jealous: and I am afraid that the kindling of that one feature of love relighted the fire of her passion thus fervidly. To be outstripped in generosity was hateful to her. Rose, naturally, could not reflect that a young creature like herself, fighting against the world, as we call it, has all her faculties at the utmost stretch, and is often betrayed by failing nature when the will is still valiant.

And here she sat—in chains! 'Yes! I am fit only

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to be the wife of an idle brainless man, with money and a title,' she said, in extreme self-contempt. She caught a glimpse of her whole life in the horrid tomb of his embrace, and questions whether she could yield her hand to him—whether it was right in the eyes of heaven, rushed impetuously to console her, and defied anything in the shape of satisfactory affirmations. Nevertheless, the end of the struggle was, that she felt that she was bound to Ferdinand.

'But this I will do,' said Rose, standing with heat-bright eyes and deep-coloured cheeks before the glass. 'I will clear his character at Beckley. I will help him. I will be his friend. I will wipe out the injustice I did him.' And this bride-elect of a lord absolutely added—that she was unworthy to be the wife of a tailor!

'He! how unequalled he is! There is nothing he fears except shame. Oh! how sad it will be for him to find no woman in his class to understand him and be his helpmate!'

Over this sad subject, of which we must presume her to be accurately cognizant, Rose brooded heavily. By mid-day she gave her Grandmother notice that she was going home to Juliana's funeral.

'Well, Rose, if you think it necessary to join the ceremony,' said Lady Elburne. 'Beckley is bad quarters for you, as you have learnt. There was never much love between you cousins.'

'No, and I don't pretend to it,' Rose answered. 'I am sorry poor Juley's gone.'

'She's better gone for many reasons—she appears to have been a little venomous toad,' said Lady Elburne; and Rose, thinking of a snakelike death-bite

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working through her blood, rejoined: 'Yes, she isn't to be pitied: she's better off than most people.'

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So it was arranged that Rose should go. Ferdinand and her aunt, Mrs. Shorne, accompanied her. Mrs. Shorne gave them their opportunities, albeit they were all stowed together in a carriage, and Ferdinand seemed willing to profit by them; but Rose's hand was dead, and she sat by her future lord forming the vow on her lips that they should never be touched by him.

Arrived at Beckley, she, to her great delight, found Caroline there, waiting for the funeral. In a few minutes she got her alone, and after kisses, looked penetratingly into her lovely eyes, shook her head, and said: 'Why were you false to me?'

'False?' echoed Caroline.

'You knew him. You knew why he did that. Why did you not save me?'

Caroline fell upon her neck, asking pardon. She spared her the recital of facts further than the broad avowal. Evan's present condition she plainly stated: and Rose, when the bitter pangs had ceased, made oath to her soul she would rescue him from it.

In addition to the task of clearing Evan's character, and rescuing him, Rose now conceived that her engagement to Ferdinand must stand ice-bound till Evan had given her back her troth. How could she obtain it from him? How could she take anything from one so noble and so poor! Happily there was no hurry; though before any bond was ratified, she decided conscientiously that it must be done.

You see that like a lithe snake she turns on herself, and must be tracked in and out. Not being a girl to solve the problem with tears, or outright perfidy, she had to

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ease her heart to the great shock little by little: sincere as far as she knew: as far as one who loves may be.

The day of the funeral came and went. The Jocelyns were of their mother's opinion: that for many reasons Juliana was better out of the way. Mrs. Bonner's bequest had been a severe blow to Sir Franks. However, all was now well. The estate naturally lapsed to Lady Jocelyn. No one in the house dreamed of a will, signed with Juliana's name, attested, under due legal forms, being in existence. None of the members of the family imagined that at Beckley Court they were then residing on somebody else's ground.

Want of hospitable sentiments was not the cause that led to an intimation from Sir Franks to his wife, that Mrs. Strike must not be pressed to remain, and that Rose must not be permitted to have her own way in this. Knowing very well that Mrs. Shorne spoke through her husband's mouth, Lady Jocelyn still acquiesced, and Rose, who had pressed Caroline publicly to stay, had to be silent when the latter renewed her faint objections; so Caroline said she would leave on the morrow morning.

Juliana, with her fretfulness, her hand bounties, her petty egoisms, and sudden far-leaping generousities, and all the contradictory impulses of her malady, had now departed utterly. The joys of a landed proprietor mounted into the head of Sir Franks. He was up early the next morning, and he and Harry walked over a good bit of the ground before breakfast. Sir Franks meditated making it entail, and favoured Harry with a lecture on the duty of his shaping the course of his conduct at once after the model of the landed gentry generally.

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'And you may think yourself lucky to come into that catalogue—the son of a younger son!' said Sir Franks, tapping Mr. Harry's shoulder. Harry also began to enjoy the look and smell of land. At the breakfast, which, though early, was well attended, Harry spoke of the adviseability of felling timber here, planting there, and so forth, after the model his father held up. Sir Franks nodded approval of his interest in the estate, but reserved his opinion on matters of detail.

'All I beg of you is,' said Lady Jocelyn, 'that you won't let us have turnips within the circuit of a mile'; which was obligingly promised.

The morning letters were delivered and opened with the customary calmness.

'Letter from old George,' Harry sings out, and buzzes over a few lines. 'Halloa!—Hum!' He was going to make a communication, but catching sight of Caroline, tossed the letter over to Ferdinand, who read it and tossed it back with the comment of a careless face.

'Read it, Rosey?' says Harry, smiling bluntly.

Rather to his surprise, Rose took the letter. Study her eyes if you wish to gauge the potency of one strong dose of ridicule on an ingenuous young heart. She read that Mr. George Uploft had met 'our friend Mr. Snip' riding, by moonlight, on the road to Beckley. That great orbed night of their deep tender love flashed luminously through her frame, storming at the base epithet by which her lover was mentioned, flooding grandly over the ignominies cast on him by the world. She met the world, as it were, in a death-grapple; she matched the living heroic youth she felt him to be, with that dead wooden image of

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him which it thrust before her. Her heart stood up singing like a craven who sees the tide of victory setting toward him. But this passed beneath her eyelids. When her eyes were lifted, Ferdinand could have discovered nothing in them to complain of, had his suspicions been light to raise: nor could Mrs. Shorne perceive that there was the opening for a shrewd bodkin-thrust. Rose had got a mask at last: her colour, voice, expression, were perfectly at command. She knew it to be a cowardice to wear any mask: but she had been burnt, horribly burnt: how much so you may guess from the supple dissimulation of such a bold clear-visaged girl. She conquered the sneers of the world in her soul: but her sensitive skin was yet alive to the pangs of the scorching it had been subjected to when weak, helpless, and betrayed by Evan, she stood with no philosophic parent to cry fair play for her, among the skilful torturers of Elburne House.

Sir Franks had risen and walked to the window.

‘News?’ said Lady Jocelyn, wheeling round in her chair.

The one eyebrow up of the easy-going baronet signified trouble of mind. He finished his third perusal of a letter that appeared to be written in a remarkably plain legal hand, and looking as men do when their intelligences are just equal to the comprehension or expression of an oath, handed the letter to his wife, and observed that he should be found in the library. Nevertheless he waited first to mark its effect on Lady Jocelyn. At one part of the document her forehead wrinkled slightly.

‘Doesn’t sound like a joke!’ he said.

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She answered:

‘No.’

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Sir Franks, apparently quite satisfied by her ready response, turned on his heel and left the room quickly.

An hour afterward it was rumoured and confirmed that Juliana Bonner had willed all the worldly property she held in her own right, comprising Beckley Court, to Mr. Evan Harrington, of Lymport, tailor. An abstract of the will was forwarded. The lawyer went on to say, that he had conformed to the desire of the testatrix in communicating the existence of the aforesaid will six days subsequent to her death, being the day after her funeral.

There had been railing and jeering at the Countess de Saldar, the clever outwitted exposed adventuress, at Elburne House and Beckley Court. What did the crowing cleverer aristocrats think of her now?

On Rose the blow fell bitterly. Was Evan also a foul schemer? Was he of a piece with his intriguing sister? His close kinship with the Countess had led her to think baseness possible to him when it was confessed by his own mouth once. She heard black names cast at him and the whole of the great Mel's brood, and incapable of quite disbelieving them merited, unable to challenge and rebut them, she dropped into her recent state of self-contempt: into her lately-instilled doubt whether it really was in Nature's power, unaided by family-portraits, coats-of-arms, ball-room practice, and at least one small phial of Essence of Society, to make a Gentleman.

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This, if you have done me the favour to read it aright, has been a chronicle of desperate heroism on the part of almost all the principal personages represented. But not the Countess de Saldar, scaling the embattled fortress of Society; nor Rose, tossing its keys to her lover from the shining turret-tops; nor Evan, keeping bright the lamp of self-respect in his bosom against South wind and East; none excel friend Andrew Cogglesby, who, having fallen into Old Tom's plot to humiliate his wife and her sisters, simply for Evan's sake, and without any distinct notion of the terror, confusion, and universal upset he was bringing on his home, could yet, after a scared contemplation of the scene when he returned from his expedition to Fallowfield, continue to wear his rueful mask; and persevere in treacherously outraging his lofty wife.

He did it to vindicate the ties of blood against accidents of position. Was he justified? I am sufficiently wise to ask my own sex alone.

On the other side, be it said (since in our modern days every hero must have his weak heel), that now he had gone this distance it was difficult to recede. It would be no laughing matter to tell his solemn Harriet that he had been playing her a little practical joke. His temptations to give it up were incessant and most agitating; but if to advance seemed terrific, there was, in stopping short, an awfulness so overwhelming that Andrew abandoned himself to

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the current, his real dismay adding to his acting powers.

The worst was, that the joke was no longer his: it was Old Tom's. He discovered that he was in Old Tom's hands completely. Andrew had thought that he would just frighten the women a bit, get them down to Lymport for a week or so, and then announce that matters were not so bad with the Brewery as he had feared; concluding the farce with a few domestic fireworks. Conceive his dismay when he entered the house, to find there a man in possession.

Andrew flew into such a rage that he committed an assault on the man. So ungovernable was his passion, that for some minutes Harriet's measured voice summoned him from over the banisters above, quite in vain. The miserable Englishman refused to be taught that his house had ceased to be his castle. It was something beyond a joke, this! The intruder, perfectly docile, seeing that by accurate calculation every shake he got involved a bottle of wine for him, and ultimate compensation probably to the amount of a couple of sovereigns, allowed himself to be lugged up stairs, in default of summary ejection on the point of Andrew's toe into the street. There he was faced to the lady of the house, who apologized to him, and requested her husband to state what had made him guilty of this indecent behaviour. The man showed his papers. They were quite in order. 'At the suit of Messrs. Grist.'

'My own lawyers!' cried Andrew, smacking his forehead; and Old Tom's devilry flashed on him at once. He sank into a chair.

'Why did you bring this person up here?' said Harriet, like a speaking statue.

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‘My dear!’ Andrew answered, and spread out his hand, and waggled his head; ‘My—please!—I—I don’t know. We all want exercise.’

The man laughed, which was kindly of him, but offensive to Mrs. Cogglesby, who gave Andrew a glance which was full payment for his imbecile pleasantry, and promised more.

With a hospitable inquiry as to the condition of his appetite, and a request that he would be pleased to satisfy it to the full, the man was dismissed: whereat, as one delivered of noxious presences, the Countess rustled into sight. Not noticing Andrew, she lisped to Harriet: ‘Misfortunes are sometimes no curses! I bless the catarrh that has confined Silva to his chamber, and saved him from a bestial exhibition.’

The two ladies then swept from the room, and left Andrew to perspire at leisure.

Fresh tribulations awaited him when he sat down to dinner. Andrew liked his dinner to be comfortable, good, and in plenty. This may not seem strange. The fact is stated that I may win for him the warm sympathies of the body of his countrymen. He was greeted by a piece of cold boiled neck of mutton and a solitary dish of steaming potatoes. The blank expanse of tablecloth returned his desolate stare.

‘Why, what’s the meaning of this?’ Andrew brutally exclaimed, as he thumped the table.

The Countess gave a start, and rolled a look as of piteous supplication to spare a lady’s nerves, addressed to a ferocious brigand. Harriet answered: ‘It means that I will have no butcher’s bills.’

‘Butcher’s bills! butcher’s bills!’ echoed Andrew; ‘why, you must have butcher’s bills; why, confound!

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why, you 'll have a bill for this, won't you, Harry? eh? of course!

'There will be no more bills dating from yesterday,' said his wife.

'What! this is paid for, then?'

'Yes, Mr. Cogglesby; and so will all household expenses be, while my pocket-money lasts.'

Resting his eyes full on Harriet a minute, Andrew dropped them on the savourless white-rimmed chop, which looked as lonely in his plate as its parent dish on the table. The poor dear creature's pocket-money had paid for it! The thought, mingling with a rush of emotion, made his ideas spin. His imagination surged deliriously. He fancied himself at the Zoological Gardens, exchanging pathetic glances with a melancholy marmoset. Wonderfully like one the chop looked! There was no use in his trying to eat it. He seemed to be fixing his teeth in solid tears. He choked. Twice he took up knife and fork, put them down again, and plucking forth his handkerchief, blew a tremendous trumpet, that sent the Countess's eyes rolling to the ceiling, as if heaven were her sole refuge from such vulgarity.

'Damn that Old Tom!' he shouted at last, and pitched back in his chair.

'Mr. Cogglesby!' and 'In the presence of ladies!' were the admonishing interjections of the sisters, at whom the little man frowned in turns.

'Do you wish us to quit the room, sir?' inquired his wife.

'God bless your soul, you little darling!' he apostrophized that stately person. 'Here, come along with me, Harry. A wife's a wife, *I* say—hang it! Just

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outside the room—just a second! or up in a corner will do.'

Mrs. Cogglesby was amazed to see him jump up and run round to her. She was prepared to defend her neck from his caress, and refused to go: but the words, 'Something particular to tell you,' awakened her curiosity, which urged her to compliance. She rose and went with him to the door.

'Well, sir; what is it?'

No doubt he was acting under a momentary weakness: he was about to betray the plot and take his chance of forgiveness: but her towering port, her commanding aspect, restored his courage. (There may be a contrary view of the case.) He enclosed her briskly in a connubial hug, and remarked with mad ecstasy: 'What a duck you are, Harry! What a likeness between you and your mother.'

Mrs. Cogglesby disengaged herself imperiously. Had he called her aside for this gratuitous insult? Contrite, he saw his dreadful error.

'Harry! I declare!' was all he was allowed to say. Mrs. Cogglesby marched back to her chair, and recommenced the repast in majestic silence.

Andrew sighed; he attempted to do the same. He stuck his fork in the blanched whiskerage of his marmoset, and exclaimed: 'I can't!'

He was unnoticed.

'*You* do not object to plain diet?' said Harriet to Louisa.

'Oh, no, in verity!' murmured the Countess. 'How-ever plain it be! Absence of appetite, dearest. You are aware I partook of luncheon at mid-day with the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Duffian. You must not

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look condemnation at your Louy for that. Luncheon is not conversion!’

Harriet observed that this might be true; but still, to her mind, it was a mistake to be too intimate with dangerous people. ‘And besides,’ she added, ‘Mr. Duffian is no longer “the Reverend.” We deprive all renegades of their spiritual titles. His worldly ones let him keep!’

Her superb disdain nettled the Countess.

‘Dear Harriet!’ she said, with less languor, ‘You are utterly and totally and entirely mistaken. I tell you so positively. Renegade! The application of such a word to such a man! Oh! and it is false, Harriet: quite! Renegade means one who has gone over to the Turks, my dear. I am most certain I saw it in Johnson’s Dictionary, or an improvement on Johnson, by a more learned author. But there is the fact, if Harriet can only bring her—shall I say stiff-necked prejudices to envisage it?’

Harriet granted her sister permission to apply the phrases she stood in need of, without impeaching her intimacy with the most learned among lexicographers.

‘And is there no such thing as being too severe?’ the Countess resumed. ‘What our enemies call unchristian!’

‘Mr. Duffian has no cause to complain of us,’ said Harriet.

‘Nor does he do so, dearest. Calumny may assail him; you may utterly denude him——’

‘Adam!’ interposed Andrew, distractedly listening. He did not disturb the Countess’s flow.

‘You may vilify and victimize Mr. Duffian, and strip

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him of the honours of his birth, but, like the Martyrs, he will still continue the perfect nobleman. Stoned, I assure you that Mr. Duffian would preserve his breeding. In character he is exquisite; a polish to defy misfortune.'

'I suppose his table is good?' said Harriet, almost ruffled by the Countess's lecture.

'Plate,' was remarked in the cold tone of supreme indifference.

'Hem! good wines?' Andrew asked, waking up a little, and not wishing to be excluded altogether.

'All is of the very best,' the Countess pursued her eulogy, not looking at him.

'Don't you think you could—eh, Harry?—manage a pint for me, my dear?' Andrew humbly petitioned. 'This cold water—ha! ha! my stomach don't like cold bathing.'

His wretched joke rebounded from the impenetrable armour of the ladies.

'The wine-cellar is locked,' said his wife. 'I have sealed up the key till an inventory can be taken by some agent of the creditors.'

'What creditors?' roared Andrew.

'You can have some of the servants' beer,' Mrs. Cogglesby appended.

Andrew studied her face to see whether she really was not hoisting him with his own petard. Perceiving that she was sincerely acting according to her sense of principle, he fumed, and departed to his privacy, unable to stand it any longer.

Then like a kite the Countess pounced upon his character. Would the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Duffian decline to participate in the sparest provender?

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Would *he* be guilty of the discourtesy of leaving table without a bow or an apology, even if reduced to extremest poverty? No, indeed! which showed that, under all circumstances, a gentleman was a gentleman. And, oh! how she pitied her poor Harriet—eternally tied to a most vulgar little man, without the gilding of wealth.

‘And a fool in his business to boot, dear!’

‘These comparisons do no good,’ said Harriet. ‘Andrew at least is not a renegade, and never shall be while I live. I will do my duty by him, however poor we are. And now, Louisa, putting my husband out of the question, what are your intentions? I don’t understand bankruptcy, but I imagine they can do nothing to wife and children. My little ones must have a roof over their heads; and, besides, there is little Maxwell. You decline to go down to Lympport, of course.’

‘Decline!’ cried the Countess melodiously; ‘and do not you?’

‘As far as I am concerned—yes. But I am not to think of myself.’

The Countess meditated, and said: ‘Dear Mr. Duffian has offered me his hospitality. *Renegades* are not absolutely *inhuman*. They *may* be *generous*. I have no moral doubt that Mr. Duffian would, upon my representation—dare I venture?’

‘Sleep in his house! break bread with him!’ exclaimed Harriet. ‘What do you think I am made of? I would perish—go to the workhouse, rather!’

‘I see you trooping there,’ said the Countess, intent on the vision.

‘And have you accepted his invitation for yourself, Louisa?’

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The Countess was never to be daunted by threatening aspects. She gave her affirmative with calmness and a deliberate smile.

‘You are going to live with him?’

‘Live with him! What expressions! My husband accompanies me.’

Harriet drew up.

‘I know nothing, Louisa, that could give me more pain.’

The Countess patted Harriet’s knee. ‘It succeeds to bankruptcy, assuredly. But would you have me drag Silva to the—the shop, Harriet, love? Alternatives!’

Mrs. Andrew got up and rang the bell to have the remains of their dinner removed. When this was done, she said,—

‘Louisa, I don’t know whether I am justified: you told me to-day I might keep my jewels, trinkets, and lace, and such like. To *me*, I know they do not belong now: but I will dispose of them to procure you an asylum somewhere—they will fetch, I should think, four hundred pounds,—to prevent your going to Mr. Duffian.’

No exhibition of great-mindedness which the Countess could perceive, ever found her below it.

‘Never, love, never!’ she said.

‘Then, will you go to Evan?’

‘Evan? I hate him!’ The olive-hued visage was dark. It brightened as she added, ‘At least as much as my religious sentiments permit me to. A boy who has thwarted me at every turn!—disgraced us! Indeed, I find it difficult to pardon you the supposition of such a possibility as your own consent to look on him ever again, Harriet.’

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'You have no children,' said Mrs. Andrew.

The Countess mournfully admitted it.

'There lies your danger with Mr. Duffian, Louisa!'

'What! do you doubt my virtue?' asked the Countess.

'Pish! I fear something different. You understand me. Mr. Duffian's moral reputation is none of the best, perhaps.'

'That was before he *renegaded*,' said the Countess.

Harriet bluntly rejoined: 'You will leave that house a Roman Catholic.'

'Now you have spoken,' said the Countess, pluming. 'Now let me explain myself. My dear, I have fought worldly battles too long and too earnestly. I am rightly punished. I do but quote Herbert Duffian's own words: he is no flatterer—though you say he has such soft fingers. I am now engaged in a spiritual contest. He is very wealthy! I have resolved to rescue back to our Church what can benefit the flock of which we form a portion, so exceedingly!'

At this revelation of the Countess's spiritual contest, Mrs. Andrew shook a worldly head.

'You have no chance with men there, Louisa.'

'My Harriet complains of female weakness!'

'Yes. We are strong in our own element, Louisa. Don't be tempted out of it.'

Sublime, the Countess rose:

'Element! am I to be confined to one? What but spiritual solaces could assist me to live, after the degradations I have had heaped on me? I renounce the world. I turn my sight to realms where caste is unknown. I feel no shame *there* of being a tailor's daughter. You see, I can bring my tongue to name



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the thing in its actuality. Once, that member would have *blistered*. Confess to me that, in spite of your children, you are tempted to howl at the idea of Lymport——'

The Countess paused, and like a lady about to fire off a gun, appeared to tighten her nerves, crying out rapidly—

'Shop! Shears! Geese! Cabbage! Snip! Nine to a man!'

Even as the silence after explosions of cannon, that which reigned in the room was deep and dreadful.

'See,' the Countess continued, 'you are horrified: you shudder. I name all our titles, and if I wish to be red in my cheeks, I must rouge. It is, in verity, as if my senseless clay were pelted, as we heard of Evan at his first Lymport boys' school. You remember when he told us the story? He lisped a trifle then. "I'm the thon of a thnip." Oh! it was hell-fire to us, then; but now, what do I feel? Why, I avowed it to Herbert Duffian openly, and he said, that the misfortune of dear Papa's birth did not the less enable him to proclaim himself *in conduct* a nobleman's offspring—'

'Which he never was.' Harriet broke the rhapsody in a monotonous low tone: the Countess was not compelled to hear:

'—and that a large outfitter—one of the *very* largest, was in reality a merchant, whose daughters have often wedded nobles of the land, and become ancestresses! Now, Harriet, do you see what a truly religious mind can do for us in the way of comfort? Oh! I bow in gratitude to Herbert Duffian. I will not rest till I have led him back to our fold, recovered from his error. He was our own preacher and pastor. He quitted

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us from conviction. He shall return to us from conviction.'

The Countess quoted texts, which I respect, and will not repeat. She descanted further on spiritualism, and on the balm that it was to tailors and their offspring; to all outcasts from Society.

Overpowered by her, Harriet thus summed up her opinions: 'You were always self-willed, Louisa.'

'Say, full of sacrifice, if you would be just,' added the Countess; 'and the victim of basest ingratitude.'

'Well, you are in a dangerous path, Louisa.'

Harriet had the last word, which usually the Countess was not disposed to accord; but now she knew herself strengthened to do so, and was content to smile pityingly on her sister.

Full upon them in this frame of mind, arrived Caroline's great news from Beckley.

It was then that the Countess's conduct proved a memorable refutation of cynical philosophy; she rejoiced in the good fortune of him who had offended her! Though he was not crushed and annihilated (as he deserved to be) by the wrong he had done, the great-hearted woman pardoned him!

Her first remark was: 'Let him thank me for it or not, I will lose no moment in hastening to load him with my congratulations.'

Presently she joked Andrew, and defended him from Harriet now.

'So we are not *all* bankrupts, you see, dear brother-in-law.'

Andrew had become so demoralized by his own plot, that in every turn of events he scented a similar piece of human ingenuity. Harriet was angry with his dis-

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belief, or say, the grudging credit he gave to the glorious news. Notwithstanding her calmness, the thoughts of Lympport had sickened her soul, and it was only for the sake of her children, and from a sense of the dishonesty of spending a farthing of the money belonging, as she conceived, to the creditors, that she had consented to go.

‘I see your motive, Mr. Cogglesby,’ she observed. ‘Your measures are disconcerted. I will remain here till my brother gives me shelter.’

‘Oh, that’ll do, my love; that’s all I want,’ said Andrew sincerely.

‘Both of you, fools!’ the Countess interjected. ‘Know you Evan so little? He will receive us anywhere: his arms are open to his kindred: but to his heart the road is through humiliation, and it is to his heart we seek admittance.’

‘What do you mean?’ Harriet inquired.

‘Just this,’ the Countess answered in bold English: and her eyes were lively, her figure elastic: ‘We must all of us go down to the old shop and shake his hand there—every man Jack of us!—I’m only quoting the sailors, Harriet—and that’s the way to win him.’

She snapped her fingers, laughing. Harriet stared at her, and so did Andrew, though for a different reason. She seemed to be transformed. Seeing him inclined to gape, she ran up to him, caught up his chin between her ten fingers, and kissed him on both cheeks, saying:

‘*You* needn’t come, if you’re too proud, you know, little man!’

And to Harriet’s look of disgust, the cause for which she divined with her native rapidity, she said: ‘What

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does it matter? They *will* talk, but they can't look down on us now. Why, this is my doing!

She came tripping to her tall sister, to ask plaintively: '*Mayn't* I be glad?' and bobbed a curtsey.

Harriet desired Andrew to leave them. Flushed and indignant she then faced the Countess.

'So unnecessary!' she began. 'What can excuse your indiscretion, Louisa?'

The Countess smiled to hear her talking to ^{the} her younger sister once more. She shrugged.

'Oh, if you will keep up the fiction, do. Andrew knows—he isn't an idiot—and to him we can make light of it now. What does anybody's birth matter, who's well off?'

It was impossible for Harriet to take that view. The shop, if not the thing, might still have been concealed from her husband, she thought.

'It mattered to me when *I* was well off,' she said sternly.

'Yes; and to *me* when *I* was; but we've had a fall and a lesson since that, my dear. Half the aristocracy of England spring from shops!—Shall I measure you?'

Harriet never felt such a desire to inflict a slap upon mortal cheek. She marched away from her in a tiff. On the other hand, Andrew was half-fascinated by the Countess's sudden re-assumption of girlhood, and returned—silly fellow! to have another look at her. She had ceased, on reflection, to be altogether so vivacious: her stronger second nature had somewhat resumed its empire: still she was fresh, and could at times be roguishly affectionate; and she patted him, and petted him, and made much of him; slightly railed at him for his uxoriousness and domestic subjection, and

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proffered him her fingers to try the taste of. The truth must be told: Mr. Duffian not being handy, she in her renewed earthly happiness wanted to see her charms in a woman's natural mirror: namely, the face of man: if of man on his knees, all the better: and though a little man is not much of a man, and a sister's husband is, or should be, hardly one at all, still some sort of a reflector he must be. Two or three jests adapted to Andrew's palate achieved his momentary captivation.

He said: 'Gad, I never kissed you in my life, Louy.'

And she, with a flavour of delicate Irish brogue, 'Why don't ye catch opportunity by the tail, then?'

Perfect innocence, I assure you, on both sides.

But mark how stupidity betrays. Andrew failed to understand her, and act on the hint immediately. Had he done so, the affair would have been over without a witness. As it happened, delay permitted Harriet to assist at the ceremony.

'It wasn't your mouth, Louy,' said Andrew.

'Oh, my mouth!—that I keep for my chosen,' was answered.

'Gad you make a fellow almost wish——' Andrew's fingers worked over his poll, and then the spectre of righteous wrath flashed on him—naughty little man that he was! He knew himself naughty, for it was the only time since his marriage that he had ever been sorry to see his wife. This is a comedy, and I must not preach lessons of life here: but I am obliged to remark that the husband must be proof, the sister-in-law perfect, where arrangements exist that keep them under one roof. She may be so like his wife! Or, from the knowledge she has of his circumstances, she

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may talk to him almost as his wife. He may forget that she is not his wife! And then again, the small beginnings, which are in reality the mighty barriers, are so easily slid over. But what is the use of telling this to a pure generation? My constant error is in supposing that I write for the wicked people who begat us.

Note, however, the difference between the woman and the man! Shame confessed Andrew's naughtiness; he sniggered pitiably: whereas the Countess jumped up, and pointing at him, asked her sister what she thought of that. Her next sentence, coolly delivered, related to some millinery matter. If this was not innocence, what is?

Nevertheless, I must here state that the scene related, innocent as it was, and, as one would naturally imagine, of puny consequence, if any, did no less a thing than, subsequently, to precipitate the Protestant Countess de Saldar into the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. A little bit of play!

It seems barely just. But if, as I have heard, a lady has trod on a pebble and broken her nose, tremendous results like these warn us to be careful how we walk. As for play, it was never intended that we should play with flesh and blood.

And, oh, be charitable, matrons of Britain! See here, Andrew Cogglesby, who loved his wife as his very soul, and who almost disliked her sister;—in ten minutes the latter had set his head spinning! The whole of the day he went about the house meditating frantically on the possibility of his Harriet demanding a divorce.

She was not the sort of woman to do that. But one

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thing she resolved to do ; and it was, to go to Lymport with Louisa, and having once got her out of her dwelling-place, never to allow her to enter it, wherever it might be, in the light of a resident again. Whether anything but the menace of a participation in her conjugal possessions could have despatched her to that hateful place, I doubt. She went: she would not let Andrew be out of her sight. Growing haughtier toward him at every step, she advanced to the strange old shop. EVAN HARRINGTON over the door! There the Countess, having meantime returned to her state of womanhood, shared her shudders. They entered, and passed in to Mrs. Mel, leaving their footman, apparently, in the rear. Evan was not visible. A man in the shop, with a yard measure negligently adorning his shoulders, said that Mr. Harrington was in the habit of quitting the shop at five.

‘Deuced good habit, too,’ said Andrew.

‘Why, sir,’ observed another, stepping forward, ‘as you truly say—yes. But—ah! Mr. Andrew Cogglesby? Pleasure of meeting you once in Fallowfield! Remember Mr. Perkins?—the lawyer, not the maltster. Will you do me the favour to step out with me?’

Andrew followed him into the street.

‘Are you aware of our young friend’s good fortune?’ said Lawyer Perkins. ‘Yes. Ah! Well!—Would you believe that any sane person in his condition, now—nonsense apart—could bring his mind wilfully to continue a beggar? No. Um! Well, Mr. Cogglesby, I may tell *you* that I hold here in my hands a document by which Mr. Evan Harrington transfers the whole of the property bequeathed to him to Lady Jocelyn, and that I have his orders to execute it instantly, and

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deliver it over to her ladyship, after the will is settled, probate, and so forth: I presume there will be an arrangement about his father's debts. Now what do you think of that?'

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'Think, sir,—think!' cried Andrew, cocking his head at him like an indignant bird, 'I think he's a damned young idiot to do so, and you're a confounded old rascal to help him.'

Leaving Mr. Perkins to digest his judgement, which he had solicited, Andrew bounced back into the shop.

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Under the first lustre of a May-night, Evan was galloping over the moon-shadowed downs toward Beckley. At the ridge commanding the woods, the park, and the stream, his horse stopped, as if from habit, snorted, and puffed its sides, while he gazed steadily across the long lighted vale. Soon he began to wind down the glaring chalk-track, and reached grass levels. Here he broke into a round pace, till, gaining the first straggling cottages of the village, he knocked the head of his whip against the garden-gate of one, and a man came out, who saluted him, and held the reins.

'Animal does work, sir,' said the man.

Evan gave directions for it to be looked to, and went on to the doorway, where he was met by a young woman. She uttered a respectful greeting, and begged him to enter.

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The door closed, he flung himself into a chair, and said: 'Well, Susan, how is the child?'

'Oh! he's always well, Mr. Harrington; he don't know the tricks o' trouble yet.'

'Will Polly be here soon?'

'At a quarter after nine she said, sir.'

Evan bade her sit down. After examining her features quietly, he said:

'I'm glad to see you here, Susan. You don't regret that you followed my advice?'

'No, sir; now it's over, I don't. Mother's kind enough, and father doesn't mention anything. She's a-bed with bile—father's out.'

'But what? There's something on your mind.'

'I shall cry, if I begin, Mr. Harrington.'

'See how far you can get without.'

'Oh! sir, then,' said Susan, on a sharp rise of her bosom, 'it ain't my fault. I wouldn't cause trouble to Mr. Harry, or any friend of yours; but, sir, father have got hold of his letters to me, and he says, there's a promise in 'em—least, one of 'em; and it's as good as law, he says—he heard it in a public-house; and he's gone over to Fall'field to a law-gentleman there.' Susan was compelled to give way to some sobs. 'It ain't for me father does it, sir,' she pleaded. 'I tried to stop him, knowing how it'd vex you, Mr. Harrington; but he's heady about points, though a quiet man ordinary; and he says he don't expect—and I know now no gentleman'd marry such as me—I ain't such a stupid gaper at words as I used to be; but father says it's for the child's sake, and he does it to have him provided for. Please, don't ye be angry with me, sir.'

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Susan's half-controlled spasms here got the better of her.

While Evan was awaiting the return of her calmer senses, the latch was lifted, and Polly appeared.

'At it again!' was her sneering comment, after a short survey of her apron-screened sister; and then she bobbed to Evan.

'It's whimper, whimper, and squeak, squeak, half their lives with some girls. After that they go wondering they can't see to thread a needle! The neighbours, I suppose. I should like to lift the top off some o' *their* houses. I hope I haven't kept you, sir.'

'No, Polly,' said Evan; 'but you must be charitable, or I shall think you want a lesson yourself. Mr. Raikes tells me you want to see me. What is it? You seem to be correspondents.'

Polly replied: 'Oh, no, Mr. Harrington: only accidental ones—when something particular's to be said. And he dances-like on the paper, so that you can't help laughing. Isn't he a very eccentric gentleman, sir?'

'Very,' said Evan. 'I've no time to lose, Polly.'

'Here, you must go,' the latter called to her sister. 'Now pack at once, Sue. Do rout out, and do leave off thinking you've got a candle at your eyes, for Goodness' sake!'

Susan was too well accustomed to Polly's usage to complain. She murmured a gentle 'Good night, sir,' and retired. Whereupon Polly exclaimed: 'Bless her poor dear soft heart! It's us hard ones that get on best in the world. I'm treated better than her, Mr. Harrington, and I know I ain't worth half of her. It goes nigh to make one religious, only to see how

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exactly like Scripture is the way Beckley treats her, whose only sin is her being so soft as to believe in a man! Oh, dear! Mr. Harrington! I wish I had good news for you.'

In spite of all his self-control, Evan breathed quickly and looked eagerly.

'Speak it out, Polly.'

'Oh, dear! I must, I suppose,' Polly answered. 'Mr. Laxley's become a lord now, Mr. Harrington.'

Evan tasted in his soul the sweets of contrast.

'Well?'

'And my Miss Rose—she——'

'What?'

Moved by the keen hunger of his eyes, Polly hesitated. Her face betrayed a sudden change of mind.

'Wants to see you, sir,' she said resolutely.

'To see me?'

Evan stood up, so pale that Polly was frightened.

'Where is she? Where can I meet her?'

'Please don't take it so, Mr. Harrington.'

Evan commanded her to tell him what her mistress had said.

Now up to this point Polly had spoken truth. She was positive her mistress did want to see him. Polly, also, with a maiden's tender guile, desired to bring them together for once, though it were for the last time, and for no good on earth. She had been about to confide to him her young mistress's position toward Lord Laxley, when his sharp interrogation stopped her. Shrinking from absolute invention, she remarked that of course she could not exactly remember Miss Rose's words; which seemed indeed too much to expect of her.

'She will see me to-night?' said Evan.

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‘I don’t know about to-night,’ Polly replied.

‘Go to her instantly. Tell her I am ready. I will be at the West park-gates. This is why you wrote, Polly? Why did you lose time? Don’t delay, my good girl! Come!’

Evan had opened the door. He would not allow Polly an instant for expostulation; but drew her out, saying, ‘You will attend to the gates yourself. Or come and tell me the day, if she appoints another.’

Polly made a final effort to escape from the pit she was being pushed into.

‘Mr. Harrington! it wasn’t to tell you this I wrote. Miss Rose is engaged, sir.’

‘I understand,’ said Evan hoarsely, scarcely feeling it, as is the case with men who are shot through the heart.

Ten minutes later he was on horseback by the Fallowfield gates, with the tidings shrieking through his frame. The night was still, and stiller in the pauses of the nightingales. He sat there, neither thinking of them nor reproached in his manhood for the tears that rolled down his cheeks. Presently his horse’s ears pricked, and the animal gave a low neigh. Evan’s eyes fixed harder on the length of gravel leading to the house. There was no sign, no figure. Out from the smooth grass of the lane a couple of horsemen issued, and came straight to the gates. He heard nothing till one spoke. It was a familiar voice.

‘By Jove, Ferdy, here *is* the fellow, and we’ve been all the way to Lymport!’

Evan started from his trance.

‘It’s you, Harrington?’

‘Yes, Harry.’

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'Sir!' exclaimed that youth, evidently flushed with wine, 'what the devil do you mean by addressing me by my Christian name?'

Laxley pushed his horse's head in front of Harry. In a manner apparently somewhat improved by his new dignity, he said: 'We have ridden to Lymport to speak to you, sir. Favour me by moving a little ahead of the lodge.'

Evan bowed, and moved beside him a short way down the lane, Harry following.

'The purport of my visit, sir,' Laxley began, 'was to make known to you that Miss Jocelyn has done me the honour to accept me as her husband. I learn from her that during the term of your residence in the house, you contrived to extract from her a promise to which she attaches certain scruples. She pleases to consider herself bound to you till you release her. My object is to demand that you will do so immediately.'

There was no reply.

'Should you refuse to make this reparation for the harm you have done to her and her family,' Laxley pursued, 'I must let you know that there are means of compelling you to it, and that those means will be employed.'

Harry, fuming at these postured sentences, burst out: 'What do you talk to the fellow in that way for? A fellow who makes a fool of my cousin, and then wants to get us to buy off my sister! What's he spying after here? The place is ours till we troop. I tell you there's only one way of dealing with him, and if you don't do it, I will.'

Laxley pulled his reins with a jerk that brought him to the rear.

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‘Miss Jocelyn has commissioned you to make this demand on me in her name?’ said Evan.

‘I make it in my own right,’ returned Laxley. ‘I demand a prompt reply.’

‘My lord, you shall have it. Miss Jocelyn is not bound to me by any engagement. Should she entertain scruples which I may have it in my power to obliterate, I shall not hesitate to do so—but only to her. What has passed between us I hold sacred.’

‘Hark at that!’ shouted Harry. ‘The damned tradesman means money! You ass, Ferdinand! What did we go to Lymport for? Not to bandy words. Here! I’ve got my own quarrel with you, Harrington. You’ve been setting that girl’s father on me. Can you deny that?’

It was enough for Harry that Evan did not deny it. The calm disdain which he read on Evan’s face acted on his fury, and digging his heels into his horse’s flanks he rushed full at him and dealt him a sharp flick with his whip. Evan’s beast reared.

‘Accept my conditions, sir, or afford me satisfaction,’ cried Laxley.

‘You do me great honour, my lord; but I have told you I cannot,’ said Evan, curbing his horse.

At that moment Rose came among them. Evan raised his hat, as did Laxley. Harry, a little behind the others, performed a laborious mock salute, and then ordered her back to the house. A quick altercation ensued; the end being that Harry managed to give his sister the context of the previous conversation.

‘Now go back, Rose,’ said Laxley. ‘I have particular business with Mr. Harrington.’

‘I came to see him,’ said Rose, in a clear voice.

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Laxley reddened angrily.

‘Then tell him at once you want to be rid of him,’ her brother called to her.

Rose looked at Evan. Could he not see that she had no word in her soul for him of that kind? Yes: but love is not always to be touched to tenderness even at the sight of love.

‘Rose,’ he said, ‘I hear from Lord Laxley, that you fancy yourself not at liberty; and that you require me to disengage you.’

He paused. Did he expect her to say there that she wished nothing of the sort? Her stedfast eyes spoke as much: but misery is wanton, and will pull all down to it. Even Harry was checked by his tone, and Laxley sat silent. The fact that something more than a tailor was speaking seemed to impress them.

‘Since I have to say it, Rose, I hold you in no way bound to me. The presumption is forced upon me. May you have all the happiness I pray God to give you. Gentlemen, good night!’

He bowed and was gone. How keenly she could have retorted on that false prayer for her happiness! Her limbs were nerveless, her tongue speechless. He had thrown her off—there was no barrier now between herself and Ferdinand. Why did Ferdinand speak to her with that air of gentle authority, bidding her return to the house? She was incapable of seeing, what the the young lord acutely felt, that he had stooped very much in helping to bring about such a scene. She had no idea of having trifled with him and her own heart, when she talked feebly of her bondage to another, as one who would be warmer to him were she free. Swiftly she compared the two that loved

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her, and shivered as if she had been tossed to the embrace of a block of ice.

'You are cold, Rose,' said Laxley, bending to lay his hand on her shoulder.

'Pray, never touch me,' she answered, and walked on hastily to the house.

Entering it, she remembered that Evan had dwelt there. A sense of desolation came over her. She turned to Ferdinand remorsefully, saying: 'Dear Ferdinand!' and allowed herself to be touched and taken close to him. When she reached her bed-room, she had time to reflect that he had kissed her on the lips, and then she fell down and shed such tears as had never been drawn from her before.

Next day she rose with an undivided mind. Belonging henceforth to Ferdinand, it was necessary that she should invest him immediately with transcendent qualities. The absence of character in him rendered this easy. What she had done for Evan, she did for him. But now, as if the Fates had been lying in wait to entrap her and chain her, that they might have her at their mercy, her dreams of Evan's high nature—hitherto dreams only—were to be realized. With the purposeless waywardness of her sex, Polly Wheedle, while dressing her young mistress, and though quite aware that the parting had been spoken, must needs relate her sister's story and Evan's share in it. Rose praised him like one for ever aloof from him. Nay, she could secretly congratulate herself on not being deceived. Upon that came a letter from Caroline:

'Do not misjudge my brother. He knew Juliana's love for him and rejected it. You will soon have

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proofs of his disinterestedness. Then do not forget that he works to support us all. I write this with no hope save to make you just to him. That is the utmost he will ever anticipate.'

It gave no beating of the heart to Rose to hear good of Evan now: but an increased serenity of confidence in the accuracy of her judgement of persons.

The arrival of lawyer Perkins supplied the key to Caroline's communication. No one was less astonished than Rose at the news that Evan renounced the estate. She smiled at Harry's contrite stupefaction, and her father's incapacity of belief in conduct so singular, caused her to lift her head and look down on her parent.

'Shows he knows nothing of the world, poor young fellow!' said Sir Franks.

'Nothing more clearly,' observed Lady Jocelyn. 'I presume I shall cease to be blamed for having had him here?'

'Upon my honour, he must have the soul of a gentleman!' said the baronet. 'There's nothing he can expect in return, you know!'

'One would think, Papa, you had always been dealing with tradesmen!' remarked Rose, to whom her father now accorded the treatment due to a sensible girl.

Laxley was present at the family consultation. What was his opinion? Rose manifested a slight anxiety to hear it.

'What those sort of fellows do never surprises me,' he said, with a semi-yawn.

Rose felt fire on her cheeks.

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'It's only what the young man is bound to do,' said Mrs. Shorne.

'His duty, aunt? I hope we may all do it!' Rose interjected.

'Championing him again?'

Rose quietly turned her face, too sure of her cold appreciation of him to retort. But yesterday night a word from him might have made her his; and here she sat advocating the nobility of his nature with the zeal of a barrister in full swing of practice. Remember, however, that a kiss separates them: and how many millions of leagues that counts for in love, in a pure girl's thought, I leave you to guess.

Now, in what way was Evan to be thanked? how was he to be treated? Sir Franks proposed to go down to him in person, accompanied by Harry. Lady Jocelyn acquiesced. But Rose said to her mother:

'Will not you wound his sensitiveness by going to him there?'

'Possibly,' said her ladyship. 'Shall we write and ask him to come to us?'

'No, Mama. Could we ask him to make a journey to receive our thanks?'

'Not till we have solid ones to offer, perhaps.'

'He will not let us help him, Mama, unless we have all given him our hands.'

'Probably not. There's always a fund of nonsense in those who are capable of great things, I observe. It shall be a family expedition, if you like.'

'What!' exclaimed Mrs. Shorne. 'Do you mean that you intend to allow Rose to make one of the party? Franks! is that *your* idea?'

Sir Franks looked at his wife.

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‘What harm?’ Lady Jocelyn asked; for Rose’s absence of conscious guile in appealing to her reason had subjugated that great faculty.

‘Simply a sense of propriety, Emily,’ said Mrs. Shorne, with a glance at Ferdinand.

‘You have no objection, I suppose!’ Lady Jocelyn addressed him.

‘Ferdinand will join us,’ said Rose.

‘Thank you, Rose, I’d rather not,’ he replied. ‘I thought we had done with the fellow for good last night.’

‘Last night?’ quoth Lady Jocelyn.

No one spoke. The interrogation was renewed. Was it Rose’s swift instinct which directed her the shortest way to gain her point? or that she was glad to announce that her degrading engagement was at an end? She said: ‘Ferdinand and Mr. Harrington came to an understanding last night, in my presence.’

That, strange as it struck on their ears, appeared to be quite sufficient to all, albeit the necessity for it was not so very clear. The carriage was ordered forthwith; Lady Jocelyn went to dress; Rose drew Ferdinand away into the garden. Then, with all her powers, she entreated him to join her.

‘Thank you, Rose,’ he said; ‘I have no taste for the genus.’

‘For my sake, I beg it, Ferdinand.’

‘It’s really too much to ask of me, Rose.’

‘If you care for me, you will.’

‘Pon my honour, quite impossible!’

‘You refuse, Ferdinand?’

‘My London tailor’d find me out, and never forgive me.’

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This pleasantry stopped her soft looks. Why she wished him to be with her, she could not have said. For a thousand reasons: which implies no distinct one: something prophetically pressing in her blood.

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A Lovers' Parting

Now, to suppose oneself the fashioner of such a chain of events as this which brought the whole of the Harrington family in tender unity together once more, would have elated an ordinary mind. But to the Countess de Saldar, it was simply an occasion for reflecting that she had misunderstood—and could most sincerely forgive—Providence. She admitted to herself that it was not entirely her work; for *she* never would have had their place of meeting to be the Shop. Seeing, however, that her end was gained, she was entitled to the credit of it, and could pardon the means adopted. Her brother lord of Beckley Court, and all of them assembled in the old 193, Main Street, Lympport! What matter for proud humility! Providence had answered her numerous petitions, but in its own way. Stipulating that she must swallow this pill, Providence consented to serve her. She swallowed it with her wonted courage. In half an hour subsequent to her arrival at Lympport, she laid siege to the heart of Old Tom Cogglesby, whom she found installed in the parlour, comfortably sipping at a tumbler of rum-and-water. Old Tom was astonished to meet such an agreeable unpretentious woman, who

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Parting talked of tailors and lords with equal ease, appeared to comprehend a man's habits instinctively, and could amuse him while she ministered to them.

'Can you cook, ma'am?' asked Old Tom.

'All but that,' said the Countess, with a smile of sweet meaning.

'Ha! then you won't suit me as well as your mother.'

'Take care you do not excite my emulation,' she returned graciously, albeit disgusted at his tone.

To Harriet, Old Tom had merely nodded. There he sat, in the arm-chair, sucking the liquor, with the glimpse of a sour chuckle on his cheeks. Now and then, during the evening, he rubbed his hands sharply, but spoke little. The unbending Harriet did not conceal her disdain of him. When he ventured to allude to the bankruptcy, she cut him short.

'Pray, excuse me—I am unacquainted with affairs of business—I cannot even understand my husband.'

'Lord bless my soul!' Old Tom exclaimed, rolling his eyes.

Caroline had informed her sisters upstairs that their mother was ignorant of Evan's change of fortune, and that Evan desired her to continue so for the present. Caroline appeared to be pained by the subject, and was glad when Louisa sounded his mysterious behaviour by saying: 'Evan has a native love of concealment—he must be humoured.'

At the supper, Mr. Raikes made his bow. He was modest and reserved. It was known that this young gentleman acted as shopman there. With a tenderness for his position worthy of all respect, the Countess spared his feelings by totally ignoring his presence;

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whereat he, unaccustomed to such great-minded treatment, retired to bed, a hater of his kind. Harriet and Caroline went next. The Countess said she would wait up for Evan, but hearing that his hours of return were about the chimes of matins, she cried exultingly: 'Darling Papa all over!' and departed likewise. Mrs. Mel, when she had mixed Old Tom's third glass, wished the brothers good night, and they were left to exchange what sentiments they thought proper for the occasion. The Countess had certainly disappointed Old Tom's farce, in a measure; and he expressed himself puzzled by her. 'You ain't the only one,' said his brother, Andrew, with some effort, held his tongue concerning the news of Evan—his fortune and his folly, till he could talk to the youth in person.

All took their seats at the early breakfast next morning.

'Has Evan not come home yet?' was the Countess's first question.

Mrs. Mel replied, 'No.'

'Do you know where he has gone, dear Mama?'

'He chooses his own way.'

'And you fear that it leads somewhere?' added the Countess.

'I fear that it leads to knocking up the horse he rides.'

'The horse, Mama! He is out on a horse all night! But don't you see, dear old pet! his morals, at least, are safe on horseback.'

'The horse has to be paid for, Louisa,' said her mother sternly; and then, for she had a lesson to read to the guests of her son, 'Ready money doesn't come by joking. What will the creditors think? If

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CHAPTER he intends to be honest in earnest, he must give up
XLVI four-foot mouths.'

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'Fourteen-feet, ma'am, you mean,' said Old Tom, counting the heads at table.

'Bravo, Mama!' cried the Countess, and as she was sitting near her mother, she must show how prettily she kissed, by pouting out her playful lips to her parent. 'Do be economical always! And mind! for the sake of the wretched animals, I will intercede for you to be his inspector of stables.'

This, with a glance of intelligence at her sisters.

'Well, Mr. Raikes,' said Andrew, '*you* keep good hours, at all events—eh?'

'Up with the lark,' said Old Tom. 'Ha! 'fraid he won't be so early when he gets rid of his present habits—eh?'

'Nec dierum numerum, ut nos, sed noctium computant,' said Mr. Raikes, and both the brothers sniffed like dogs that have put their noses to a hot coal, and the Countess, who was less insensible to the aristocracy of the dead languages than are women generally, gave him the recognition that is occasionally afforded the family tutor.

About the hour of ten Evan arrived. He was subjected to the hottest embrace he had ever yet received from his sister Louisa.

'Darling!' she called him before them all. 'Oh! how I suffer for this ignominy I see you compelled for a moment to endure. But it is but for a moment. They must vacate; and you will soon be out of this horrid hole.'

'Where he just said he was glad to give us a welcome,' muttered old Tom.

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Evan heard him, and laughed. The Countess laughed too.

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'No, we will not be impatient. We are poor insignificant people!' she said; and turning to her mother, added: 'And yet I doubt not you think the smallest of our landed gentry equal to great continental seigneurs. I do not say the contrary.'

'You will fill Evan's head with nonsense till you make him knock up a horse a week, and never go to his natural bed,' said Mrs. Mel angrily. 'Look at him! Is a face like that fit for business?'

'Certainly, certainly not!' said the Countess.

'Well, Mother, the horse is dismissed,—you won't have to complain any more,' said Evan, touching her hand. 'Another history commences from to-day.'

The Countess watched him admiringly. Such powers of acting she could not have ascribed to him.

'Another history, indeed!' she said. 'By the way, Van, love! was it out of Glamorganshire—were we Tudors, according to Papa? or only Powys chieftains? It's of no moment, but it helps one in conversation.'

'Not half so much as good ale, though!' was Old Tom's comment.

The Countess did not perceive its fitness, till Evan burst into a laugh, and then she said:

'Oh! we shall never be ashamed of the Brewery. Do not fear that, Mr. Cogglesby.'

Old Tom saw his farce reviving, and encouraged the Countess to patronize him. She did so to an extent that called on her Mrs. Mel's reprobation, which was so cutting and pertinent, that Harriet was compelled to defend her sister, remarking that perhaps her mother would soon learn that Louisa was justified in not

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permitting herself and family to be classed too low. At this Andrew, coming from a private interview with Evan, threw up his hands and eyes as one who foretold astonishment but counselled humility. What with the effort of those who knew a little to imply a great deal; of those who knew all to betray nothing; and of those who were kept in ignorance to strain a fact out of the conflicting innuendos the general mystification waxed apace, and was at its height, when a name struck on Evan's ear that went through his blood like a touch of the torpedo.

He had been called into the parlour to assist at a consultation over the Brewery affairs. Raikes opened the door, and announced, 'Sir Franks and Lady Jocelyn.'

Them he could meet, though it was hard for his pride to pardon their visit to him there. But when his eyes discerned Rose behind them, the passions of his lower nature stood up armed. What could she have come for but to humiliate, or play with him?

A very few words enabled the Countess to guess the cause for this visit. Of course, it was to beg time! But they thanked Evan. For something generous, no doubt. Sir Franks took him aside, and returning remarked to his wife that she perhaps would have greater influence with him. All this while Rose sat talking to Mrs. Andrew Cogglesby, Mrs. Strike, and Evan's mother. She saw by his face the offence she had committed, and acted on by one of her impulses, said: 'Mama, I think if I were to speak to Mr. Harrington——'

Ere her mother could make light of the suggestion, Old Tom had jumped up, and bowed out his arm.

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‘Allow me to conduct ye to the drawing-room, upstairs, young lady. He ’ll follow, safe enough!’

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Rose had not stipulated for that. Nevertheless, seeing no cloud on her mother’s face, or her father’s, she gave Old Tom her hand, and awaited a movement from Evan. It was too late to object to it on either side. Old Tom had caught the tide at the right instant. Much as if a grim old genie had planted them together, the lovers found themselves alone.

‘Evan, you forgive me?’ she began, looking up at him timidly.

‘With all my heart, Rose,’ he answered, with great cheerfulness.

‘No. I know your heart better. Oh, Evan! you must be sure that we respect you too much to wound you. We came to thank you for your generosity. Do you refuse to accept anything from us? How can we take this that you thrust on us, unless in some way——’

‘Say no more,’ he interposed. ‘You see me here. You know me as I am, now.’

‘Yes, yes!’ the tears stood in her eyes. ‘Why did I come, you would ask? That is what you cannot forgive! I see now how useless it was. Evan! why did you betray me?’

‘Betray you, Rose?’

‘You said that you loved me once.’

She was weeping, and all his spirit melted, and his love cried out: ‘I said “till death,” and till death it will be, Rose.’

‘Then why, why did you betray me, Evan? I know it all. But if you blackened yourself to me, was it not because you loved something better than me?’

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And now you think me false! Which of us two has been false? It's silly to talk of these things now—too late! But be just. I wish that we may be friends. Can we, unless you bend a little?’

The tears streamed down her cheeks, and in her lovely humility he saw the baseness of that pride of his which had hitherto held him up.

‘Now that you are in this house where I was born and am to live, can you regret what has come between us, Rose?’

Her lips quivered in pain.

‘Can I do anything else but regret it all my life, Evan?’

How was it possible for him to keep his strength?

‘Rose!’ he spoke with a passion that made her shrink, ‘are you bound to this man?’ and to the drooping of her eyes, ‘No. Impossible, for you do not love him. Break it. Break the engagement you cannot fulfil. Break it and belong to me. It sounds ill for me to say that in such a place. But Rose, I will leave it. I will accept any assistance that your father—that any man will give me. Beloved—noble girl! I see my falseness to you, though I little thought it at the time—fool that I was! Be my help, my guide—as the soul of my body! Be mine!’

‘Oh, Evan!’ she clasped her hands in terror at the change in him, that was hurrying her she knew not whither, and trembling, held them supplicatingly.

‘Yes, Rose: you have taught me what love can be. You cannot marry that man.’

‘But, my honour, Evan! No. I do not love him; for I can love but one. He has my pledge. *Can* I break it?’

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The stress on the question choked him, just as his heart sprang to her.

‘Can you face the world with me, Rose?’

‘Oh, Evan! is there an escape for me? Think! Decide! No—no! there is not. My mother, I know, looks on it so. Why did she trust me to be with you here, but that she thinks me engaged to him, and has such faith in me? Oh, help me!—be *my* guide. Think whether you would trust me hereafter! I should despise myself.’

‘Not if you marry him!’ said Evan bitterly. And then thinking as men will think when they look on the figure of a fair girl marching serenely to a sacrifice, the horrors of which they insist that she ought to know:—half-hating her for her calmness—adoring her for her innocence: he said: ‘It rests with you, Rose. The world will approve you, and if your conscience does, why—farewell, and may heaven be your help.’

She murmured, ‘Farewell.’

Did she expect more to be said by him? What did she want or hope for now? And yet a light of hunger grew in her eyes, brighter and brighter, as it were on a wave of yearning.

‘Take my hand once,’ she faltered.

Her hand and her whole shape he took, and she with closed eyes let him strain her to his breast.

Their swoon was broken by the opening of the door, where Old Tom Cogglesby and Lady Jocelyn appeared.

‘Gad! he seems to have got his recompense—eh, my lady?’ cried Old Tom.

However satisfactorily they might have explained the case, it certainly did seem so.

Lady Jocelyn looked not absolutely displeased. Old

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Tom was chuckling at her elbow. The two principal actors remained dumb.

'I suppose, if we leave young people to settle a thing, this is how they do it,' her ladyship remarked.

'Gad, and they do it well!' cried Old Tom.

Rose, with a deep blush on her cheeks, stepped from Evan to her mother. Not in effrontery, but earnestly, and as the only way of escaping from the position, she said: 'I have succeeded, Mama. He will take what I offer.'

'And what's that, now?' Old Tom inquired.

Rose turned to Evan. He bent and kissed her hand.

'Call it "recompense" for the nonce,' said Lady Jocelyn. 'Do you still hold to your original proposition, Tom?'

'Every penny, my lady. I like the young fellow, and she's a jolly little lass—if she means it:—she's a woman.'

'True,' said Lady Jocelyn. 'Considering that fact, you will oblige me by keeping the matter quiet.'

'Does she want to try whether the tailor's a gentleman still, my lady—eh?'

'No. I fancy she will have to see whether a certain nobleman may be one.'

The Countess now joined them. Sir Franks had informed her of her brother's last fine performance. After a short, uneasy pause, she said, glancing at Evan:—

'You know his romantic nature. I can assure you he was sincere; and even if you could not accept, at least——'

'But we *have* accepted, Countess,' said Rose.

'The estate!'

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'The estate, Countess. And what is more, to increase the effect of his generosity, he has consented to take a recompense.'

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'Indeed!' exclaimed the Countess, directing a stony look at her brother. 'May I presume to ask what recompense?'

Rose shook her head. 'Such a very poor one, Countess! He has no idea of relative value.'

The Countess's great mind was just then running hot on estates, and thousands, or she would not have played goose to them, you may be sure. She believed that Evan had been wheedled by Rose into the acceptance of a small sum of money, in return for his egregious gift! With an internal groan, the outward aspect of which she had vast difficulty in masking, she said: 'You are right—he has no head. Easily cajoled!'

Old Tom sat down in a chair, and laughed outright. Lady Jocelyn, in pity for the poor lady, who always amused her, thought it time to put an end to the scene.

'I hope your brother will come to us in about a week,' she said. 'May I expect the favour of your company as well?'

The Countess felt her dignity to be far superior as she responded: 'Lady Jocelyn, when next I enjoy the gratification of a visit to your hospitable mansion, I must know that I am not at a disadvantage. I cannot consent to be twice pulled down to my brother's level.'

Evan's heart was too full of its dim young happiness to speak, or care for words. The cold elegance of the Countess's curtsey to Lady Jocelyn: her ladyship's kindly pressure of his hand: Rose's steadfast look

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into his eyes: Old Tom's smothered exclamation that he was not such a fool as he seemed: all passed dream-like, and when he was left to the fury of the Countess, he did not ask her to spare him, nor did he defend himself. She bade adieu to him and their mutual relationship that very day. But her star had not forsaken her yet. Chancing to peep into the shop, to entrust a commission to Mr. John Raikes, who was there doing penance for his career as a gentleman, she heard Old Tom and Andrew laughing, utterly unlike bankrupts.

'Who'd have thought the women such fools! and the Countess, too!'

This was Andrew's voice. He chuckled as one emancipated. The Countess had a short interview with him (before she took her departure to join her husband, under the roof of the Honourable Herbert Duffian), and Andrew chuckled no more.

CHAPTER XLVII

A year later, the Countess de Saldar de Sanciervo to her sister Caroline

Rome.

'Let the post-mark be my reply to your letter received through the Consulate, and most courteously delivered with the Consul's compliments. We shall yet have an ambassador at Rome—mark your Louisa's words. Yes, dearest! I am here, body and spirit! I have at last found a haven, a refuge, and let those who condemn me compare the peace of their spirits

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with mine. *You* think that you have quite conquered the dreadfulness of our origin. My love, I smile at you! I *know* it to be impossible for the Protestant heresy to offer a shade of consolation. Earthly-born, it rather *encourages* earthly distinctions. It is the sweet sovereign Pontiff alone who gathers all in his arms, not excepting tailors. Here, if they could know it, is their blessed comfort!

‘Thank Harriet for her message. *She* need say nothing. By refusing me her hospitality, when she must have known that the house was as free of creditors as any foreigner under the rank of Count is of soap, she *drove* me to Mr. Duffian. Oh! how I rejoice at her exceeding unkindness! How warmly I forgive her the unsisterly—to say the least—vindictiveness of her unaccountable conduct! Her sufferings will one day be terrible. Good little Andrew supplies her place to me. Why do you refuse his easily afforded bounty? No one need know of it. I tell you candidly, I take double, and the small good punch of a body is only too delighted. But then, *I* can be discreet.

‘Oh! the gentlemanliness of these infinitely maligned Jesuits! They remind me immensely of Sir Charles Grandison, and those frontispiece pictures to the novels we read when girls—I mean in manners and the ideas they impose—not in dress or length of leg, of course. The same winning softness; the same irresistible ascendancy over the female mind! They require virtue for two, I assure you, and so I told Silva, who laughed.

‘But the charms of confession, my dear! I will talk of Evan first. I have totally forgiven him. Attaché to the Naples embassy, sounds tol-lol. In

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such a position I can rejoice to see him, for it permits me to acknowledge him. I am not sure that, *spiritually*, Rose will be his most fitting helpmate. However, it is done, and I did it, and there is no more to be said. The behaviour of Lord Laxley in refusing to surrender a young lady who declared that her heart was with another, exceeds all *I* could have supposed. One of the noble peers among his ancestors must have been a pig! Oh! the Roman nobility! Grace, refinement, intrigue, perfect comprehension of your ideas, wishes—the meanest trifles! Here you have every worldly charm, and all crowned by Religion! This is my true delight. I feel at last that whatsoever I do, I cannot go far wrong while I am within hail of my gentle priest. I never could feel so before.

‘The idea of Mr. Parsley proposing for the beautiful widow Strike! It was indecent to do so so soon—widowed under such circumstances! But I dare say he was as disinterested as a Protestant curate ever can be. Beauty is a good dowry to bring a poor, lean, worldly curate of your Church, and he knows that. Your bishops and arches are quite susceptible to beautiful petitioners, and we know *here* how your livings and benefices are dispensed. What do you intend to do? Come to me; come to the bosom of the old and the only true Church, and I *engage* to marry you to a Roman prince the very next morning or two. That is, if you have no ideas about prosecuting a certain enterprise which *I* should not abandon. In that case, stay. As Duchess of B., Mr. Duffian says you would be cordially welcome to his Holiness, who *may* see women. That absurd report is all nonsense. We do not kiss his toe, certainly, but we have

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privileges equally enviable. Herbert is all charm. I confess he is a little wearisome with his old ruins, and his Dante, the poet. He is quite of my opinion, that Evan will never wash out the trade stain on him until he comes over to the Church of Rome. I adjure you, Caroline, to lay this clearly before our dear brother. In fact, while he continues a Protestant, to *me* he is a *tailor*. But here Rose is the impediment. I know her to be just one of those little dogged minds that are incapable of receiving new impressions. Was it not evident in the way she *stuck* to Evan after I had once brought them together? I am not at all astonished that Mr. Raikes should have married her maid. It is a case of natural selection. But it is amusing to think of him carrying on the old business in 193, and with credit! I suppose his parents are to be pitied; but what better is the creature fit for? Mama displeases me in consenting to act as house-keeper to old Grampus. I do not object to the fact, for it is *prospective*; but she should have insisted on another place of resort than Fallowfield. I do not agree with you in thinking her right in refusing a second marriage. Her age does not shelter her from scandal in your Protestant communities.

‘I am every day expecting Harry Jocelyn to turn up. He was rightly sent away, for to think of the folly Evan put into his empty head! No; he shall have another wife, and Protestantism shall be his forsaken mistress!

‘See how your Louy has given up the world and its vanities! You expected me to creep up to you contrite and whimpering? On the contrary, I never felt prouder. And I am not going to live a lazy life, I

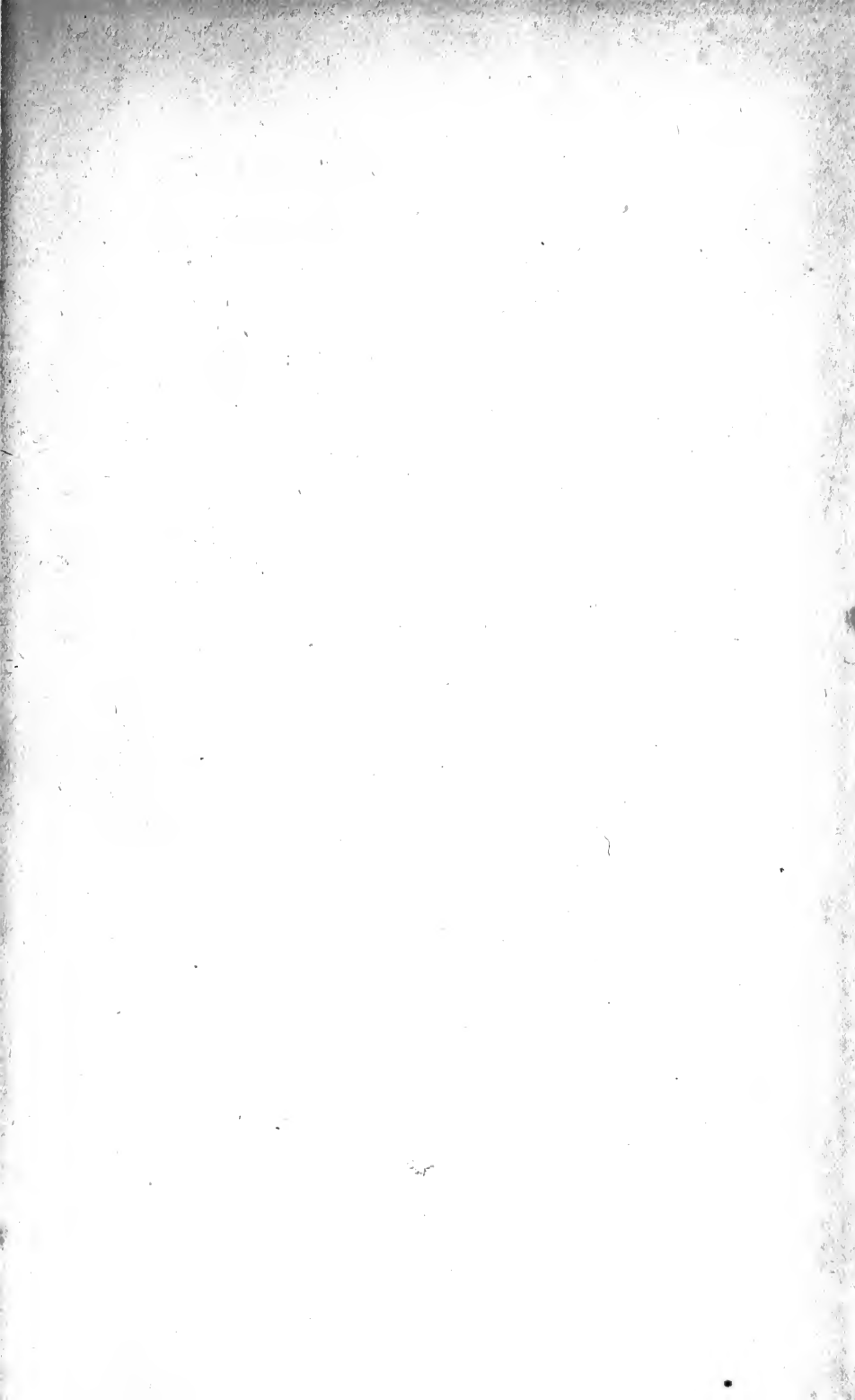
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can assure you. The Church hath need of me! If only for the peace it hath given me on *one* point, I am eternally bound to serve it.

‘Postscript: I am persuaded of this; that it is utterly impossible for a man to be a *true gentleman* who is not of the true Church. What it is I cannot say; but it is as a convert that I appreciate my husband. Love is made to me, dear, for Catholics are human. The other day it was a question whether a lady or a gentleman should be compromised. It required the grossest fib. The gentleman did not hesitate. And why? His priest was handy. Fancy Lord Laxley in such a case. I shudder. This shows that your religion precludes any possibility of the being the *real* gentleman, and whatever Evan may think of himself, or Rose think of him, I *know the thing.*’





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