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THE UNCLASSED.

VOL. II.



# THE UNCLASSED

A Novel

BY

GEORGE GISSING

AUTHOR OF "WORKERS IN THE DAWN."

"Hast du nicht gute Gesellschaft gesehn? Es zeigt uns dein Büchlein  
Fast nur Gaukler und Volk, ja was noch niedriger ist.  
Gute Gesellschaft hab' ich gesehn; man nennt sie die gute  
Wenn sie zum kleinsten Gedicht keine Gelegenheit giebt."—GOETHE.

*IN THREE VOLUMES.—VOL. II.*

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# THE UNCLASSED.

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## BOOK III.

### CHAPTER I.

“THINKING MAKES IT SO.”

OSMOND WAYMARK was light-hearted; and with him such a state meant something not at all to be understood by those with whom lightness of heart is a chronic affection. The man who dwells for long periods face to face with the bitter truths of life learns so to distrust a fleeting moment of joy, gives habitually so cold a reception to the tardy messenger of delight, that, when the bright guest outdares his churlishness and perforce tarries with him, there ensues a passionate revulsion unknown to hearts which open readily to every fluttering illusive bliss. Illusion it of course remains; is

ever recognized as that; but illusion so sweet and powerful that he thanks the god that blinds him, and counts off with sighs of joy the hours thus brightly winged.

He awaited with extreme impatience the evening on which he would again see Ida. Distrustful always, he could not entirely dismiss the fear that his first impressions might prove mistaken in the second interview; yet he tried his best to do so, and amused himself with imagining for Ida a romantic past, for her and himself together a yet more romantic future. In spite of the strange nature of their relations, he did not delude himself with the notion that the girl had fallen in love with him at first sight, and that she stood before him to take or reject as he chose. He had a certain awe of her. He divined in her a strength of character which made her his equal; it might well be, his superior. Take, for instance, the question of the life she was at present leading. In the case of an ordinary pretty and good-natured girl falling in his way as Ida Starr had done, he would have exerted whatever influence he

might acquire over her to persuade her into better paths. Any such direct guidance was, he felt, out of the question here. The girl had independence of judgment; she would resent anything said by him on the assumption of her moral inferiority, and, for aught he knew, with justice. Let me give evidence to you of a self-knowledge greater than your own knowledge of me, and you have no right to take for granted the moral iniquity of any course I choose to pursue. Only then are your instincts (which is the same as saying your powers of moral judgment) more valid for me than my own, when you prove that you have learnt me by heart, have got at my mystery, appreciate every step which has brought me to my present position, and miss no item of the circumstances, internal and external, which constitute my being. And Ida Starr was not so easily conned by rote. Waymark felt, in fact, that, in the proposed friendship between them, he was at least as much on his trial as she. The chances were at least as great that he might prove unworthy of her, as that she should prove unworthy of him.

When he presented himself at the house in the little court by Temple Bar, it was the girl Sally who opened the door to him. She beckoned him to follow, and ran before him up-stairs. The sitting-room presented the same comfortable appearance, and Grim, rising lazily from the hearth-rug, came forward purring a welcome, but Ida was not there.

“She was obliged to go out,” said Sally, in answer to his look of inquiry. “She won’t be long, and she said you was to make yourself comfortable till she came back.”

On a little side-table stood cups and saucers, and a box of cigars. The latter Sally brought forward.

“I was to ask you to smoke, and whether you’d like a cup of coffee with it?” she asked, with the curious *naïveté* which marked her mode of speech.

“The kettle’s boiling on the side,” she added, seeing that Waymark hesitated. “I can make it in a minute.”

“In that case, I will.”

“You don’t mind me having one as well?”

“Of course not.”

“Shall I talk, or shall I keep quiet? I’m not a servant here, you know,” she added, with an amusing desire to make her position clear. “Ida and me’s friends, and she’d do just as much for I.”

“Talk by all means,” said Waymark, smiling, as he lit his cigar. The result was that, in a quarter of an hour Sally had related her whole history. As Ida had said, she came from Weymouth, where her father was a fisherman, and owner of bum-boats, yachts, and other such craft. Her mother kept a laundry, and the family had all lived together in easy circumstances. She herself had come to London—well, just for a change. And what was she doing? Oh, getting her living as best she could. In the day-time she worked in a city workroom.

“And how much do you think I earn a week?” she asked.

“Fifteen shillings or so, I suppose?”

“Ah, that’s all you know about it! Now, last week was the best I’ve had yet, and I made seven shillings.”

“What do you do?”

“Machine work; makin’ ulsters. How much do you think we get, now, for makin’ a ulster—one like this?” pointing to one which hung behind the door.

“Have no idea.”

“Well,—*fourpence*: there now!”

“And how many can you make in a day?”

“I can’t make no more than two. Some make three, but it’s blessed hard work. But I get a little job now and then to do at home.”

“But you can’t live on seven shillings a week?”

“I sh’d think not, indeed. We have to make up the rest as best we can, s’nough.”

“But your employers must know that?”

“In course. What’s the odds? All us girls are the same; we have to keep on the two jobs at the same time. But I’ll give up the day-work before long, s’nough. I come home at night that tired out I ain’t fit for nothing. I feel all eyes, as the sayin’ is. And it’s hard to have to go out into the Strand, when you’re like that.”



“But do they know about all this at home?”

“No fear! If our father knew, he’d be down here precious soon, and the house wouldn’t hold him. But I shall go back some day, when I’ve got a good fit-out.”

The door opened quietly, and Ida came in.

“Well, young people, so you are making yourselves at home.”

The sweet, pure face, the eyes and lips with their contained mirth, the light, perfect form, the graceful carriage,—Waymark felt his pulses throb at the sound of her voice and the touch of her hand.

“You didn’t mind waiting a little for me? I really couldn’t help it. And then, after all, I thought you mightn’t come.”

“But I promised to.”

“Promises, promises, oh dear!” laughed Ida. “Sally, here’s an orange for you.”

“You *are* a duck!” was the girl’s reply, as she caught it, and, with a nod to Waymark, left the room.

“And so you’ve really come,” Ida went on, sitting down and beginning to draw off her gloves.

“You find it surprising? To begin with, I have come to pay my debts.”

“Is there another cup of coffee?” she asked, seeming not to have heard. “I’m too tired to get up and see.”

Waymark felt a keen delight in waiting upon her, in judging to a nicety the true amount of sugar and cream, in drawing the little table just within her reach.

“Mr. Waymark,” she exclaimed, all at once, “if you had had supper with a friend, and your friend had paid the bill, should you take out your purse and pay him back at your next meeting?”

“It would depend entirely on circumstances.”

“Just so. Then the present circumstances don’t permit anything of the kind, and there’s an end of *that* matter. Light another cigar, will you?”

“You don’t dislike the smoke?”

“If I did, I should certainly say so.”

Having removed her outer garments one by one, she rose and took them into the inner room. On reappearing, she went to the sitting-room

door and turned the key in the lock. Then she noticed that the cat had approached her and was purring about her feet.

“My poor old Grim!” she cried, with almost passionate fervour. “To think that I haven’t as much as noticed you! Come and sit on my lap, old darling. Bless his little golden eyes! Do look at his face, Mr. Waymark. Isn’t it the most beautiful face you ever saw?”

“Of animals, I think so.”

“Oh, of animals or people either! I never saw a man’s or woman’s face yet which would bear looking at from all points. There’s always some view of a face which brings out the worst part of the person’s character, though you’re sometimes long before you catch it. But however you look at Grimmy’s face, it’s always the same true, gentle, thoughtful little countenance. How I like animals! Will you go with me some day to the Zoological Gardens? When I was a child, I used to live near Regent’s Park, and often went near the gardens just to hear the sound of their voices.”

Something in the memory seemed to make

her thoughtful. The smile faded from her face, and she remained for a moment looking into the fire.

“Oh, I have read your book,” she exclaimed, with a quick return to her ordinary manner.

“‘The Vicar of Wakefield’? And did you like it?”

“It made me wish to go away and live in some quiet little village, just like that. It quite took me out of my usual life and thoughts. But then it made me wonder, too. Doesn’t it seem to you strange,—I mean when you think about it,—that so much trouble and misery and shame should be caused just by a girl being led astray, as they call it? Suppose you had a daughter, and the same kind of thing happened to her, should you rave and storm and go on in that mad way, like the old Vicar does? Should you think she’d disgraced herself and all her family for ever?”

“On the whole, I think not.”

“Of course if a girl comes to want and misery and so on, why, the case is pitiful. But I can’t understand all this talk about shame and dis-

grace. What worse is she than she was before? Suppose it all happened secretly, and there an end of it, well, wouldn't it be the same as if it had never happened?”

“People don't think so. They believe in what they call contamination of the soul.”

“Yes, but it seems so queer. Suppose a girl is found out to have a lover who visits her so as to make people suspicious. Her character is lost; her soul is contaminated. Then suppose it is discovered all at once that the two have been secretly married. Character instantly comes back, and the soul is made pure again. Surely there's something very absurd in all this.”

“I myself hold the same opinions, but the world would call us abominable heretics. I fancy the truth is this. If you *believe* yourself to be made impure by any piece of conduct, you are in fact made so; otherwise not. Shakspeare makes Hamlet say, ‘There's nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.’ Purity and impurity are not actually existing things; they are only states of thought. What one may do

and be no worse for, another must not venture upon. Do you see what I mean ?”

“ Yes, yes,” cried the girl eagerly. “ You put into words what I’ve so often tried to make myself understand. ‘ There’s nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so.’ Oh, what a good thought that is ; I am sure it is true !”

She repeated it, half to herself, several times.

“ Take my own case,” she said then. “ A respectable woman, as they are called, would not speak to me, would run and wash her hand if I touched it, would not let her dress brush against mine in the street, if she knew it. Am I really so vile ? Do *you* in your heart think me so ? I can bear the truth. Tell me ; speak honestly to me ; I wish it !”

“ There is no woman I ever knew worthy to be called your equal.”

“ Oh, but I don’t want you to speak in that way,” she urged, almost fretfully. “ Do you think I am degraded,—hopelessly and for ever impure, however I might alter my life ?”

“ I think nothing of the kind. The mere fact of your being able to speak to me in this way

proves the opposite. For, I repeat, everything is a question of thought. There *are* girls whom I pass here in the Strand who do indeed seem hopelessly degraded, but I dare say they would have been so under any circumstances.”

“Look at me,—now !” exclaimed Ida, standing up. “Here, at this moment, in my talk with you, I am as pure as any woman who lives. I can be so at any moment, whenever I choose. But there are times when I am indeed vile. I know it perfectly well. I hate myself when I feel it. I get my living by a vile trade. But what I *will* declare is this : that my trade does not render me hopelessly degraded. Give me a fortune, and to-morrow I will be as chaste as if I still sat on my mother’s knee ; the past life will have gone for ever, and have left no trace,—except in a clearer understanding of things. Do you believe that ?”

“Entirely.”

“Some day I shall shake it all off,—that is if the world will be so kind as to show me some way of living without labour which would make life intolerable to me. There again. They

would tell me that the hardest and meanest toil was to be chosen before such a life as mine. By some women, perhaps ; not by me. I have no religion ; I can't bring myself to believe in God and Heaven, still less in Hell. So why should I slave my body into pieces, just to keep what is called virtue ? I will die if you like. I am always ready to do that. But I refuse to live a life of prison-labour."

"At the same time," said Waymark, after a short silence, "we have to admit the teaching of experience, that what is called a vicious life does often end in real degradation,—what even we should call such. Many a girl has sunk to fearful depths, who, if circumstances had averted the first step, might have never known evil."

"Then she was not worth preserving ! We must learn to keep soul and body apart. If we can't do that, why, every-day life will offer a thousand occasions for degradation. There are respectable women who every day contaminate the soul through the body more than I have done in all my life—I have known them. Oh yes ! But, happily, I am strong ; I shall not



allow myself to sink. If this life becomes unendurable, and no other better offers itself, I shall find some easy kind of death, and there an end.”

“That’s not likely to be your end,” said Waymark, meeting her eyes. “Life is only just beginning for you. There must be many men who would sacrifice their own existence to make yours smooth and happy.”

“I know no one from whom I would accept the sacrifice,” returned Ida, with a touch of scorn in her eyes.

“Have you never been in love?” Waymark asked, paling slightly as he did so.

“Never. Nor ever had any one whom I could call a friend.”

“You have promised to let me be that to you.”

“Yes, I have,” she replied, gravely, “and I don’t repent it. I never spoke with any one as with you to-night; you will be a help to me. Will you let me see you every week?”

“I cannot see you too often.”

“My plan of life is this. At the beginning

of each week, I arrange how I shall spend every day in it. Will you let me send you a note each Monday morning, to tell you when I shall be free, and, if you can't come, just let me know?"

Presently, she took a little manuscript book from a drawer.

"I write in this," she said, "all sorts of little things that I want to remember. "Will you write for me, here, that sentence from Shakspeare: —'There is nothing either good or bad'."

He did so, and put after it the date and his initials.

"Could you let me have some more books to read?" she asked.

"I have brought one, thinking you might be ready for it."

It was 'Jane Eyre.' She glanced over the pages eagerly.

"I don't know how it is," she said, "I have grown so hungry for reading of late. Till just now I never cared for it. When I was a child and went to school, I didn't like my lessons. Still I learned a good deal, for a little girl, and

it has stayed by me. And oh, it seems so long ago! Never mind, perhaps I will tell you all about that some day.”

“I shall think much of you,” said Waymark, when it was time for him to go.

“The less the better,” was Ida’s reply.

For his comfort, yes, — Waymark thought, as he walked homewards. Ida had already a dangerous hold upon him; she possessed his senses, and set him on fire with passionate imaginings. Were he but rich, he could buy her, make her his property, as did any other of the men on whom she lived. Here, as on every hand, his cursed poverty closed against him the possibilities of happiness. That she should ever come to love him, seemed very unlikely; the alliance between them could only be a mere caprice on her part, such as girls of her kind are very subject to; he might perhaps fill up her intervals of tedium, but would have no share in her real life. And the thought of that life fretted him with jealousy. She might say what she liked about never having known love, but it was of course impossible that she

should not have a preference among her lovers. And to think of the chances before such a girl, so blessed with rare beauty and endless charms. In the natural order of events she would become the mistress of some rich man; might even, as at times happens, be raised by marriage to high social position; in either case, the connection between them must cease. And, indeed, what right had he to endeavour to gain her love, having nothing but mere beggarly devotion to offer her in return? He had not even the excuse of one who could offer her married life in soberly easy circumstances,—supposing that to be an improvement on her present position. In fact, it amounted to this: any hint of love on his part was a request that she would yield him gratis what others paid for; he would become a pensioner on her bounty. Needless to say, a wholly intolerable situation. Would it not be better at once to break off these impossible relations? How often he had promised himself, in moments of clear thought, never again to enter on a course which would obviously involve him in futile suffering. Why had he not now

the strength to obey his reason, and continue to possess his soul in the calm of which he had enjoyed a brief taste?

The novel circumstances of the past week had almost driven from his mind all thought of Maud Enderby. He regretted having asked and obtained permission to write to her. She seemed so remote from him, their meeting so long past. What could there be in common between himself and that dim, quiet little girl, who had excited his sympathy merely because her pretty face was made sad by the same torments which had afflicted him? He needed some strong, vehement, original nature, such as Ida Starr's; how would Maud's timid conventionality—doubtless she was absolutely conventional—suit with the heresies of which he was all compact? Still, he could not well ignore what had taken place between them, and, after all, there would be a certain pleasant curiosity in awaiting her reply. In any case, he would write just such a letter as came naturally from him. If she was horrified, well, there an end of the matter.

Accordingly, he sat down on the morning after his visit to Ida, and, after a little difficulty in commencing, produced a letter of some ten close pages. It was mainly occupied with a description of his experiences in Litany Lane and Jubilee Court on the preceding Tuesday. He made no apology for detailing such unpleasant matters, and explained that he would henceforth be kept in pretty close connection with this unknown world. Even this, he asserted, was preferable to the world of Dr. Tootle's Academy. Then he dwelt a little on the contrast between this life of his and that which Maud was doubtless leading in her home on the Essex coast; and finally he hoped she would write to him when she found leisure, and be able to let him know that she was no longer so unhappy as formerly.

This he posted on Friday. On the following Monday morning, the post brought two letters for him, both addressed in female hand, one bearing a city, the other a country, post-mark. Waymark smiled as he compared the two envelopes, on one of which his name stood in firm, upright

characters, on the other in slender, sloping, delicate writing. The former he pressed to his lips, then tore open eagerly; it was the promised intimation that Ida would be at home after eight o'clock on Wednesday and Friday evenings, nothing more. The second letter he allowed to lie by till he had breakfasted. He could see that it contained more than one sheet. When at length he opened it, he read this:—

“ DEAR MR. WAYMARK,

“ I have an hour of freedom this Sunday afternoon, and I will spend it in replying as well as I can to your very interesting letter. My life is, as you say, very quiet and commonplace compared with that you find yourself suddenly entering upon. I have no such strange and moving things to write about, but I will tell you in the first place how I live and what I do, then put down some of the thoughts your letter has excited in me.

“ The family I am with consists of very worthy but commonplace people. They treat me with more consideration than I imagine

governesses usually get, and I am grateful to them for this, but their conversation, especially that of Mrs. Epping, I find frankly wearisome. It deals with very trivial concerns of every-day life, wherein I vainly endeavour to interest myself. Mr. Epping has a mania for horticulture, and makes the most kindly efforts to delight me with talk about his various specimens, whereas — dare I confess it? — I am strangely indifferent to plants and flowers. Their existence about me has, I doubt not, a soothing effect, but quite apart from my own consciousness; I can see their absolute loveliness, but do not feel drawn to lean over and examine them, or even to breathe their sweetest odours. Yet nature is dear to me, but in its broader and grander aspects. I glory in the sea-shore, in the downs, in grand effects of sky. I fear the result of my present experiences will be to make me even *dislike* flowers, which would be sad.

“ But I have not mentioned the most seriously distressing feature of my life here. It is the terrible religious formalism of the Eppings and their friends. They belong to what is called the



High Church, and devote themselves to external piety with a precision I could scarcely have imagined to exist in the present day. They discuss with astonishing vigour and at dreadful length what seem to me the most immaterial points in the Church service, and just at present an impulse is given to their zeal by the fact of their favourite clergyman being threatened with a prosecution for ritualistic practices. Of course I have to feign a becoming interest in all this, and to take part in all their religious forms and ceremonies. And indeed it is all so new to me that I have scarcely yet got over the first feelings of wonder and curiosity.

“Have I not, then, you will ask, the courage of my opinions? But indeed my religious opinions are so strangely different from those which prevail here, that I fear it would be impossible to make my thoughts clear to these good people. They would scarcely esteem me a Christian; and yet I cannot but think that it is they who are widely astray from Christian belief and practice. The other evening, Mr. Wigglesworth—the clergyman I named—dined

with us, and throughout the meal discussions of the rubric alternated with genial chat about delicacies of the table! That the rubric should be so interesting amazes me, but that an earnest Christian should think it compatible with his religion to show the slightest concern in what he shall eat or drink is unspeakably strange to me. Surely, if Christianity means anything it means asceticism. My experience of the world is so slight. I believe this is the first clergyman I ever saw in private life. Surely they cannot all be thus?

“I knew well how far the world at large had passed from true Christianity; that has been impressed upon me from my childhood. But how strange it seems to me to hear proposed as a remedy the merely exterior formalism to which my friends here pin their faith! How often have I burned to speak up among them, and ask:—‘What think ye, then, of Christ? Is He, or is He not, our exemplar? Was not His life meant to exhibit to us the ideal of the completest severance from the world which is consistent with human existence? To follow

Him, should we not, at least in the spirit, cast off everything which may tempt us to consider life, as life, precious? We cannot worship both God and the world, and yet now-a-days Christians seem to make a merit of doing so. When I conceive a religious revival, my thought does not in the least concern itself with forms and ceremonies. I imagine another John the Baptist, inciting the people, with irresistible fervour, to turn from their sins,—that is, from the world and all its concerns,—and to purify themselves by Renunciation. What they call ‘Progress,’ I take to be the veritable Kingdom of Anti-christ. The world is evil, life is evil; only by renunciation of the very desire for life can we fulfil the Christian idea. What then of the civilization which endeavours to make the world more and more pleasant as a dwelling-place, life more and more desirable for its own sake?

“And so I come to the contents of your own letter. You say you marvel that these wretched people you visited do not, in a wild burst of insurrection, overthrow all social order, and seize for themselves a fair share of the world’s

goods. I marvel also ;—all the more that their very teachers in religion seem to lay such stress on the joys of life. And yet what profit would a real Christian preacher draw for them from this very misery of their existence ! He would teach them that herein lay their supreme blessing, not their curse ; that in their poverty and nakedness lay means of grace and salvation such as the rich can scarcely by any means attain to ; that they should proudly, devoutly, accept their heritage of woe, and daily thank God for depriving them of all that can make life dear. Only awaken the spirit in these poor creatures, and how near might they be to the true Kingdom of Heaven ! And surely such a preacher will yet arise, and there will be a Reformation very different from the movement we now call by that name. But I weary you, perhaps. It may be you have no interest in all this. Yet I think you would wish me to write from what I am.

“It has been rough, stormy weather since I came here. Last night the tempest was fearful. During the evening I stole out and down to the shore. There was a brilliant moon, but

the wind was wild, and the roaring of the sea was like the voice of the wrath of God. I never felt so strongly the moving of the immortal spirit within me, as in the face of this tremendous scene. Fear took hold of me, fear of myself; I believe I uttered a cry for help.

“I must go to the children. It would interest me to hear your further experiences in the new work. Believe me to be your sincere friend,

“MAUD ENDERBY.”

Waymark read, and thought, and wondered. Then it was time to go and collect his rents.

## CHAPTER II.

## HINTS.

HERE is an extract from a letter written by Julian Casti to Waymark in the month of May. By this time they were living almost next door to each other in Beaufort Street, but something was about to happen which Julian preferred to communicate in writing.

“This will be the beginning of a new life for me. Already I have felt a strange increase in my power of poetical production. Verse runs together in my thoughts without effort; I feel ready for some really great attempt; I have grand ideas which make me tremble with solemn joy. Have you not noticed something of this in me these last few days? Come and see me to-night, if you can, and rejoice with me.”

Of course this meant that Julian was about to

be married ; as in fact he was, on the last day of the same month. Honeymoon trip was out of the question for him. He and his wife merely established themselves in the lodgings which he was already occupying. And the new life began.

Waymark had made Harriet's acquaintance a couple of weeks before ; Julian had brought her with him one Sunday to his friend's room. She was then living by herself, having quitted Mrs. Ogle the day after that decisive call upon Julian. There was really no need for her to have done so ; Mrs. Ogle's part in the comedy being an imaginary one of Harriet's devising. But Julian was led entirely by his cousin, and, as she knew quite well, there was not the least danger of his going on his own account to the shop in Gray's Inn Road ; he dreaded the thought of such an interview.

As I said, Waymark had made the acquaintance of Miss Smales. Frankly, he was not charmed ; the more he thought of this marriage, the more it amazed him. For of course he deemed it wholly of his friend's bringing about. And indeed the extract from the letter just

quoted represented in all truth poor Julian's state of mind. Five minutes had sufficed to bring about the change. Naturally, the soil was well prepared to receive the seed, and Julian was not the first who, loving love, has been blinded by the contact of lips into the belief that woman is synonymous with love. Nay, if we come to that, was he not right? Take man and woman, any man and any woman, and you have the constituents of love. But unfortunately by the law of evolution body has developed into soul; *hinc illæ lachrymæ.*

This marriage brought about a change in the intercourse of our two friends. Henceforth the visiting was to be wholly on the side of Waymark; Harriet did not like to be left alone in the evening; accordingly Julian could not go to Waymark's abode, as he had been accustomed to, and conversation in Mrs. Casti's presence naturally could not be as unrestrained as both would have desired. Waymark bore this with impatience, and even did his best to alter it. One Sunday afternoon, about three weeks after the marriage, he called and carried Julian off to his



room across the street. Harriet's face sufficiently indicated her opinion of this proceeding, and Julian had difficulty in appearing at his ease. Waymark understood what was going on, and tried to discuss the matter freely, but the other shrank from it.

"I am grievously impatient of domestic arrangements," Waymark said. "I fancy it would never do for me to marry, unless I had limitless cash, and my wife were as great a Bohemian as myself. By the bye, I've got another letter from Maud. Let me read it to you."

Waymark had told his friend of the relations between himself and Maud Enderby; though of Ida Starr he had never spoken. He now read her letter, the third he had received from her.

"I was never so wholly astray in my judgment of any one as of this girl," he said, when he had ended. "I wish I had a portrait of her to show you. Such a quiet, timid, drooping little being! Who could conceive her from these letters? What surprising force and independence of thought!"

"What strikes me most," said Julian, "is her

imagination. She draws such fine pictures, and in such forcible language."

"And always of a splendidly gloomy kind. Her pessimism is magnificent. This intense religiousness is no doubt a mere phase; it will pass, of course. I wonder how things would arrange themselves if she came back to London. Why shouldn't she come here to sit and chat, like you do?"

"That would naturally lead to something definite," said Casti, smiling.

"Oh, I don't know. Why should it? I'm a believer in friendship between men and women. Of course there is in it the spice of the difference of sex, and why not accept that as a pleasant thing? How much better if, when we met a woman we liked, we could say frankly, 'Now let us amuse each other without any *arrière pensée*. If I married you to-day, even though I feel quite ready to, I should ten to one see some one next week who would make me regret having bound myself. So would you, my dear. Very well, let us tantalize each other agreeably, and be at ease in the sense that we are on the right side of the illusion. You laugh at the idea?"

Julian laughed, but not heartily. They went on to talk of other things.

“I’m making an article out of Jubilee Court,” said Waymark. “Semi-descriptive, semi-reflective, wholly cynical. Maybe it will pay for my summer holiday. And, apropos of the same subject, I’ve got great ideas. This introduction to such phases of life will prove endlessly advantageous to me, artistically speaking. Let me get a little more experience, and I will write a novel such as no one has yet ventured to write, at all events in England. I begin to see my way to magnificent effects; ye gods, such light and shade! The fact is, the novel of every-day life is getting worn out. We must dig deeper, get to untouched social strata. Dickens felt this, but he had not the courage to face his subjects; his monthly numbers had to lie on the family tea-table, which is emphatically *not* the place where you will find anything out of the common. Not *virginibus puerisque* will be my lay, I assure you, but for men and women who like to look beneath the surface, and who understand that only as artistic

material has human life any significance. Yes, that is the conclusion I am working round to. The artist is the only sane man. Life for its own sake?—no; I would drink a pint of laudanum to-night. But life as the source of splendid pictures, inexhaustible material for effects,—*that* can reconcile me to existence, and that only. It is a delight followed by no bitter after-taste, and the only such delight I know.”

Harriet was very quiet when Julian returned. She went about getting the tea with a sort of indifference; she let a cup fall and break, but made no remark, and left her husband to pick up the pieces.

“Waymark thinks I’m neglecting him,” said Julian, with a laugh, as they sat down together.

“It’s better to neglect him than to neglect me, I should think,” was Harriet’s reply, in a quietly ill-natured tone which she was mistress of.

“But couldn’t we find out some way of doing neither, dear?” went on Julian, playing with his spoon. “Now suppose I give him a couple of hours one evening every week? You could

spare that, couldn't you? Say, from eight to ten on Wednesdays?"

"I suppose you'll go if you want to," said Harriet, rising from the tea-table, and taking a seat sulkily by the window.

"Come, come, we won't say any more about it, if it's so disagreeable to you," said Julian, going up to her, and coaxing her back to her place. "You don't feel well to-day, do you? I oughtn't to have left you this afternoon, but it was difficult to refuse, wasn't it?"

"He had no business to ask you to go. He could see I didn't like it."

Waymark grew so accustomed to receiving Ida's note each Monday morning, that when for the first time it failed to come he was troubled seriously. It happened, too, that he was able to attach a particular significance to the omission. When they had last parted, instead of just pressing her hand as usual, he had raised it to his lips. She frowned, and turned quickly away saying no word. He had offended her by this infringement of the conditions of their friend-

ship; for once before, when he had uttered a word which implied more than she was willing to allow, Ida had engaged him in the distinct agreement that he should never do or say anything that approached love-making. As, moreover, it was distinctly understood that he should never visit her save at times previously appointed, he could not see her till she chose to write. After waiting in the vain expectation of some later post bringing news, he himself wrote, simply asking the cause of her silence. The reply came speedily.

“I have no spare time in the week. I thought you would understand this.

“I. S.”

It was her custom to write without any formal beginning or ending; yet Waymark felt that this note was briefer than it would have been, had all been as usual between them. The jealousy which now often tortured him awoke with intolerable vehemence. He spent a week of misery.

But late on Saturday evening came a letter addressed in the well-known hand. It said:—

“Sally and I are going up the river tomorrow, if it is fine. Do you care to meet us on the boat which reaches Chelsea Pier at 10.30?”

“I. S.”

It seemed he did care; at all events he was half an hour too soon at the pier. As the boat approached, his eye soon singled out two very quietly dressed girls, who sat with their backs to him, and neither turned nor made any sign of expecting an addition to their party. With like undemonstrativeness he took a seat at Ida's side, and returned Sally's nod and smile. Ida merely said “good morning,” in the ladylike manner which was natural to her; there was nothing of displeasure on her face, however, and when he began to speak of indifferent things she replied with the usual easy friendliness.

It was the first time he had seen her by daylight, or in such attire. She always dressed in perfect taste, but with a decided liking for rich materials and the adornments which so well became her beauty. At present the dress, mantle and black straw hat were almost too simple. He had been uncertain whether she

used any artificial colour on her cheeks ; seemingly she did, for now she looked much paler than usual. But the perfect clearness of her complexion, the gentle lustre of her eyes, appeared to indicate complete health. She breathed in the fresh sun-lit air with frank enjoyment, and smiled to herself at objects on either side of the river.

“By the bye,” Waymark said, when no word had been exchanged for some minutes, “you didn’t tell me where you were going ; so I took no ticket, and left matters to fate.”

“Are you a good walker ?” Ida asked.

“Fairly good, I flatter myself.”

“Then this is what I propose. It’s a plan I carried out two or three times by myself last summer, and enjoyed. We get off at Putney, walk through Roehampton, then over the park into Richmond. By that time we shall be ready for dinner, and I know a place where we can have it in comfort.”

There was little thought of weariness throughout the delightful walk. All three gave themselves up for the time to simple enjoyment ;



their intercourse became that of children ; the troubles of passion, the miseries of self-consciousness, the strain of mutual observation fell from them as the city dropped behind ; they were once more creatures for whom the external world alone had reality, whose senses were the media of sunny joys. This is one of the familiar effects of free sky and field ; human beings become less exclusively interesting to each other ; the soul feels its oneness, its independence before the face of nature. There was a glorious June sky ; there were country roads scented with flower and tree ; the wide-gleaming common with its furze and bramble ; then the splendid meadow-tracts of the great park, with felled trunks to rest upon, and prospects of endlessly-varied green to soothe the eye. The girls exhibited their pleasure each in her own way. Sally threw off restraint, and sprang about in free happiness, like one of the young roes, the sight of which made her utter cries like a delighted child. She recalled scenes about her Devon home, and chattered in her dialect of people and places strange enough to both her companions. She

was in constant expectation of catching a glimpse of the sea; in spite of all warning it was a great surprise and disappointment to her that Richmond Hill did not end in cliffs and breakers. Ida talked less, but every now and then laughed in her deep enjoyment. She had no reminiscences of country life; it was enough that all about her was new and fresh and pure; nothing to remind her of Regent Street and the Strand. She plucked the commonest sprigs, hazel or briar, and examined them with pleased and curious eyes. To tread on the rich turf was a delicious sensation. When they rested, she drank in the fragrance of the earth, and it was sweeter to her than distilled essences. Waymark talked of he knew not what, cheerful things that came by chance to his tongue, trifling stories, descriptions of places, ideal plans for the spending of ideal holidays; but nothing of London, nothing of what at other times his thoughts most ran upon. He came back to himself now and then, and smiled as he looked at the girls, but this happened seldom.

The appetites of all three were beyond denying

when they had passed the 'Star and Garter' and began to walk down into the town. Waymark wondered whither their guide would lead them, but asked no questions. To his surprise, Ida stopped at a small inn half way down the hill.

"You are to go straight in," she said, with a smile, to Waymark, "and are to tell the first person you meet that three people want dinner. There's no choice,—roast beef and vegetables, and some pudding or other afterwards. Then you are to walk straight up-stairs, as if you knew your way, and we will follow."

These directions were obeyed, with the result that all reached an upper chamber, wherein a table was cleanly and comfortably laid, as if expecting them. French windows led out on to a quaint little verandah at the back of the house, and the view thence was perfect. The river below, winding between wooded banks, and everywhere the same splendour of varied green which had delighted their eyes all the morning. Just below the verandah was the tiled roof of an out-house, whereon lay a fine black

and white cat, basking in the hot sun. Ida clapped her hands.

“He’s like poor old Grim,” she cried. Then, turning to Waymark: “If you are good, you may bring out a chair and smoke a cigar here after dinner.”

They had just began to eat, when footsteps were heard coming up the stairs.

“Oh bother!” exclaimed Sally. “There’s some one else a-comin’, s’nough.”

There was. The door opened and two gentlemen walked in. Waymark looked up, and to his astonishment recognized his old friends O’Gree and Egger. Mr. O’Gree was mopping his face with a handkerchief, and looked red and hungry; Mr. Egger was resplendent in a very broad-brimmed straw hat, the glistening newness of which contrasted alarmingly with the rest of his attire, which had known no variation since his first arrival at Dr. Tootle’s. He, too, was perspiring profusely, and, as he entered, was just in the act of taking out the great yellow handkerchief which Waymark had seen him chewing so often in the bitterness of his spirit.

“Bedad, Waymark, is it you?” cried Mr. O’Gree, forgetting the presence of the ladies in his astonishment. “Sure, and they told us we’d find a *gentleman* here.”

“Consequently,” returned Waymark laughing, “I was the last person you would have thought of as answering to that description?”

“Well, no, I didn’t mean that. I meant there was no mention of the ladies.”

Waymark flashed a question at Ida with his eyes, and understood her assent in the smile and slight motion of the head.

“Then let me introduce you to the ladies.”

The new-comers accordingly made the acquaintance of Miss Starr and Miss Grace, (that was Sally’s name,) and took seats at the table, to await the arrival of their dinners. Both were eminently on their good behaviour forthwith. Mr. O’Gree managed to place himself at Sally’s left hand, and thenceforth led the conversation with the natural ease of an Irishman, especially delighted if Sally herself seemed to appreciate his efforts to be entertaining.

“Now, who’d have thought of the like of this!”

he exclaimed. "And we came in here by the merest chance; sure, there's a fatality in these things. We've walked all the way from Hammersmith."

"And we from Putney," said Waymark.

"You don't mean it? It's been a warm undertaking."

"How did you find the walk, Mr. Egger?"

"Bedad," replied that gentleman, who had got hold of his friend's exclamation, and used it with killing effect; "I made my possible, but, bedad, I could not much more."

"You both look warm," Waymark observed, smiling. "I fear you hurried. You should have been leisurely, like we were."

"Now that's cruel, Waymark. You needn't have reflected upon our solitariness. If we'd been blessed with society such as you had, we'd have come slow enough. As it was, we thought a good deal of our dinners. /What a divine day! —Miss Grace, I humbly apologize; I didn't observe you were looking for the salt. Will you let me help you to it?"

"No, no, no,—please!" almost screamed

Sally, as she was proceeding to put salt on to her plate. Mr. O'Gree paused in astonishment.

"You don't want to bring me bad luck, do you?" asked Sally, blushing, whilst she looked askance at him in a quite irresistible way.

"Sure, and I'd rather swallow the salt-cellar!" cried Mr. O'Gree, with enthusiasm.

There was general laughter at this piece of superstition and its result. Sally helped herself to the salt, and friendliness waxed between her and her neighbour. Even the arrival of Mr. O'Gree's dinner had small effect upon his amiable loquacity. The Swiss, however, was speedily absorbed in his plate, and did manfully.

No fresh guests appeared to disturb the party. When all had appeased their hunger, Waymark took a chair out on to the verandah for Ida. He was spared the trouble of providing in the same way for Sally by Mr. O'Gree's ready offices. Poor Egger, finding himself deserted, opened a piano there was in the room, and began to run his finger over the keys.

“Let us have one of your German songs, my boy,” cried O’Gree.

“But it is the Sunday, and we are still in England,” said the Swiss, hesitating.

“Pooh, never mind,” said Waymark. “We’ll shut the door. Sing my favourite, Mr. Egger, — ‘*Wenn’s Mailüfterl.*’”

The Swiss sang, keeping his voice low, and thus improving the effect of the sweet, sad air. All around lay so wonderfully still in the hot summer afternoon. There were drowsy pipings of birds from the clustered trees by the river-side, and now and then an oar-splash as a boat went by. So peaceful a moment in all these so different lives; to pass so quickly, but doubtless by all to be remembered so long. Such moments make the young and unknowing long for immortality; the older and wiser to yearn for the eternal rest.

“*Die Schwalb’n fliegen fort, doch sie zieh’n wieder her ;  
Der Mensch wenn er fortgeht, er kommt nimmermehr.*”

“It is very beautiful,” said Ida in a low voice to Waymark, who stood beside her. “I wish I could understand the words.”



“I will tell you them afterwards,” he whispered back.

When they left the inn at length, Waymark walked first with Ida, and Mr. O’Gree followed with Sally. Egger brought up the rear; he had relapsed into a dreamy mood, and his mind seemed occupied with unearthly things.

“How had you proposed to return?” Waymark asked, as they paused on the bridge, and watched the boats for a few minutes.

“Oh, we have no plan whatever,” replied O’Gree, recklessly. “It’s quite early yet.”

“After three o’clock. Sturdy fellows like you perhaps contemplate walking back; in any case you’ve time enough to ramble about yet. But we others must think of going towards the station.”

Ida had, in truth, begun to show signs of bodily weariness, in spite of herself.

“Oh, you don’t mean that!” exclaimed Mr. O’Gree. Then he added, after a quick examination of Waymark’s face, “At all events you will let us walk as far as the station with you?—

Shouldn't you prefer the shady side, Miss Grace?"

They moved on. With not a little amusement Waymark had noted Sally's demeanour under Mr. O'Gree's attentions. The girl had evidently made up her mind to be absolutely proper. The Irishman's respectful delicacy was something so new to her and so pleasant, and the question with her was how she could sufficiently show her appreciation without at the same time forfeiting his good opinion for becoming modesty. All so new to her, compelled by necessity to make an art of forwardness, and to school herself in the endurance of brutality. She was constantly blushing in the most unfeigned way at his neatly-turned little compliments, and, when she spoke, did so with a pretty air of self-distrust which sat quite charmingly on her. Fain, fain would O'Gree have proposed to journey back to London by the same train, but good taste and good sense prevailed with him. At the ticket-barrier there was a parting.

"How delightful it would be, Miss Grace," said Mr. O'Gree, in something like a whisper,

“if this lucky chance happened again. If I only knew when you were coming again, there’s no telling but it might.”

Sally gave her hand, smiled, evidently wished to say something, but ended by turning away and running after her companions.

## CHAPTER III.

## EXAMPLE WITHOUT PRECEPT.

WAYMARK was grateful for the help Mr. Woodstock had given him. He found a lifetime of prejudice removed by this piece of kindness; and felt that he had wronged his old guardian in his former thoughts. Indeed, the two soon began to get on very well together. In a great measure, of course, this was due to the change in Waymark's philosophy; whereas his early idealism had been revolted by what he then deemed Mr. Woodstock's crass materialism and vulgarity, the tolerance which had come with widened experience now made him regard these characteristics with far less certainty of condemnation. He was merely amused, often, at what had formerly enraged and disgusted him. At the same time, there were changes in Abraham

himself, no doubt—at all events in his manner to the young man. He, on his side, was also far more tolerant than in the days when he had growled at Osmond for a conceited young puppy. Might it be that he was ceasing to find in his own pursuits and prejudices that satisfaction which had formerly attended them, and that thus his mind became more disposed to consider the aims and ideals of those who differed from him?

One Sunday morning in early July, Waymark was sitting alone in his room, when he noticed that a cab stopped before the house. A minute after, there was a knock at his door, and, to his great surprise, Mr. Woodstock entered, bearing a huge volume in his arms. Abraham deposited it on a chair, wiped his forehead, and looked round the room.

“You smoke poor tobacco,” was his first remark, as he sniffed the air.

“Good tobacco happens to be somewhat expensive,” was the reply. “Will you sit down?”

“Yes, I will.” The chair creaked under him.

“And so here you hang out, eh? Only one room?”

“As you see.”

“Devilish unhealthy, I should think.”

“But economical.”

“Ugh!”

The grunt meant nothing in particular. Waymark was eyeing the mighty volume on the chair, and had recognized it. Some fortnight previously, he had come upon Abraham, in the latter's study, turning over a collection of Hogarth's plates, and greatly amusing himself with the realism which so distinctly appealed to his taste in art. The book had been pledged in the shop, and by lapse of time was become Abraham's property. It was the first time that Waymark had had an opportunity of examining Hogarth; the pictures harmonized with his mood; they gave him a fresh impulse in the direction his literary projects were taking. He spent a couple of hours in turning the leaves, and Mr. Woodstock had observed his enjoyment. What meant the arrival of the volume here in Beaufort Street?

Abraham lit a cigar, still looking about the room.

“You live alone?” he asked, in a matter-of-fact way.

“At present.”

“Ha! Didn’t know but you might have found it lonely; I used to, at your age.”

Then, after a short silence,—

“By the bye, it’s your birthday.”

“How do you know?”

“Well, I shouldn’t have done, but for an old letter I turned up by chance the other day. How old are you?”

“Five-and-twenty.”

“H’m. I’m sixty-nine next third of September. You’ll be a wiser man when you get to my age.—Well, if you can find room anywhere for that book there, perhaps you’d like to keep it!”

Waymark looked up in amazement.

“A birthday-present!” he exclaimed. “It’s ten years since I had one. Upon my word, I don’t well know how to thank you!”

“Do you know what the thing was published at?” asked Abraham, in an off-hand way.

“No.”

“Fifty pounds.”

“I don’t care about the value. It’s the kindness. You couldn’t have given me anything, either, that would have delighted me so much.”

“All right; keep it, and there’s an end of the matter. And what do you do with yourself all day, eh? I didn’t think it very likely I should find you in.”

“I’m writing a novel.”

“H’m. Shall you get anything for it?”

“Can’t say. I hope so.”

“Look here. Why don’t you go in for politics?”

“Neither know nor care anything about them.”

“Would you like to go into Parliament?”

“Wouldn’t go if every borough in England called upon me to-morrow!”

“Why not?”

“Simply because I hate the mere sight of Parliamentary debates. To take part in such absurdity would be to acquiesce in the world’s folly. Plainly, I think myself too good for such



occupation. If you once can succeed in getting *outside* the world, you have little desire to go back and join in its grossest pranks."

"That's all damned nonsense! How can any one be too good to be in Parliament? The better men you have there, the better the country will be governed, won't it?"

"Certainly. But the best man, in this case, is the man who sees the shortest distance before his nose. If you think the world worth all the trouble it takes to govern it, go in for politics neck and crop, by all means, and the world will no doubt thank you in its own way."

Abraham looked puzzled, and half disposed to be angry.

"Then you think novel-writing better than governing the country?" he asked.

"On its own merits, vastly so."

"And suppose there was no government. What about your novels then?"

"I'd make a magnificent one out of the spectacle of chaos, and then jump into the Thames with satisfaction."

"But you know very well you're talking

bosh," exclaimed Abraham, somewhat discomfited. "There must be government, and there must be order, say what you like. It's nature that the strong should rule over the weak, and show them what's for their own good. What else are we here for? If you're going to be a parson, well and good; then cry down the world as much as you please, and think only about heaven and hell. But as far as I can make out, there's government there too. The devil rebelled and was kicked out. Serve him right. If he wasn't strong enough to hold his own, he'd ought to have kept quiet."

"You're a Conservative, of course," said Waymark, smiling. "You believe only in keeping the balance. You don't care about reform."

"Don't be so sure of that. Let me have the chance and the power, and I'd reform hard enough, many a thing."

"Well, one might begin on a small scale. Suppose one took in hand Litany Lane and Jubilee Court? Suppose we exert our right as the stronger, and, to begin with, do a little white-washing? Then sundry stairs and ceilings might

be looked to. No doubt there'd be resistance, but on the whole it would be for the people's own good. A little fresh draining mightn't be amiss, or—"

"What the devil's all this to do with politics?" cried Abraham, whose face had grown dark.

"I should imagine, a good deal," returned Waymark, knocking out his pipe. "If you're for government, you mustn't be above considering details."

"And so you think you have a hit at me, eh? Nothing of the kind. These are affairs of private contract, and no concern of government at all. In private contract a man has only a right to what he's strong enough to exact. If a tenant tells me my houses ain't fit to live in, I tell him to go where he'll be better off, and I don't hinder him; I know well enough in a day or two there'll come somebody else. Ten to one he can't go, and he don't. Then why should I be at unnecessary expense in making the places better? As soon as I can get no tenants, I'll do so; not till then."

“You don’t believe in works of mere humanity?”

“What the devil’s humanity got to do with business?” cried Abraham.

“True,” was Waymark’s rejoinder.

“See, we won’t talk of these kind of things,” said Mr. Woodstock. “That’s just what we always used to quarrel about, and I’m getting too old for quarrelling. Got any engagement this afternoon?”

“I thought of looking in to see a friend here in the street.”

“Male or female?”

“Both; man and wife.”

“Oh, then you have got some friends? So had I when I was your age. They go somehow when you get old. Your father was the last of them, I think. But you’re not much like him, except a little in face. True, he was a Radical, but you,—well, I don’t know what you are. If you’d been a son of mine, I’d have had you in Parliament by now, somehow or other.”

“I think you never had a son?” said Way-

mark, observing the note of melancholy which every now and then came up in the old man's talk.

“No.”

“But you had some children, I think?”

“Yes, yes,—they're dead.”

He had walked to the window, and suddenly turned round with a kind of impatience.

“Never mind the friend to-day; come and have some dinner with me. I seem to want a bit of company.”

This was the first invitation of the kind Waymark had received. He accepted it, and they went out together.

“It's a pleasant part this,” Mr. Woodstock said, as they walked by the river. “One might build himself a decent house somewhere about here, eh?”

“Do you think of doing so?”

“I think of doing so? What's the good of a house, and nobody to live in it?”

Waymark studied these various traits of the old man's humour, and constantly felt more of kindness towards him.

On the following day, just as he had collected his rents, and was on his way out of Litany Lane, Waymark was surprised at coming face to face with Mrs. Casti; yet more surprised when he perceived that she came out from the Clock House. She looked embarrassed, and for a moment seemed about to pass without recognizing him; but he had raised his hat, and she could not but move her head in reply. She so obviously wished to avoid speaking, that he walked quickly on in another direction. He wondered what she could be doing in such a place as this. It could hardly be that she had acquaintances or connections here. Julian had not given him any particulars of Harriet's former life, and his friend's marriage was still a great puzzle to him. He knew well that the girl had no liking for himself; it was not improbable that this casual meeting would make their intercourse yet more strained. He thought for a moment of questioning Julian, but decided that the matter was no business of his.

It was so rare for him to meet an acquaintance in the streets, that a second chance of the

same kind, only a few minutes later, surprised him greatly. This time the meeting was a pleasant one; somebody ran across to him from over the way, and he saw that it was Sally Grace. She looked pleased. The girl had wonderfully preserved her sea-side complexion through the year and a half of haphazard town life, and, when happy, glowed all over her cheeks with the healthiest hue. She held out her hand in the usual frank, impulsive way.

“Oh, I thought it was you! You won't see I no more at the old place.”

“No? How's that?”

“I'm leavin' 'un to-morrow. I've got a place in a shop, just by here,—a chandler's shop, and I'm going to live in.”

“Indeed? Well, I'm glad to hear it. I dare say you'll be better off.”

“Oh, I say,—you know your friend?”

“The Irishman?”

“Yes.”

“What about him?” asked the other, smiling as he looked into the girl's pretty face. To his

surprise, her answer was to catch his arm and pull him off the pavement.

“What’s the matter?” he inquired, stopping.

“It’s unlucky,” she answered, pointing up to a ladder which leaned against a house, and beneath which he had been about to pass. He laughed, and, as they went on, repeated his question about Mr. O’Gree.

“Well,” said Sally, “I don’t mind you telling ’un where I live now,—if you like.—Look, there’s the address on that paper; you can take it.”

“Oh, I see. In point of fact, you *wish* me to tell him?”

“Oh, I don’t care. I dessay he don’t want to know anything about I. But you can if you like.”

“I will be sure to, and no doubt he will be delighted. He’s been growing thin since I told him you declined to renew his acquaintance.”

“Oh, don’t talk! And now I must be off. Good-bye. I dessay I shall see you sometimes?”

“Without doubt. We’ll have another Sunday at Richmond soon. Good-bye.”

We take our way with Sally. It was about



four in the afternoon when she reached home, and she ran up at once to Ida's room, and burst in, crying out, "I've got it! I've got it!" with much dancing about and joyous singing. Ida rose, with a faint smile of welcome. She had been sitting in the window, at times reading a book lent her by Waymark, but mostly gazing on the glorious strip of sky up above the court, and listening to the roar of the Strand, which seemed so far off, though it was so near. She was in her dressing-gown, with her hair hanging down over her shoulders,—divine, fragrant, lustrous hair,—and Grim had been lying on her lap. She sighed as she rose.

"They said they liked my appearance," Sally went on, "and 'ud give me a try. I go in to-morrow. It won't be a over easy place, neither. I've to do all the cleaning in the house, and there's a baby to look after when I'm not in the shop, and they say I may have to do washing as well."

"And what will they give you?"

"Five shillings a month, for the first half-year; then a rise."

“ And you're satisfied ? ”

“ Oh, it'll do till something better turns up. Oh, I say, I met your friend just after I'd come away.”

“ Did you ? ” said Ida quietly.

“ Yes; and I told him he could tell his friend where I was, if he liked.”

“ His friend ? ”

“ The Irishman, you know,” explained Sally, moving about the room. “ I told you he'd been asking after me.”

Ida seemed all at once to awake from a dream. She uttered a long “ Ah ! ” under her breath, and for a moment looked at the girl like one who is struck with an unexpected explanation. Then she turned away to the window, and again gazed up at the blue sky, standing so for nearly a minute.

“ Sally,” she said, looking round again, and beckoning.

The girl came. Ida kissed her, saying, as she did so, “ Thank you, dear.”

“ What for ? ” asked the other in surprise.

“ For making the sky clear to me.”

Sally looked uneasy, could not understand, and said nothing. There was another silence.

“Are you engaged to-night?” Sally asked presently.

“No; will you sit with me?”

“You’re not feeling very well to-day, are you?”

“I think not,” replied Ida, passing her hand over her forehead, wearily. “I’ve been thinking of going out of London for a few days, perhaps to the seaside.”

“Go to Weymouth!” cried Sally, delighted at the thought. “Go and see my people, and tell ’un how I’m getting on. They’ll make you bide with ’un all the time you’re there, s’nough. It isn’t a big grand house, but it’s comfortable, and see if our mother wouldn’t look after you! It’s three weeks since I wrote; if I don’t mind there ’ll be our father up here looking after I. Now, do go!”

“No, it’s too far. Besides, if I go, I shall want to be quite alone.”

On the following evening Waymark was expected. At his last visit he had noticed that

Ida was not in her usual spirits. To-night he saw that something was clearly wrong, and when Ida spoke of going to the seaside, he strongly urged her to do so.

“Where should you go to?” he asked.

“I think, to Hastings. I went there once, when I was a child, with my mother—I believe I told you. I had rather go there than anywhere else.”

“I feel the need of a change myself,” he said, a moment after, and without looking at her. “Suppose I were to go to Hastings, too,—at the same time that you’re there,—would you dislike it?”

She merely shook her head, almost indifferently. She did not care to talk much to-night, and frequently nodded instead of replying with words.

“But—you would rather I didn’t?” he urged.

“No, indeed,” still in the same indifferent way. “I should have company, if I found it dull.”

“Then let us go down by the same train,—will you, Ida?”

As far as she remembered, it was the first time that he had ever addressed her thus by her name. She looked up and smiled slightly.

“If you like,” was her answer. “When?”

“I can’t go before Tuesday. Say on Tuesday morning. Shall I look up the train, and write to you when to be at the station?”

“If you will. And now, you don’t mind if I send you away a little earlier than usual?”

He rose at once, and took his leave. Doing so, he could not help keeping his eyes fixed on her face; hers fell, and she turned away, saying “Good-bye” with a tired voice.

The proposal he had made was somewhat rash, seeing that, beyond a few shillings, he had nothing wherewith to meet the outlay of such a trip. He was perfectly well aware that Ida would neither expect nor suffer him to go to the slightest expense on her account; still he ought to have at least three or four pounds, for contingencies. The article which he had hoped might enable him to take a holiday was still trying to find an editor. There was only one thing to be done. He wrote a line to Mr.

Woodstock, asking whether the period of their business relations had sufficed to establish his probity in his employer's eyes, seeing that, if that were the case, he should be glad of the twenty pounds, or some portion of it, which had been left as guarantee. By return of post there came a cheque for the sum, but with no accompanying note. Waymark wrote his thanks, and no reference was made to the matter on either side when he took the rents to the office on Monday.

## CHAPTER IV.

## THE MISSING YEARS.

“WHY shouldn’t life be always like this?” said Waymark, lying on the upper beach and throwing pebbles into the mock breakers, which each moment drew a little further back and needed a little extra exertion of the arm to reach them. There was small disturbance by people passing, here some two miles up the shore eastward from Hastings. A large shawl spread between two walking-sticks stuck upright gave, at this afternoon hour, all the shade needful for two persons lying side by side, and, even in the blaze of unclouded summer, there were pleasant airs flitting about the edge of the laughing sea. “Why shouldn’t life be always like this? It might be,—sunshine or fireside,—if men were wise. Leisure is the one thing that all desire,

but they strive for it so blindly that they frustrate one another's hope. And so at length they have come to lose the end in the means ; are mad enough to set the means before them as in itself an end."

"We must work to forget our troubles," said his companion, simply.

"Why, yes, and those very troubles are the fit reward of our folly. We have not been content to live in the simple happiness of our senses. We must be learned and wise, forsooth. We were not content to enjoy the beauty of the greater and the lesser light. We must understand whence they come and whither they go,—after that, what they are made of and how much they weigh. We thought for such a long time that our toil would end in something ; that we might become as gods, knowing good and evil. Now we are at the end of our tether, we see clearly enough that it has all been worse than vain ; how good if we could unlearn it all, scatter the building of phantasmal knowledge in which we dwell so uncomfortably ! It is too late. The gods never take back their gifts ; we



wearied them with our prayers into granting us this one, and now they sit in the clouds and mock us."

Ida looked, and kept silent; perhaps scarcely understood.

"People kill themselves in despair," Waymark went on, "that is, when they have drunk to the very dregs the cup of life's bitterness. If they were wise, they would die at that moment—if it ever comes—when joy seems supreme and stable. Life can give nothing further, and it has no more hellish misery than disillusion following upon delight."

"Did you ever seriously think of killing yourself?" Ida asked, gazing at him closely.

"Yes. I have reached at times the point when I would not have moved a muscle to escape death, and from that it is not far to suicide. But my joy had never come, and it is hard to go away without that one draught.—And you?"

"I went so far once as to buy poison. But neither had I tasted any happiness, and I could not help hoping."

“And you still wait,—still hope?”

Ida made no direct answer. She gazed far off at the indistinguishable border-land of sea and sky, and when she spoke it was in a softened tone.

“When I was here last, I was seven years old. Now I am not quite nineteen. How long I have lived since then,—how long! Yet my life did not really begin till I was about eleven. Till then I was a happy child, understanding nothing. Between then and now, if I have discovered little good either in myself or in others, I have learned by heart everything that is bad in the world. Nothing in meanness or vileness or wretchedness is a secret to me. Compare me with other girls of nineteen,—perhaps still at school. What sort of a companion should I be for one of those, I wonder? What strange thoughts I should have, if ever I talked with such a girl; how old I should feel myself beside her!”

“Your knowledge is better in my eyes than their ignorance. My ideal woman is the one who, knowing every darkest secret of life, keeps yet a pure mind,—as you do, Ida.”

She was silent so long that Waymark spoke again.

“Your mother died when you were eleven?”

“Yes, and that was when my life began. My mother was very poor, but she managed to send me to a pretty good school. But for that, my life would have been very different; I should not have understood myself as well as I always have done. Poor mother,—good, good mother! Oh, if I could but have her now, and thank her for all her love, and give her but one year of quiet happiness. To think that I can see her as if she were standing before me, and yet that she is gone, is nowhere, never to be brought back to me if I break my heart with longing!”

Tears fell from her eyes, and a sob caught her breath. She turned away and wept freely, as she had so often wept, at night or at noon-day, when these thoughts came upon her. And the tears meant more than she could ever say to another, however close and dear to her. The secret of her mother's life lay in the grave and in her own mind; the one would render it up as soon as the other. For never would Ida tell

in words of that moment when there had come to her maturing intelligence clear insight into her mother's history, when the fables of childhood had no longer availed to blind her, and every recalled circumstance pointed but to one miserable truth. Poor, poor mother!

"She's happier than we are," Waymark said, solemnly. "Think how long she has been resting."

Ida became silent, and presently spoke with a firmer voice.

"They took her to a hospital in her last illness, and she died there. I don't know where her grave is."

"And what became of you? Had you friends to go to?"

"No one; I was quite alone.—We had been living in lodgings. The landlady told me that of course I couldn't stay on there; she couldn't afford to keep me; I must go and find a home somewhere. Try and think what that meant to me. I was so young and ignorant that such an idea as that I might one day have to earn my own living had never entered my mind. I was fed and clothed like every one else,—a good deal

better, indeed, than some of the children at school, —and I didn't know why it shouldn't always be so. Besides, I was a vain child ; I thought myself clever ; I had even begun to look at myself in the glass and think I was handsome. It seemed quite natural that every one should be kind and indulgent to me. I shall never forget the feeling I had when the landlady spoke to me in that hard, sharp way. My whole idea of the world was upset all at once ; I seemed to be in a miserable dream. I sat in my mother's bedroom hour after hour, and, every step I heard on the stairs, I thought it must be my mother coming back home to me ;—it was impossible to believe that I was left alone, and could look to no one for help and comfort. Whatever should I do ? Somebody brought me up something to eat, and then I was left for the night.—I have been miserable enough since then, but I suppose never *so* miserable.

“Next morning the landlady came up to me / again, and said, if I liked, she could tell me of a way of earning my living. It was by going as a servant to an eating-house in a street close by, where they wanted some one to wash up dishes

and do different kinds of work not too hard for a child like me. I could only do as I was advised ; I went at once, and was engaged. They took off the dress I was wearing, which was far too good for me then, and gave me a dirty, ragged one ; then I was set to work at once to clean some knives. Nothing was said about wages or anything of that kind ; only I understood that I should live in the house, and have all given me that I needed. Of course I was very awkward. I tried my very hardest to do everything that was set me, but only got scolding for my pains ; and it soon came to boxes on the ear and even kicks. The place was kept by a man and wife ; they had a daughter older than I, and they treated her just like a hired servant. I used to sleep with the girl in a wretched kitchen underground, and the poor thing kept me awake every night with crying and complaining of her hard life. It was no harder than mine, and I can't think she felt it more ; but I had even then a kind of stubborn pride which kept me from showing what I suffered. I couldn't have borne to let them see what a terrible change it was for

me, all this drudgery and unkindness; I felt it would have been like taking them into my confidence, opening my heart to them, and I despised them too much for that. I even tried to talk in a rough rude way, as if I had never been used to anything better——”

“That was fine, that was heroic!” broke in Waymark, admiringly.

“I only know it was miserable enough. And things got worse instead of better. The master was a coarse drunken brute, and he and his wife used to quarrel fearfully. I have seen them throw knives at each other, and do worse things than that, too. The woman seemed somehow to have a spite against me from the first, and the way her husband behaved to me made her hate me still more. Child as I was, he did and said things which made her jealous. Often when she had gone out of an evening, I had to defend myself against him, and call the daughter to protect me. And so it went on, till, what with fear of him, and fear of her, and misery and weariness, I resolved to go away, become of me what might. One night, instead of undressing

for bed as usual, I told Jane—that was the daughter—that I couldn't bear it any longer, and was going away, as soon as I thought the house was quiet. She looked at me in astonishment, and asked me if I had anywhere to go to. Will you believe that I said yes, I had? I suppose I spoke in a way which didn't encourage her to ask questions; she only lay down on the bed and cried as usual. "Jane," I said, in a little, "if I were you, I'd run away as well." "I will," she cried out, starting up, "I will this very night! We'll go out together." It was my turn to ask her if *she* had anywhere to go to. She said she knew a girl who lived in a good home at Tottenham, and who'd do something for her, she thought. At any rate she'd rather go to the workhouse than stay where she was. So, about one o'clock, we both crept out by a back way, and ran into Edgware Road. There we said good-bye, and she went one way, and I another.

"All that night I walked about, for fear of being noticed loitering by a policeman. When it was morning, I had come round to Hyde Park,



and, though it was terribly cold—just in March—I went to sleep on a seat. I woke about ten o'clock, and walked off into the town, seeking a poor part, where I thought it more likely I might find something to do. Of course I asked first of all at eating-houses, but no one wanted me. It was nearly dark, and I hadn't tasted anything. Then I begged of one or two people—I forgot everything but my hunger—and they gave me a few coppers. I bought some bread, and still wandered about. There are some streets into which I can never bear to go now; the thought of walking about them eight years ago is too terrible to me. Well, I walked till midnight, and then could stand up no longer. I found myself in a dirty little street where the house doors stood open all night; I went into one, and walked up as far as the first landing, and there fell down in a corner and slept all night."

"Poor child!" said Waymark, looking into her face, which had become very animated as the details of the story succeeded each other in her mind. "What a strange, wild, beautiful

little face you must have carried about amid all these horrors.”

“I must have looked a terrible little savage on that next morning,” Ida went on, smiling sadly. “Oh, how hungry I was! I was awoke by a woman who came out of one of the rooms, and I asked her if she’d give me something to eat. She said she would, if I’d light her fire for her, and clean up the grate. I did this, gladly enough. Then she pretended I had done it badly, and gave me one miserable little dry crust, and told me to be off. Well, that day I found another woman who said she’d give me one meal and twopence a day for helping her to chop wood and wash vegetables; she had a son who was a costermonger, and the stuff he sold had to be cleaned each day. I took the work gladly. She never asked me where I spent the night; the truth was I chose a different house each night, where I found the door open, and went up and slept on the stairs. I often found several people doing the same thing, and no one disturbed us.

“I lived so for a fortnight, then I was lucky

enough to get into another eating-house. I lived there nearly two months, and had to leave for the very same reason as at the first place. I only half understood the meaning of what I had to resist, but my resistance led to other unbearable cruelties, and again I ran away. I went about eight o'clock in the evening. The thought of going back to my old sleeping places on the stairs was horrible. Besides, for some days a strange idea had been in my head. I had not forgotten my friend Jane, and I wondered whether, if I went to Tottenham, it would be possible to find her. Perhaps she might be well off there, and could help me. I had made inquiries about the way to Tottenham, and the distance, and when I left the eating-house I had made up my mind to walk straight there. I started from Hoxton, and went on and on, till I had left the big streets behind. I kept asking my way, but often went long distances in the wrong direction. I knew that Tottenham was quite in the country, and my idea was to find a sleeping-place in some field, then to begin my search on the next day. It was summer, but

still I began to feel cold, and this drew me away out of my straight road to a fire which I saw burning a little way off. I thought it would be nice to sit down by it and rest. I found that the road was being mended, and by the fire lay a watchman in a big tub. Just as I came up he was eating his supper. He was a great, rough man, but I looked in his face and thought it seemed good, so I asked him if he'd let me rest a little. Of course he was surprised at seeing me there, for it must have been midnight, and when he asked me about myself I told him the truth, because he spoke in a kind way. Then he stopped eating and gave me what was left; it was a bit of fat bacon and some cold potatoes; but how good it was, and how good *he* was! To this moment I can see that man's face. He got out of his tub and made me take his place, and he wrapped me up in something he had there. Then he sat by the fire, and kept looking at me, I thought, in a sad sort of way; and he said, over and over again, 'Aye, it's bad to be born a little girl; it's bad to be born a little girl; pity you wasn't a boy.' Oh, how

well I can hear his voice this moment! And as he kept saying this, I went off to sleep."

She stopped, and played with the pebbles.

"And in the morning?" asked Waymark. "Do go on. I never read a tale half so interesting."

"Well, when I woke up, it was light, and there were a lot of other men about, beginning their work on the road. I crept out of the tub, and when they saw me, they laughed in a kind sort of way, and gave me some breakfast. I suppose I thanked them, I hope I did; the watchman was gone, but no doubt he had told the others my story, for they showed me the way to Tottenham, and wished me luck. Ever since then, I've felt kindly to labouring men. And I'm sure that people that work with their hands are much better than those who live by buying and selling. Compare a shopman with these good-hearted fellows!"

"You're quite right," said Waymark. "There's nothing makes men so mean as commerce.—And you found your friend Jane!"

"No, no; how was it likely I should? I

wandered about till I could stand no longer, and then I went up to the door of a house which stood in a garden, and begged for something to eat. The servant who opened was sending me away, when her mistress heard, and came to the door. She stood looking at me for some time, and then told me to come in. I went into the kitchen, and she asked me all about myself. I told her the truth; I was too miserable now to do anything else. Well, the result was—she kept me there.”

“For good?”

“Indeed, for good. In that very house I lived for six years. Oh; she was the queerest and kindest little body! At first I helped her servant in the kitchen,—she lived quite by herself, with one servant,—but little by little she made me a sort of lady’s maid, and I did no more rough work. You wouldn’t believe the ridiculous fancies of that dear old woman! She thought herself a great beauty, and often told me so very plainly, and she used to talk to me about her chances of being married to this and the other person in the

neighbourhood. And the result of all this was that she had to spend I don't know how long every day in dressing herself, and then looking at herself in the glass. And I had to learn how to do her hair, and put paint and powder on her face, and all sorts of wonderful things. She was as good to me as she could be, and I never wanted for anything. And so six years passed, and one morning she was found dead in her bed.

“Well, that was the end of the happiest time of my life. In a day or two, some relatives came to look after things, and I had to go. They were kind to me, however; they gave me money, and told me I might refer to them if I needed to. I came to London, and took a room, and wondered what I should do.

“I advertised, and answered advertisements, but nothing came. My money was going, and I should soon be as badly off as ever. I began to do what I had always thought of as the very last thing, look for needle-work, either for home or in a work-room. I don't know how it is that I have always hated sewing. For one thing, I

really can't sew. I was never taught as a child, and few girls are as clumsy with a needle as I am. I've always looked upon a work-girl's life as the most horrible drudgery; I'd far rather scrub floors. I suppose I've a rebellious disposition, and just because sewing is looked upon as a woman's natural slavery, I rebelled against it.

“By this time I was actually starving. I had one day to tell my landlady I couldn't pay my rent. She was a very decent woman, and she talked to me in a kind way. What was better, she gave me help. She had a sister who kept a laundry, and she thought I might perhaps get something to do there; at all events she would go and see. The result was, I got work. I was in the laundry nearly six months, and became quite clever in getting up linen. Now this was a kind of work I liked. You can't think what a pleasure it was to me to see shirts and collars turning out so spotless and sweet—”

Waymark laughed.

“Oh, but you don't understand. I do so like cleanliness! I have a sort of feeling when I'm



washing anything, that I'm really doing good in the world, and the dazzling white of linen after I'd ironed it seemed to thank me for my work."

"Yes, yes, I understand well enough," said Waymark, earnestly. "'The moving waters at their priest-like task of pure ablution round earth's human shores.'"

"For all that, I couldn't stay. I was restless. I had a foolish notion that I should like to be with a better kind of people again,—I mean people in a higher position. I still kept answering advertisements for a lady's maid's place, and at last I got what I wanted. Oh yes, I got it."

She broke off, laughing bitterly, and remained silent. Waymark would not urge her to continue. For a minute it seemed as if she would tell no more; she looked at her watch, and half arose.

"Oh, I may as well tell you all, now I've begun," she said, falling back again in a careless way. "You know what the end's going to be; never mind, at all events I'll try and make you understand how it came.

“The family I got into was a lady and her two grown-up daughters, and a son of about five-and-twenty. They lived in a small house at Shepherd’s Bush. My wages were very small, and I soon found out that they were a kind of people who keep up a great deal of show on very little means. Of course I had to be let into all the secrets of their miserable shifts for dressing well on next to nothing at all, and they expected me—mother and daughters—to do the most wonderful and impossible things. I had to turn old rags into smart new costumes, to trim worn-out hats into all manner of gaudy shapes, even to patch up boots in a way you couldn’t imagine. And they used to send me with money to buy things they were ashamed to go and buy themselves; then, if I hadn’t laid out their few pence with marvellous result, they all but accused me of having used some of the money for myself. I had fortunately learnt a great deal with the good old lady in Tottenham, or I couldn’t have satisfied them for a day. I’m sure I did what few people could have done, and for all that they treated me from almost the

first very badly. I had to be housemaid as well as lady's maid; the slavery left me every night worn out with exhaustion. And I hadn't even enough to eat. As time went on, they treated me worse and worse. They spoke to me often in a way that made my blood boil, as if they were so many queens, and I was some poor mean wretch who was honoured by being allowed to toil for them. Then they quarrelled among themselves unceasingly, and of course I had to bear all the bad temper. I never saw people hate one another like those three did; the sisters even scratched each other's faces in their fits of jealousy, and sometimes they both stormed at their mother till she went into hysterics, just because she couldn't give them more money. The only one in the house who ever spoke decently to me was the son,—Alfred Bolter, his name was. I suppose I felt grateful to him. Once or twice, when he met me on the stairs, he kissed me. I was too miserable even to resent it.

“I went about, day after day, in a dazed state, trying to make up my mind to leave the people, but I couldn't. I don't know how it

was, I had never felt so afraid of being thrown out into the world again. I suppose it was bodily weakness, want of proper food and overwork. I began to feel that the whole world was wronging me. Was there never to be anything for me but slaving? Was I never to have any enjoyment of life, like other people? I felt a need of pleasure, I didn't care how or what. I was always in a fever; everything was exaggerated to me. What was going to be my future?—I kept asking myself. Was it only to be hard work, miserably paid, till I died? And I should die at last without having known what it was to enjoy my life. When I was allowed to go out—it was very seldom—I walked aimlessly about the streets, watching all the girls I passed, and fancying they all looked so happy, all enjoying their life so. I was growing thin and pale. I coughed, and began to think I was consumptive. A little more of it, and I believe I should have become so really.

“It came to an end, suddenly and unexpectedly. All three, mother and daughters, had

been worrying me through a whole morning, and at last one of them called me a downright fool, and said I wasn't worth the bread I ate. I turned on them. I can't remember a word I said, but speak I did, and in a way that astonished them; they shrank back from me, looking pale and frightened. I felt in that moment that I was a thousand times their superior; I believe I told them so. Then I rushed up to my room, packed my box, and went out into the street.

“I had just turned a corner, when some one came up to me, and it was Mr. Bolter. He had followed me from the house. He laughed, said I had done quite right, and asked me if I had any money. I shook my head. He walked on by me, and talked. The end was, that he found a room for me, provided for me, and I became his mistress.

“I had not the least affection for him, but he had pleasant, gentlemanly ways, and it scarcely even occurred to me to refuse his offers. I was reckless; what happened to me mattered little, as long as I had not to face hard work. I needed rest. For one in my position there was, I saw

well enough, only one way of getting it. I took that way."

Ida had told this in a straightforward, unhesitating manner, not meeting her companion's gaze, yet not turning away. One would have said that judgments upon her story were indifferent to her; she simply related past events. In a moment, she resumed,

"Do you remember, on the night when you first met me, a man following us in the street?"

Waymark nodded.

"He was a friend of Alfred Bolter's, and sometimes we met him when we went to the theatre, and such places. That is the only person I ever hated from the first sight,—hated and dreaded in a way I could not possibly explain."

"But why do you mention him?" asked Waymark. "What is his name?"

"His name is Mellowdew," returned Ida, pronouncing it as if the sound excited loathing in her. "I had been living in this way for nearly half-a-year, when one day this man called and

came up to my sitting-room. He said he had an appointment with Mr. Bolter, who would come presently. I sat scarcely speaking, but he talked on. Presently, Mr. Bolter came. He seemed surprised to find the other man with me, and almost at once turned round and went out again. Mellowdew followed him, saying to me that he wondered what it all meant. The meaning was made clear to me a few hours after. There came a short note from Mr. Bolter, saying that he had suspected that something was wrong, and that under the circumstances he could of course only say good-bye.

“I can't say that I was sorry ; I can't say that I was glad. I despised him for his meanness, not even troubling myself to try and make sure of what had happened. The same night Mellowdew came to see me again, made excuses, blamed his friend, shuffled here and there, and gave me clearly to understand what he wanted. I scarcely spoke, only told him to go away, and that he need never speak to me anywhere or at any time ; it would be useless. Well, I changed my lodgings for those I now have, and simply

began the life I now—the life I have been leading. Work was more impossible for me than ever, and I had to feed and clothe myself.”

“How long ago was that?” asked Waymark, without looking up.

“Four months.”

Ida rose from the beach. The tide had gone down some distance; there were stretches of smooth sand, already dry in the sunshine.

“Let us walk back on the sands,” she said pointing.

“You are going home?”

“Yes, I want to rest a little. I will meet you again about eight o’clock, if you like.”

Waymark accompanied her as far as the door, then strolled on to his own lodgings, which were near at hand. It was only the second day that they had been in Hastings, yet it seemed to him as if he had been walking about on the sea-shore with Ida for weeks. For all that, he felt that he was not as near to her now as he had been on certain evenings in London, when his arrival was to her a manifest pleasure,



and their talk unflagging from hour to hour. She did not show the spirit of holiday, seemed weary from time to time, was too often pre-occupied and indisposed to talk. True, she had at length fulfilled her promise of telling him the whole of her story, but even this increase of confidence Waymark's uneasy mind strangely converted into fresh source of discomfort to himself. She had made this revelation—he half believed—on purpose to keep up the distance between them, to warn him how slight occasion had led her from what is called the path of virtue, that he might not delude himself into exaggerated estimates of her character. Such a thought could of course only be due to the fact that Ida's story had indeed produced something of this impression upon her hearer. Waymark had often busied himself with inventing all manner of excuses for her, had exerted his imagination to the utmost to hit upon some most irresistible climax of dolorous circumstances to account for her downfall. He had yet to realize that circumstances are as relative in their importance as everything

else in this world, and that oftentimes the greatest tragedies revolve on apparently the most insignificant outward events,—personality being all.

He spent the hours of her absence in moving from place to place, fretting in mind. At one moment, he half determined to bring things to some issue, by disregarding all considerations and urging his love upon her. Yet this he felt he could not do. Surely—he asked himself angrily—he was not still so much in the thrall-dom of conventionality as to be affected by his fresh reminder of her position and antecedents? Perhaps not quite so much prejudice as experience which disturbed him. He was well acquainted with the characteristics of girls of this class; he knew how all but impossible it is for them to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. And there was one thing particularly in Ida's story that he found hard to credit; was it indeed likely that she had not felt more than she would confess for this man whose mistress she became so easily? If she had *not*, if what she said were true, was not this something like a proof of

her lack of that refined sentiment which is the capacity for love, in its real sense? Torturing doubts and reasonings of this kind once set going in a brain already confused with passion, there is slight limit to the range of speculation opened; Waymark found himself—in spite of everything—entertaining all his old scepticism. In any case, had he the slightest ground for the hope that she might ever feel to him as warmly as he did to her? He could not recall one instance of Ida's having betrayed a trace of fondness in her intercourse with him. The mere fact of their intercourse he altogether lost sight of. Whereas an outsider would, under the circumstances, have been justified in laying the utmost stress on this, Waymark had grown to accept it as a matter of course, and only occupied himself with Ida's absolute self-control, her perfect calmness in all situations, the ease with which she met his glance, the looseness of her hand in his, the indifference with which she heard him when he had spoken of his loneliness and frequent misery. Where was the key of her character? She did not care

for admiration; it was quite certain that she was not leading him about just to gratify her own vanity. Was it not purely an intellectual matter? She was a girl of superior intellect, and, having found in him some one with whom she could satisfy her desire for rational converse, did she not on this account keep up their relations? For the rest—well, she liked ease and luxury; above all, ease. Of that she would certainly make no sacrifice. How well he could imagine the half-annoyed, half-contemptuous smile which would rise to her beautiful face, if he were so foolish as to become sentimental with her! That, he felt, would be a look not easy to bear. Humiliation he dreaded.

When eight o'clock came, he was leaning over the end of the pier, at the appointed spot, still busy in thought. There came a touch on his arm.

“Well, are you thinking how you can make a book out of my story?”

The touch, the voice, the smile,—how all his sophistry was swept away in a rush of tenderness and delight!

“I must wait for the end of it,” he returned, holding out his hand, which she did not take.

“The end?—Oh, you must invent one. Ends in real life are so commonplace and uninteresting.”

“Commonplace or not,” said Waymark, with some lack of firmness in his voice, “the end of your story should not be an unhappy one, if I had the disposing of it. And I might have,—but for one thing.”

“What’s that?” she asked, with sudden interest.

“My miserable poverty. If I only had money,—money,”—

“Money!” she exclaimed, turning away almost angrily. Then she added, with the coldness which she did not often use, but which, when she did, chilled and checked him,—“I don’t understand you.”

He pointed with a bitter smile down to the sands.

“Look at that gold of the sunset in the pools the tide has left. It is the most glorious colour in nature, but it makes me miserable by

reminding me of the metal it takes its name from."

She looked at him with eyes which had in them a strange wonder, sad at first, then full of scorn, of indignation. And then she laughed, drawing herself away from him. The laugh irritated him. He experienced a terrible revulsion of feeling, from the warmth and passion which had possessed him, to that humiliation, which he could not bear.

And just now a number of people came and took their stands close by, in a gossiping group. Ida had half turned away, and was looking at the golden pools. He tried to say something, but his tongue was dry, and the word would not come. Presently, she faced him again, and said, in very much her ordinary tone,—

"I was going to tell you that I have just had news from London, which makes it necessary for me to go back to-morrow. I shall have to take an early train."

"This is because I have offended you," Waymark said, moving nearer to her. "You had no thought of going before that."

“I am not surprised that you refuse to believe me,” returned Ida, smiling very faintly. “Still, it is the truth. And now I must go in again ;—I am very tired.”

“No,” he exclaimed, as she moved away, “you must not go in till—till you have forgiven me. At least come away to a quiet place, where I can speak freely to you ; these people——”

“To-morrow morning,” she said, waving her hand wearily. “I can’t talk now,—and indeed there is no need to speak of this at all. I have forgotten it.”

“No, you have not ; how could you ?—And you will not go to-morrow ; you shall not.”

“Yes, I must,” she returned, firmly.

“Then I shall go with you.”

“As you like. I shall leave by the express at five minutes past nine.”

“Then I shall be at the station. But at least I may walk home with you ?”

“No, please. If you wish me to think you are sincere,—if you wish us still to be friends—stay till I have left the pier.—Good night.”

He muttered a return, and stood watching her as she walked quietly away.

When it was nearly midnight, Ida lay on her bed, dressed, as she had lain since her return home. For more than an hour she had cried and sobbed in blank misery, cried as never since the bitter days long ago, just after her mother's death. Then, the fit over, something like a reaction of calm followed, and, as she lay perfectly still in the darkness, her regular breathing would have led one to believe her asleep. But she was only thinking, and indeed very far from sleep. The long day in the open air had so affected her eyes that, as she looked up at the ceiling, it seemed to her to be a blue space, with light clouds constantly flitting across it. Presently this impression became painful, and a growing restlessness made her rise. The heat of the room was stifling, for just above was the roof, upon which all day the sun had poured its rays. She threw open the window, and drank the air. The night was magnificent, flooded with warm moonlight, and fragrant with sea-



breathings. Ida felt an irresistible desire to leave the house and go down to the shore, which she could not see from her window; the tide, she remembered, would just now be full, and to walk by it in the solitude of midnight would bring her that peace and strength of soul she so much needed. She put on her hat and cloak, and went downstairs. The front door was only latched, and, as she had her key, no doubt she would be able to let herself in at any hour.

The streets were all but deserted, and, when she came to the beach, no soul was anywhere visible. She walked towards the place where she had spent the afternoon with Waymark, then onwards still further to the east, till there was but a narrow space between the water and the cliffs. Breakers there were none, not more ripple at the clear tide-edge than on the border of a little lake. So intense was the silence that every now and then could be distinctly heard a call on one of the fishing-boats lying some distance from shore. The town was no longer in sight.

It was close even here; what little breeze

there was brushed the face like the warm wing of a passing bird. Ida dipped her hands in the water and sprinkled it upon her forehead. Then she took off her boots and stockings, and walked with her feet in the ripples. A moment after she stopped, and looked all around, as if hesitating at some thought, and wishing to see that her solitude was secure. Just then the sound of a clock came very faintly across the still air, striking the hour of one. She stepped from the water a few paces, and began hastily to put off her clothing; in a moment her feet were again in the ripples, and she was walking out from the beach, till her gleaming body was hidden. Then she bathed, breasting the full flow with delight, making the sundered and broken water flash myriad reflections of the moon and stars. As she came forth on to the beach again, it was another Venus Anadyomene. Heaven gloried in her beauty, and over-shone her with chaste splendour.

\* \* \* \* \*

Waymark was at the station next morning half an hour before train-time. He waited for

Ida's arrival before taking his ticket. She did not come. He walked about in feverish impatience, plaguing himself with all manner of doubt and apprehension. The train came into the station, and yet she had not arrived. It started, and no sign of her.

He waited yet five minutes, then walked hastily into the town, and to Ida's lodgings. Miss Starr, he was told, had left very early that morning; if he was Mr. Waymark, there was a note to be delivered to him.

“I thought it better that I should go to London by an earlier train, for we should not have been quite at our ease with each other. I beg you will not think my leaving you is due to anything but necessity; indeed it is not. I shall not be living at the old place, but any letter you send there I shall get. I cannot promise to reply at once, but hope you will let me do so when I feel able to.

“I. S.”

Waymark took the next train to town.

## BOOK IV.

## CHAPTER I.

## PARENTS.

AT this point in our story, it becomes necessary to go back some twenty years, and to change the scene for a moment to an unpleasant little town in Lancashire, the name of which is nothing to our purpose, and which is sufficiently characterized by the statement of the fact that it is in the midst of a mining district, that its atmosphere is one of soot and coal-dust, and its population precisely of the kind which such surroundings might be expected to foster. Some twenty years, then, before the date we have at present reached, a well-known figure in this disagreeable little town was that of the Rev. Paul Enderby, a young man of notable exterior, and, to all appearances, endowed with

moral and intellectual qualities considerably above the average. Mr. Enderby was not a native of Lancashire ; he came from London, and was said to have sought, of free choice, this sphere for the exertion of his activity. There could be no doubt of the tremendous earnestness with which he threw himself into every kind of work adapted to his position. Though anything but well off, he managed very soon to get a reputation for solid beneficence among the poor people of his parish. In religious matters, his attitude was one of great liberality ; not a few people were found to assert that the gospel he preached was anything but that recognized by the Church of England ; still, his congregation were somehow impressed from the first by his manifest zeal, and by degrees followed him in tracts of doctrine whither they would certainly never have strayed of their own motion. In the houses of the well-to-do inhabitants he was extremely popular, thinking it in no wise incompatible with his position to display a vigorous enjoyment of the present world, and to do his best towards making others

equally at home in it. If he ever felt longings for a social circle which would have given more scope to the powers of his mind, he at all events never gave outward signs of being anything but perfectly at his ease ; wise Paul Enderby.

He had lived here for two years, an unmarried man ; now it was all at once made known abroad that this state of things was to come to an end ; moreover, to the grievous disappointment of not a few households, it was understood that the future Mrs. Enderby had been chosen from among his own people, in far-away London. The lady came, and of course there was a field-day of criticism, with very various results in various circles. To begin with, she could not be more than seventeen ; in the next place she was undeniably pretty, if not handsome. Altogether useless qualities, and worse, of course, in a clergyman's wife—at all events in such a place as this. Nor did it appear, as acquaintance grew, that Mrs. Enderby could make up in promise of serious conversation for her obvious disadvantages ; “flighty” was the epithet applied to her by

the ladies with whom she came in contact, and it may be that they were not far wrong. She had a quantity of superficial accomplishments, and evidently liked to exhibit them before her homely visitors. She exaggerated the refinement of her utterance that it might all the more strike off against the local twang, and if there is anything which will make a person detested by the lowly inhabitants of the north, it is this very refinement, affected or not. Then, it soon became clear that she would be anything but an assistance to her husband in his parochial work; one or two attempts were made, apparently with good will, at intercourse with the poor parishioners, but the enterprise was distinctly a failure; it had to be definitively given up. Presently a child was born in the parsonage, and for a little while the young mother's attention was satisfactorily engaged at home. The child was a girl and received the name of Maud.

I don't know that it is necessary to go into much more detail about the relations between Paul and his wife in these early days. The

man, for all his vigorous self-surrender to clerical work, was endowed with a hot and imaginative temperament; it may be that he felt the necessity of calming his pulses by immersion in the world's misery, and on that very account had become what he was. Enough that the marriage was one of—perhaps one should say infatuation rather than love, at all events on the husband's side. Their acquaintance was a chance one, in the first instance. The girl had been discovered living with her mother and an only sister; they were gentlefolk, but not very well-to-do. Paul's home, for the first year of his marriage, was a scene of romance. He had naturally tried to bring the girl into harmony with her circumstances, but, failing, did not pursue his efforts, and on the whole perhaps did not regret his failure. He had wedded because he wanted to love and be loved, not for the sake of having what is called a helpmate. And of love he had his fill. The girl was of temperament as warm as his own. Unfortunately, she had not his powers of self-balance. Paul's work was an abomination to



her; she grudged every moment of his presence of which it robbed her. She should have carried him off with her to some *Ææan* isle, where the tale of the diminishing moons might have circled to successive years, whilst the world of toil and want remained forgotten.

He struggled, poor fellow, to bate no jot of his former activity, but the change was soon very plain to all. Not only was his personal ubiquity a thing of the past, but those who had learned to look for his helping hand in times of need found that he either could not, or did not care to, assist them as previously. The fact was that his income was sadly inelastic, whilst the claims of home grew in very noticeable degree. His wife was no housekeeper, and what was more, fond of a certain luxury without being able to understand the adaptation of means to ends. Paul would have "dropped his blood for drachmas," rather than bid her hold her hand when she longed for anything. With the second year, when the first pleasure in her baby had worn off, she grew more and more careless in her expenses. She ordered

costly dresses,—and could he say a word of the outlay when she stood before him and made his eyes drunk with the perfection of her beauty? He remembered how young she was, and thought she would grow wiser. And the more she sank him in horrible embarrassments, the more desperately he loved her. In the third year, things had got so far that people began to talk, and Paul seriously contemplated a plan of exchanging to some other living; a richer one if practicable; if not, then just for the sake of making a new beginning in a new place. He was growing haggard; his health was failing; his work shrank to the narrowest possible limits; he shunned men's gaze.

Yet all at once there happened something which revived much of his old zeal, and, in spite of everything, brought him once more prominently forward. A grave calamity had visited the town. By a great explosion in a neighbouring colliery, numbers of homes had been rendered destitute, and aid of every kind was imperatively called for on all sides. In former times, Paul Eaderby would have been just the man for this

occasion, and even now he was not wanting. Extensive subscriptions were raised, and he, as chief man in the committee which had been formed, had chief control of the funds. People said afterwards that they had often remarked something singular in his manner as he went about in these duties. Whether that was true or not, something more than singular happened when, some two months later, accounts were being investigated and cleared up. Late one evening, Mr. Enderby left home,—and never returned to it. It was very soon known that he must have appropriated to his own use considerable sums which had reached his hands for charitable purposes, and the scandal was terrific. Mrs. Enderby and her child disappeared in a day or two. It was said that an old and a young lady from London had come and fetched her away, and she was no more heard of in that disagreeable little town.

Had he killed himself? Presumably not; for Miss Bygrave, his wife's elder sister, had received a letter from Paul summoning her to the poor girl's aid: and this letter, dated from Liverpool,

after disclosing in a few words the whole situation, went on to say that the writer, though he would never more be seen by those who knew him, would not fail to send his wife what money he could as often as he could. And, after half a year, sums had begun to be remitted, in envelopes bearing a Californian postmark. They were not much use, however, to Mrs. Enderby. A few days after her arrival at her home in London, she had been discovered hanging, with a rope round her neck, from a nail behind her bedroom door. Cut down in time, her life was saved, but reason had forsaken her. She was taken away to an asylum, and remained there for five years.

By that time, she seemed to have quite recovered. Her home was now to be with her sister, Theresa Bygrave, in the house in South Bank, which we already know. Her child, Maud Enderby, was nearly seven years old, and was in Miss Bygrave's care, the poor mother of the sisters having died amid the horrors which had come upon her family. Mrs. Enderby returned to the world very much the same woman that

she had left it, but with some of her more individual characteristics strengthened. She had never lacked character, being capable of the same passionate force which proved itself, though so differently, in Theresa. This now took the form of one immutable resolution. Having found that the child knew nothing of its parents, she determined that this ignorance should continue; or rather that it should be exchanged for the belief that those parents were both long dead. She herself would take her husband's first name, and be known as Mrs. Paul. Her sister was in doubt whether to give her consent, but yielded in the end. "Would you have the child grow up with the misery of knowing one parent a fugitive criminal, and the other a lunatic?" asked the unhappy mother; adding, "I am sane now, but I shall not be so for long at a time, and at last I shall die mad."

The first part of the prophecy was soon fulfilled. She brooded over the loss of her husband, who had now for more than two years given no sign that he still lived, and her wretchedness brought about a result to which perpetual

insanity would have been preferable. She began to support herself with all manner of drugs and stimulants; by degrees became a drunkard. In eighteen months, she was again confined in the asylum. But through everything the resolve to conceal herself from the child held good. She scarcely allowed herself to caress it, though full of passionate love. Maud's training was in Miss Bygrave's hands, and found no interference.

Her next period of sanity endured longer, but was terminated in the same manner as before. You remember that Christmas night, when the talk between Maud and her aunt was interrupted by the pale, wild face at the door, and when a moment after, a strange man entered the house, and there ensued a scene of unexplained horror? The poor woman's mind was already straying, when, as she went to pass out of the house, she found herself face to face with the husband she had not seen for ten years, and at once became a maniac.

No one had expected Paul's return. He came back to his own country in a state of complete poverty; on his face the marks of dread ex-

perience. What that experience had been, he never opened his lips to tell; the story of those ten years would die with him.

He remained in London, and somehow worked on to a tolerable livelihood. He met his sister-in-law at regular intervals, and she learned from him that he was employed in the City. When, after nearly five years, his wife once more left the asylum, it was for a long time a matter for doubt whether he ought to risk the effect of seeing her. He did so, at length. She had seemed long impressed with a belief that he was somewhere near her, and the meeting between them was much calmer than had been expected. The result upon her was for good. Within a few months, the revival of the old passion made it impossible for them to be separated. Paul took her into his own home, and their married life was renewed.

Now let us listen to a conversation between Paul Enderby and Miss Bygrave, which took place very nearly at the time when Waymark and Ida were together in Hastings. Early one evening, Paul had called at the house in South

Bank, the interior of which had in no respect changed since we last saw it; still the same coldness, bareness and gloom, the same silence echoing to a strange footfall. Theresa Bygrave had not greatly altered; tall, upright, clad in the plainest black garment, she walked into the room with silent dignity, looking scarcely older, though much of gray was now visible in the hair which fell on each side of her clear, colourless, perfect face. She smiled gently in greeting her brother-in-law,—not a smile of pleasure, but of kindly feeling.

Paul Enderby was still a man of fine physique and distinctly handsome countenance. He was not yet fifty, but the little hair he had was almost white; his face was completely shaven. His nerves left him no rest; it was difficult for him to remain seated more than a few minutes; his hands constantly occupied themselves at his watch-chain, in his pockets, with objects about the room. The physiognomy was in keeping with this nervousness, keen in outline, expressive of shrewd intellect, with almost feminine tenderness about the lips, eyes the more restless



and anxious that they were very short-sighted. He spoke quickly and eagerly, frequently correcting his expressions, and always watching the effect of what he said, though his gaze never for a moment fully met that of the person he spoke with. At present his cheeks were much flushed. He constantly laughed in a forced way, as if to solicit a friendly construction of all he said.

“We have talked it over again,” he began, when Miss Bygrave was seated, “and we have decided, <sup>and</sup> <sup>Paul</sup> it really seems best to us,—we think our life would be vastly happier, if—if we <sup>we</sup> took this step.”

He paused and watched the listener's face eagerly, glancing quickly away as soon as she looked up.

“And you still wish me to break it to Maud, and in the way you said?”

Her calm, low, distinct utterance contrasted very strangely with his rapid indistinctness.

“If you would.—But I do so wish you would let me know your own thoughts about this. You have so much claim to be considered.

Maud is in reality yours far more than she is ours. Will it,—do you think now it will really be for our own happiness? Will the explanation you are able to give be satisfactory to her? What will be her attitude towards us? You know her character,—you understand her.”

“If the future could be all as calm as the past year has been,” said Miss Bygrave, “I should have nothing to urge against your wishes.”

“And this will contribute to it,” exclaimed Enderby. “This would give Emily the very support she needs. And, indeed, I am convinced that her mind is perfectly established; her self-control is all but complete; the one great evil and temptation scarcely any longer exists for her. No; if I could anticipate anything so dreadful as—as you seem to fear, I would not entertain this project for a moment; far better that Maud should remain parentless—though that she is not, having you—than be drawn into such fearful things. I have consulted a physician on these points, and his opinion is strongly favourable. Maud will—will uphold

her mother; her strong nature will be just what poor Emily's weakness needs. Do try to heartily approve this, Theresa; you can't think what a comfort that would be to me, to—to know you perfectly content to have it so."

Miss Bygrave looked into his face, which had a pleading earnestness, and a deep pity lay in her eyes.

"Let it be so," she said, with decision. "I myself have much hope from Maud's influence. I will write and tell her not to renew her engagement, and she will be with us at the end of September."

"But you will not tell her anything till she comes?"

"No."

"Better so. Now I shall set to work to find a house,—somewhere in this part it shall be. Our life will be renewed in real earnest. Emily will be overwhelmed with joy when I tell her that it is all settled. And her mind will be so thoroughly occupied in the intervening time. She shall go with me to look over houses, and then there will be the purchasing of furniture,

and so on,—just what she likes.” Here one of those painful little jerks of laughter. “You can’t think how much more like my old self I have been since these gleams of sunshine came upon me! All my old interests are coming strongly back; things I haven’t thought of for years once more occupy me. I am better in health, too, now that I am able to take more care of myself.”

“I earnestly hope your sadness is gone by for ever,” said Theresa, gently, and with the calm of one whose own lot is beyond the arbitrament of the world’s mutability.

Paul Enderby seemed possessed with a sudden access of fervour. He seated himself in a chair close by her, and began to speak with a warmth and readiness different from his usual nervous manner.

“Do you think me ungrateful, Theresa, because I have not once tried to thank you for all you have been in this wretched life of mine? If I have not done so, it is because thanks were vain, seemed paltry when I most felt your overwhelming goodness. Who else would have

been as patient with me as you have,—never have uttered one syllable of reproof or reproach, when you might so justly have scorned me out of your very presence? Sometimes I have almost thought that your forbearance was cruelty; you made me so terribly conscious of the greatness of your own soul, and of my own mean littleness. You are like no other man or woman; you are great and noble as the saint whose name you bear. I have moments when the thought of you fills me with a passion of worship. And could I do better than worship one like you? You make me realize the necessity of those who made saints intermediaries between themselves and Heaven; I am not worthy to approach a glory which is above earth; I can humble myself before you, and feel that you have compassion upon me. And you do not know my full weakness. I even try to hide it from you. I would so gladly have some of your love, as well as your pity. Yet I am miserably unworthy of it.”

“You must not credit me with more than I possess,” said Theresa, whose face, as he spoke,

had become transfigured with a light which scarcely seemed of the flesh. "My life has been very remote from temptation. Perhaps in shrinking from the world, I have only obeyed the voice of my own weakness."

"No, no," he cried, with a trembling voice, "to withhold from the world can never be anything but a sign of strength. It is I, and such as I, who cling to the world so much, that love the darkness rather than the light. I am given up to mere enjoyments of the day; yours is the peace of the kingdom in which there is neither day nor night, nor time, nor change,—only the eternity of the soul. And I want you to know that I am conscious of this, that I have not lost all power of admiring what is noble and pure. Is there not something in this mere power to *understand* the higher life? Or is our damnation greater, that we see, yet will not follow?"

There were tears in his voice.

"I hope and think," was Theresa's gentle answer, "that I have never judged you wrongly. I do not believe that you have ever really loved darkness rather than light. We cannot all win

our salvation in the same way. What is law for one may not be binding upon another. Who has more than the *wish* to be perfect? Your trials may well have brought you in many ways further upon the path than I can ever be."

"No; I have fallen; only and always fallen. But in your presence I am better than myself. If I had not the chance of seeing and speaking with you, I should be hopelessly lost. Take what poor thanks I can offer you. If I am ever stronger, I will thank you better."

Almost without leave-taking, he hurried away.

We have seen how Maud Enderby and her aunt lived whilst the former was still a child. It was only very slowly that a nearer intimacy had developed with a warm affection felt on both sides, but seldom given expression to. Miss Bygrave had her limitations. Though a woman, childhood was not charming to her; she even found it difficult to sympathize with a soul which was growing, seeking its way in many directions. Suffering seemed to her the essential of spiritual progress, and had Maud been one

of those shallow, joyous natures which reach such maturity as they are capable of without any period of inward anguish, she and her aunt would doubtless have ever remained asunder. But the girl's personality was far other than this. As she grew into perception of the circumstances amid which her lot was cast, the sense of a mystery clinging around her began to darken her life. Her parents, she was told, were dead ; relatives besides her aunt she seemed to have none. Miss Bygrave herself lived in all but complete severance from the world. Maud felt that her history could not be the common one of an orphaned child, and, though very soon refraining from inquiries which she saw to be unwelcome, she brooded over these things in her loneliness. When, on leaving her first school, she attended another of a higher kind, the companionship of the young girls with whom she studied did not suffice to draw her out of herself. The contrast between her life and theirs was painfully forced upon her ; she withdrew into solitary reading and thinking ; grew ever more timid of the



world which was unknown, and by degrees sought more of her aunt's confidence, feeling that here was a soul that had long since attained to the peace which she was vainly seeking.

[Theresa Bygrave was no proselytizer.] It was with effort that she brought herself to speak to another of her form of faith. After that Christmas night when she addressed Maud for the first time on matters of religion, she had said no second word; she waited the effect of her teaching, and the girl's spontaneous recurrence to the subject. Maud was long before she could overcome the diffidence she felt in inviting her aunt's closer sympathy. As was but natural, the mere proximity to the latter's daily life was influencing her greatly, and the one lesson she had received was bearing its fruits. There was something in the very air of the still, chill house favourable to ascetic gravity. A young girl, living under such circumstances, must either pine away, eating her own heart, or become a mystic, and find her daily food in religious meditation. Maud felt severely the want of books. There were

very few in the house, and these almost all religious poets, one or two of whom Theresa was in the habit of reading and re-reading. Maud made their acquaintance, and acquired the taste for them. For a long time she wondered vainly how her aunt occupied herself through her long, lonely days, in the room which no other person ever entered; when the two began to draw nearer to each other, she discovered that Theresa spent most of her time in needlework, the result of which was all given away in charity. Maud begged to be allowed to aid her in this, and found the occupation a relief in her dreary periods of holiday.

Miss Bygrave scarcely ever spoke of the ordinary concerns of every-day life; she lived, for the most part, as if under a vow of silence. Only when Maud was seventeen years old, did she speak for the first time to her of her life in the future. Her own income, she explained, was but just sufficient for their needs, and would terminate upon her death; had Maud thought at all of what course she would choose when the time for decision came? Naturally, only

one thing could suggest itself to the girl's mind, and that was to become a teacher. To begin with, she took subordinate work in the school where she had been a pupil; later, she obtained the engagement at Dr. Tootle's.

An education of this kind, working upon Maud Enderby's natural temperament, resulted in an abnormal character, the chief trait of which was remarkable as being in contradiction to the spirit of our days. She was oppressed with the consciousness of sin. Every most natural impulse of her own heart she regarded as a temptation to be resisted with all her strength. Her ideal was the same as Theresa's, but she could not pursue it with the latter's assured calm; at every moment the voice of her youth spoke within her, and became to her the voice of the enemy. Her faith was scarcely capable of formulation in creeds; her sins were not of omission or commission in the literal sense; it was an attitude of soul which she sought to attain, though ever falling away. What little she saw of the world in London, and afterwards at her home by the sea-side, only

served to increase the trouble of her conscience, by making her more aware of her own weakness. For instance, the matter of her correspondence with Waymark. In very truth, the chief reason why she had given him the permission he asked of her was, that before so sudden and unexpected a demand she found herself confused and helpless; had she been able to reflect, the temptation would probably have been resisted, for the pleasantness of the thought made her regard it as a temptation of the gravest. Casuistry and sophistical reasoning with her own heart ensued, to the increase of her morbid sensitiveness; she persuaded herself that greater insight into the world's evil would be of aid in her struggle, and so the contents of Waymark's first letter led her to a continuance of the correspondence. The power of strong and gloomy description which she showed in her own letters, and which so impressed Waymark, afforded the very key to the deepest of her sufferings; her soul in reality was that of an artist, and, whereas the artist should be free from everything like moral prepossession, Maud's

æsthetic sensibilities were in perpetual conflict with her moral convictions. She could not understand herself, seeing that her opportunities had never allowed her to obtain an idea of the artistic character. This irrepressible delight and interest in the active life of the world, what could it be but the tendency to evil, most strongly developed? These heart-burnings whenever she witnessed men and women rejoicing in the exercise of their natural affections, what could that be but the proneness to evil in its grossest form? The sight of a mother fondling her child would often cause her to all but faint, a terrible tumult in her blood blinded her, and made her stagger for a moment. It was the same when one of Waymark's letters arrived. The touch of the paper was like fire; it was minutes before she could distinguish the words when she endeavoured to read. It was marvellous that such intense experiences allowed her to remain in tolerable health. She did indeed suffer severely at times from headaches, neuralgia, and other disorders of the nerves; but under her frail appearance she concealed a

force and a vitality which would enable her to bear through much.

It was naturally a great surprise to Maud when she received the letter from her aunt, which asked her not to continue her engagement into the new quarter, giving as a reason merely that the writer wished for her at home. It was even with something of dread and shrinking that she looked forward to a renewal of the old life. Still, it was enough that her aunt had need of her; ill health, it at once occurred to her, must be the meaning of the summons. This, however, she was assured was not the case; and then her restless imagination filled her with the thought that some new phase of her destiny was about to open; that something of the mystery would be cleared up, with confirmation or the opposite of the long romance, which had grown to a strange conviction through years of brooding. The agitation which this belief caused, gained upon her during the remaining weeks; when at length she reached home, it was in a state of illness, such as necessitated her keeping her bed for some days.

And when, yielding to her almost desperate entreaties, Theresa made the disclosure she would have preferred to postpone, Maud lay pale and feeble for hours, only able to make signs that she was not suffering. Miss Bygrave's story had been agreed upon between herself and Paul. It had been deemed best to make Mrs. Enderby's insanity the motive of Maud's removal from her parents,—this, coupled with a commercial failure suffered by her father in early life, the result of which had been a long period of poverty. Theresa said—truly, in this instance—that it had been the mother's own wish to hide herself and her terrible affliction from her child. But things were brighter now, and there seemed no longer any reason why this unnatural state of things should continue.

Maud wished at first to wait a few days before seeing her parents, but within two or three hours her mind changed, she would go to them the next day. To her aunt's astonishment, she rose from her bed almost immediately after determining this, and seemed to shake off her illness by a mere effort of will. She moved

about during the evening restlessly, and asked constant questions about the new life she was going to enter upon. When at length the time for rest came, and she went to kiss her aunt in the old accustomed way, instead of doing so, she fell upon her knees, with a burst of weeping.

“Pray for me, pray for me,” she sobbed, “that I may have strength! You have been my mother so long, and my mother in the spirit you will always be. I am not leaving you; I only seem to do so; in my heart I am always clinging to you, for you are my trust after God. Put your arms round me—once! Lay your hand on my head and bless me, for I need it!”

Theresa raised the girl, pressed her tenderly to her strong heart, and wept over her.



## CHAPTER II.

## ON A NEW FOOTING.

THE five years or so since Paul Enderby's reappearance in England seemed to have been not unprosperous. The house to which Maud was welcomed by her father and mother was not a large one, and not in a very fashionable locality, but it was furnished with elegance. Mrs. Enderby frequently had her hired brougham, and made use of it to move about a good deal where people see and are seen ; though she had very few acquaintances, and those few not people of her own apparent standing. Mr. Enderby's business was "in the City," and he was understood to follow the somewhat vague avocations of a "broker." How he had surmounted the first difficulties was not very clear ; his wife learned that he had brought with him from

America a scheme for the utilization of waste product in some obscure branch of manufacture, which had been so far successful as to supply him with a small capital. He seemed to work hard, leaving home at nine each morning, getting back to dinner at half-past six, and, as often as not, spending the evening away from home, and not returning till the small hours. He had the feverish eye of a man whose subsistence depends upon speculative acuteness and restless calculation. No doubt he was still so far the old Paul, that, whatever he undertook, he threw himself into it with surpassing energy. His hardships did not seem to have wrought much upon his health ; he was, indeed, in the prime of life.

Emily Enderby was in her thirty-eighth year, and still handsome. Most men, at all events, would have called her so, for most men are attracted by a face which is long, delicate, characterless, and preserves late the self-conscious expression of a rather frivolous girl of seventeen. She had yellow hair—or seemed to have, for much of it was false, and her own was dyed.

It was not pleasant to meet her eyes; their look suggested a secret understanding with you; and, if you happened to know her history, you could read in them only too clearly both past events and future possibilities. Her laugh was jarring to the ear, too childish, yet without the child's innocence, and she laughed on the slightest occasion. For all this, you did not shrink from her. Every now and then came a flash of good sense, or of true womanly feeling, which hinted what she might have become under happier circumstances—above all, had the companion of her life been a man with force to repress the evil in her and develop the good. By no means without strength of will, she had yet never known what was meant by principle. In this, to be sure, she was only like the vast majority of women; but, whereas most women are kept in the straight path of what we call duty, domestic and social, by sheer force of habit, and that alone, this very habit had never entered into her life. She had ideals of her own, which she pursued regardless of the course in which they led her; and these ideals were

far from ignoble. To beauty of all kinds she was passionately sensitive. As a girl she had played the piano well, and, though the power had gone from long disuse, music was still her chief passion. Graceful ease, delicacy in her surroundings, freedom from domestic cares, the bloom of flowers, sweet scents—such things made up her existence. She loved her husband, and had once worshipped him; she loved her recovered daughter; but both affections were in her, so to speak, of æsthetic rather than of moral quality.

How was such a woman capable of the sacrifice implied in the separation from her child during so many years—a sacrifice dictated, as we have seen, by conscious consideration for Maud's happiness? The explanation was this. The return of reason after her first attack of insanity, led her for the first time to a sense of the misfortunes which had befallen her. Brought to live with her sister, transferred to an utterly barren and colourless sphere, submitted to influences which previously would have left her unaffected, but which now, in her lonely and

helpless state, proved all-powerful, she experienced a change of the kind known in religious technology as "conversion." Passionate in this new feeling, as in every other which for a time possessed her, she must needs offer some extreme proof of her sincerity. Theresa had purposely kept the child away from her in the first instance—possibly with no great wisdom, humanly speaking—and when, for the first time, the subject was mentioned between them, Emily declared the resolution she had come to. After consideration, her sister favoured it, and Theresa's influence it was, doubtless, which kept the resolution inviolate. The power of a nature like Theresa's over such a woman as Emily was almost boundless. Small wonder that the second attack of insanity ensued. The life of those lucid years must have been such as would have affected a far stronger intellect. The poor creature, as we know, took refuge in drink; it would procure her the pleasurable excitement which otherwise she could never have known, and be followed by the unconsciousness which was perhaps a yet greater boon.

Intercourse between Maud and her parents, now that they lived together, was, as might have been expected, not altogether natural or easy. She came to them with boundless longings, ready to expend in a moment the love of a lifetime; they, on their side, were scarcely less full of warm anticipation; yet something prevented the complete expression of this mutual yearning. The fault was not in the father and mother if they hung back somewhat; in very truth, Maud's pure, noble countenance abashed them. This, their child, was so much the superior of them both; they felt it from the first moment, and could never master the consciousness. Maud mistook this for coldness; it checked and saddened her. Yet time brought about better things, though the ideal would never be attained. In her father, the girl found much to love; her mother she could not love as she had hoped, but she regarded her with a vast tenderness, often with deep compassion. Much of sympathy, moreover, there was between these two. Maud's artistic temperament was inherited from her mother, but she possessed it

in a stronger degree, of purer quality, and under greater restraint. This restraint, however, did not long continue to be exercised as hitherto. Once the shadow of her aunt's roof quitted, Maud strove in vain against her own instincts. Life for the first time was open before her, and the music which began to fill her ears, the splendour which shone into her eyes, gradually availed to still that inner voice which had so long spoken to her in dark admonishings. She could not resign herself absolutely to the new delight; it was still a conflict; but from the conflict itself she derived a kind of joy, born of the strength of her imagination. No longer restricted in her literature to religious poetry, she searched with eagerness the catalogue of the circulating library, and read everything which seemed likely to answer her desire for spiritual beauty. We are fond of trying to conceive what our sensations would be if we could be born into the world in possession of mature faculties; the endless delight and wonder, the rush of speculation fettered by no established prejudices, the unflagging interest in every com-

monest detail of life. Maud's experience in many respects resembled such a state as this. The universe of art was all at once disclosed; she burned through tale and poem with joy almost too great to bear. The day for selection was not yet; where all was the work of magic, how to choose and prefer? Many a night she read till the dawn came ghostlike to her window, and many days she scarcely stirred from her chair. When she paused to think of the past time, it was like looking back into a half-forgotten state of being; the motives and faiths which had actuated her grew difficult of realization. The present was scarcely less subject to consciousness; life had become a dream of emotion. The people she met, the places she went to, the succession of day upon day, these things were misty and intangible; the only real presence was her own throbbing heart.

Yes, there was one item of the past which dwelt with her, and by degrees busied her thoughts more and more. The correspondence with Waymark had ceased, and by her own negligence. In those days of mental disturb-



ance which preceded her return to London, his last letter had reached her, and this she had not replied to. It had been her turn to write, but she had not felt able to do so; it had seemed to her, indeed, that, with her return home, the correspondence would naturally come to an end; with a strange ignorance of herself, such as now and then darkens us, she had suddenly come to attach little value to the connection. Not improbably, Waymark's last two letters had been forced and lacking in interest; they were written at a time when Ida's presence was strong upon him, and when he himself half regretted having commenced a relationship which could lead to nothing. In writing, he had never said anything which could be construed into more than an expression of friendly interest, or intellectual sympathy. It may be that Maud's condition, dimly prophetic of the coming change, required more than this, and she conceived a certain dissatisfaction. Then came the change itself, and for some weeks she scarcely thought of her correspondent. One day, however, she chanced upon the little packet

of his letters, and read them through again. It was with new eyes. Thoughts spoke to her which had not been there on the first reading. Waymark had touched at times on art and kindred subjects, and only now could she understand his meaning. She felt that, in breaking off her connection with him, she had lost the one person who could give her entire sympathy; to whom she might have spoken, with certainty of being understood, of all the novel ideas which possessed her; who, indeed, would have been invaluable as a guide in the unknown land she was treading. It was now almost the end of the year; more than three months had gone by since she received that last letter from him. Could she write now, and let him know that she was in London? How explain her long silence? And even if it were explained, to write now would be almost the same as inviting him to a personal meeting, though it was hard to say how that could come about. She could not but give expression to her altered self; and would he be able to understand her? Yet,—she needed him; and there was something of her

mother in the fretting to which she was now and then driven by the balked desire. At length she was on the point of writing a letter, with whatever result, when chance spared her the trouble.

One morning in December, she went with her mother to an exhibition of pictures in Bond Street. Such visits had been common of late; Mrs. Enderby could rarely occupy herself for long at home, and pictures, as everything beautiful, always attracted her. They had been in the gallery a few minutes only, when Maud recognized Waymark close at hand. He was looking closely at a canvas, and seemed quite unaware of her proximity. She laid her hand on her mother's arm, and spoke in a nervous whisper.

"Mother, I know that gentleman."

"This one?" asked Mrs. Enderby, indicating Waymark, with a smile. She showed no surprise, any more than she would have done had Maud been only her friend.

"Yes. If he should notice me, may I introduce him to you? He was at the school where I taught, a year ago."

“Why, certainly, my love,” replied her mother, with cheerful assent. “It is quite natural that you should have acquaintances I should like to know. Shall I ask him to come and see us?”

There was no opportunity of answering. Waymark, in moving on, had glanced round at the groups of people, and his eye had fallen on Maud. He seemed uncertain; looked quickly away; glanced again, and, meeting her eyes, raised his hat, though still without conviction in his face. Maud came naturally forward a step or two, and they shook hands; then at once she introduced him to her mother. No one ever experienced awkward pauses in Mrs. Enderby's presence; conversation linked itself with perfect ease, and in a minute they were examining the pictures together. Mrs. Enderby had made up her mind with regard to her new acquaintance in one or two gleams of her quick eyes, and then talked on in an eager, intelligent way, full of contagious enthusiasm, which soon brought out Waymark's best powers. Maud said very little. Whenever it was possible

unobserved, she gazed at Waymark's face. She found herself thinking that, in external appearance, he had improved since she last saw him. He had no longer that hungry, discontented look to which she had grown accustomed in the upper schoolroom at Dr. Tootle's; his eye seemed at once quieter and keener; his complexion was brighter; the habitual frown had somewhat smoothed away. Then, he was more careful in the matter of dress. On the whole, it seemed probable that his circumstances had changed for the better.

Waymark, on his side, whilst he talked, was not less full of speculation about Maud. For the change in her appearance was certainly much more noticeable than it could be in his own. Not only that she had put aside her sad-coloured and poor raiment for a costume of tasteful and attractive simplicity,—this, of course, her mother's doing,—but the look of shrinking, almost of fear, which he had been wont to see on her face, was entirely gone. Her eyes seemed for ever intelligent of new meanings; she was pale, but with the pallor

of eager, joy-bringing thought; to meet her glance was to be subdued into calm by its simple directness. There was something pathetic in this new-born face; the lips seemed still to speak of past sorrows, or, it might be, to hold unspoken a sad fate half-foreseen.

“I hope you will let us see you shortly, Mr. Waymark,” Mrs. Enderby said, when the pictures had all been viewed. “When would it suit you to dine with us? Could you say next Wednesday? We should really be very glad.”

Waymark accepted the invitation. It was only when they had parted at the door, and gone their separate ways, that it occurred to him that he had no knowledge of where the Enderbys lived. This matter, however, was set right on the following morning, when there came a short note from Maud. “It was foolish of me to forget this,” she said, after rectifying the omission. “Formerly, I was not living with my parents.” And she added, “Pray forgive me for not replying to your last letter. I have given up my work of teaching, and shall

most likely continue to live in London." This was not very consequent, but it was all Maud could say, though, with trembling hand, she had written many notes before this final one.

If this renewal of acquaintanceship came just at the right time for Maud, it was no less welcome to Waymark. When he wrote his last letter to her, it had proceeded more from a sense of obligation than any natural impulse. For he was then only just recovering from a period of something like despair. His pursuit of Ida Starr to London had been fruitless. It was true that she had left her former abode, and the landlady professed to be ignorant of her new one, though she admitted that she had seen Ida scarcely two hours before Waymark's arrival. He wrote, but had no reply. His only comfort was an ever-rising suspicion of the truth (as he would learn it later), but fears were, on the whole, strongest within him. Confidence in her he had not. All the reflections of that last evening on Hastings pier lived and re-lived in his mind; outcome of the cynicism which was a marked feature in his

development, and at the same time tending to confirm it. She had been summoned back suddenly by a letter; who but a simpleton could doubt what that meant? It was out of her honesty that she had told him plainly why she must go; perhaps she would not have been so honest but for his prior insult. Well, they were quits, and what had he to complain of? He thought of Sally Grace, of course, and the step she had taken; but could he draw conclusions about Ida from Sally, and did ever two such instances come within a man's experience? To Sally herself he had naturally had recourse, but in vain. She said that she knew nothing of the lost girl. So Waymark fought it out, to the result of weariness; then plunged into his work again, and had regained very much his ordinary state of mind when Maud Enderby unexpectedly came before him. To the loss of her he had also resigned himself. Well, and was it likely that their correspondence could go on for ever? She was tired of it, no doubt; he, on his side, was not passionately interested. Life is an incomplete novel, con-



sisting, for the most part, of blurred and fragmentary chapters. It interests us, doubtless, as each new situation shadows itself forth; but, as we see these successively come to nothing, we smile, if we are wise, and wonder sadly what the author was about.

Waymark presented himself on the Wednesday evening at a house in Paddington. He found Maud and her mother in a little drawing-room, which had a pleasant air of ease and refinement. Mr. Enderby had not reached home yet. It was a new sensation for Waymark as he sank into a soft chair, and, in speaking, lowered his voice, to suit the quietness of the room. The soft lamp-light spreading through the coloured shade, the just perceptible odour of scent when Mrs. Enderby stirred, the crackling of the welcome fire, filled him with a sense of luxury to which he was not accustomed. He looked at Maud. She was very beautiful in her evening dress; and, marking the grave, sweet thoughtfulness of her face, the grace of her movements, the air of purity which clung about her, his mind turned to Ida Starr, and experienced a shock

at the comparison. Where was Ida at this moment? The mere possibilities which such a question brought before his mind made him uneasy, almost as if he had forgotten himself and uttered aloud some word all unfit for ladies' ears. The feeling was a novel one, and, in afterwards recalling it, he could smile rather contemptuously. If we are enraptured with one particular flower, shall we necessarily despise another, whose beauty and perfume happen to be of quite a different kind?

Mr. Enderby appeared, followed by another gentleman. Waymark noticed an unpleasant heat in the hand held out to him; there was a flush in Paul's cheeks, too, and his eyes were very bright. He greeted the visitor with somewhat excessive warmth, then turned round and introduced his companion.

“Mr. Mellowdew!”

Waymark had not clearly seen the face; on hearing the name, he looked sharply. Mr. Mellowdew he had seen before. The recognition, he fancied, was mutual, but the other was not a man to let any feeling become too

obvious on his hard, smooth, and rather handsome face. He shook hands in a friendly way, smiled a little, and went to talk to Mrs. Enderby.

The evening passed pleasantly. Mrs. Enderby and Mr. Mellowdew bore the chief expenses of the conversation, and to their loquacity Waymark was indebted, on returning to the drawing-room, for a short talk with Maud. She asked him if he was still teaching. He replied simply in the negative, and, feeling this was a little abrupt, turned it off by asking if she had been long back in London. As she answered, their eyes happened to meet, and remained at gaze for an instant; it was like the removal of an obstacle from between them.

“Has the description of your experiences been published yet?” Maud asked.

“Two months ago, in a very modified form. People who read magazines, it seems, are too delicate-minded to allow of the truth being told them. May I send you the number?”

“I should be so glad. And are you writing anything at present?”

“I have begun the story I spoke of.”

“It will take you some time.”

“Yes; but I hope to have finished it before the summer.”

Mr. Enderby had drawn near, and took a seat by them.

“I am told, Mr. Waymark,” he said, fingering his watch-guard and looking everywhere but into Waymark’s face, “that your guidance in the picture-gallery was invaluable. Art, no doubt, is a special interest of yours?”

“It is,” the other answered, “but I am not sure that my zeal is always according to knowledge.”

“Zeal, in my opinion,” observed Paul, “is better than knowledge, where art is concerned. So much nonsense of a critical kind is current now-a-days; it is refreshing to find some one who is content to honestly enjoy, without troubling about technicalities.”

Mr. Enderby showed a good deal of intelligent independence in his mode of conversing, and seemed to find Waymark’s tone congenial. Maud, as they talked, watched first one face,

then the other, and followed eagerly; she was clearly glad that they got on so well together.

“You must let us see you as often as you can,” Paul said, presently. “Mrs. Enderby is always at home on Wednesday evenings, and will be very glad if you will come as often as it suits you.”

The lady herself said the same when at length the time of departure arrived, and Waymark went away very well satisfied with the evening.

## CHAPTER III.

## IN THE MEAN TIME.

DURING the three months that followed, Waymark's intercourse with the Enderbys was pretty frequent. The Wednesday evenings became an institution, and, as acquaintance grew, Mrs. Enderby, who seemed to find a particular pleasure in Waymark's society, sometimes got him to accompany Maud and herself to museums and galleries, or any place which Maud expressed a desire to visit. She asked no questions about their new friend, and Maud was silent after she had explained Waymark's position, as far as she was acquainted with it, and how she had come to know him. To both parents, the fact of Maud's friendship was a quite sufficient guarantee, so possessed were they with a conviction of the trustworthiness of her judgment,

and the moral value of her impulses. In Waymark's character there was something which women found very attractive; strength and individuality are perhaps the words that best express what it was, though these qualities would not in themselves have sufficed to give him his influence, without a certain gracefulness of inward homage which manifested itself when he talked with women, a suggestion, too, of underlying passion which works subtly on a woman's imagination. There was nothing commonplace in his appearance and manner; one divined in him a past out of the ordinary range of experiences, and felt the promise of a future which would, in one way or another, be remarkable. To men he could seldom force himself to be deferential; face to face with them, he felt his strength; woman, on the other hand, made him conscious of his chief weakness, and, what was more, they generally became aware of the fact. His nature was just one of those to which the noblest women glory in submitting themselves, sure to be recompensed most richly. The female mind has this power of discerning

hidden depths of passion; it knows, too, that natures so endowed are rarely constant, and from this knowledge comes the perturbation of a love thus originating. But what woman of deep feeling would not, if indeed she had the choice, prefer the brief enjoyment of a love which scales all heights, to the constancy of an inferior soul, moving always along the smooth domestic level? Great bliss is only to be attained at the price of corresponding disillusion, and it is woman's superiority over man that, whilst her stake is greater, prudence weighs for her far more lightly in the balance against that for which alone life is worth living.

The more Waymark saw of Maud Enderby, the more completely did he yield to the fascination of her character. In her presence he enjoyed a strange calm of spirit; the spirit, indeed, subdued the flesh more entirely than ever before. She, he felt, dwelt perpetually in a thin, pure atmosphere which he only knew at rare times; she drank of springs which he had so seldom tasted, and the stars must seem so near from those heights of hers. The con-



flicts which left her pale were not those of mere gross humanity; for the first time he knew a woman who by no word or look or motion could stir in him a cynical thought. Here was something higher than himself, a nature which he had to confess transcended the limits of his judgment, a soul with insight possibly for ever denied to himself. He was often pained by the deference with which she sought his opinion or counsel; the words in which he replied to her sounded so hollow; he became so often and so keenly sensible of his insincerity,—a quality which, with others, he could consciously rely upon as a resource, but which, before Maud, stung him. He was driven to balance judgments, to hesitate in replies, to search his own heart, as perhaps never before.

“You make me very conscious of my insufficiency,” he exclaimed once, when she had asked a question about some poem, a question showing the most perfect sensibility to refinements of artistic form.

“How can that be,” said Maud, “when I never fail to get from you a valuable suggestion?”

It was no answer, of course, but still was perfectly true, and Waymark knew that no desire to pay a compliment could draw her into the slightest insincerity. Indeed, the artificial good humour, the affected interest, the mock sympathy, of polite intercourse were as far from her as was the least taint of indelicacy; every word she uttered rang true, and her very phrases had that musical fall which only associates itself with beautiful and honest thought. If she spoke at table, there was silence and attention, and every one felt that the matter in hand had shown a new and better aspect. She never exhibited gaiety, or a spirit of fun, but could raise a smile by an exquisite shade of humour,—humour which, as the best is, was more than half sadness. Nor was she fond of mixing with people whom she did not know well; when there was company at dinner, she generally begged to be allowed to dine alone. Though always anxious to give pleasure to her parents, she was most happy when nothing drew her from her own room; there she would read and dream through hours. Some years before, when

it had been decided that she was to be a governess, she had learnt enough of piano-playing to be able to teach children; but at present, though much persuaded by her mother, she shrank from touching the keys; the imperfection of her powers distressed her, and she did not care to practise for the attainment of a mere superficial skill. Music was inexpressibly delightful to her, yet she had little pleasure at public concerts; she felt the necessity of being alone for the full enjoyment of what she heard. Close by their house was a church, and one of her most solemn pleasures was to sit by her window on a Sunday evening, and hear the pealing of the organ, softened by distance, and lending itself to all the enlargement of the imagination. It was not, however, a religious pleasure—not so in the ordinary sense of the word; seeing that religion was to her a subject dark with endured pain, one on which in this period of her life she never voluntarily dwelt. Her worship was of beauty, by her so newly discovered, on which she had at first begun to look with trembling, which now disturbed her

with the joy of elevated thoughts; hers was that

“sense sublime  
Of something far more deeply interfused,  
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,  
And the round ocean, and the living air,  
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.”

There were hours in which the old dreaded feelings took revenge; night-wakings, when she lay in cold anguish, yearning for the dawn. She was not yet strong enough to face past and future, secure in attained conviction. As yet, she could not stir beyond the present, and in the enjoyment of the present was her strength.

It was one Wednesday evening in early April, when he returned home from Paddington, that Waymark found a letter awaiting him, addressed in a hand he at once recognized.

“Will you come and see me? I am at home after eight o'clock till the end of the week, and all day on Sunday.

“I. S.”

No distinct pleasure was aroused in Waymark as he read this. As was always the case for

hours after he had left Maud's presence, her face and voice lived with him to the exclusion of every other thought. There was even something of repulsion in the feeling excited by his thus having the memory of Ida brought suddenly before him; her face came as an unwelcome intruder upon the calm, grave mood which always possessed him on these evenings. In returning home each Wednesday night, Waymark always sought the speediest and quietest route, unwilling to be brought in contact with that life of the streets which at other times delighted him. Ida's note seemed a summons from that world which, for the moment, he held at a distance. But the call was not to be silenced at his will. He began to wonder about her life during the past half-year. Why had she written just now, after so long a silence? Where, and under what circumstances, should he meet her? Did she think to find him the same as when they last talked together?

Through the night he woke constantly, and always with thoughts busy about Ida. In the morning his first impulse was to re-read her

message; received so carelessly, it had in the mean time become of more account, and Waymark laughed in his wonted way as he saw himself thus swayed between forces he had no control over. The ordinary day's task was neglected, and he impatiently waited for the hour when he could be sure of finding Ida at home. The address was in Pimlico, and, on reaching it, he found it to be a large new block of the kind known as model lodging-houses. Ida's number was up at the very top. When he knocked, the door opened immediately, and she stood there, holding out her hand to him.

She wore the same dress that she had worn at Hastings, but the gold brooch and watch-chain were missing, and her hair was arranged in a simpler way. She was a trifle pale, perhaps, but that might be due to the excitement of the moment; her voice shook a little as she spoke.

Waymark looked about him as he went in. There appeared to be two rooms, one of them a very small bed-room, the other fitted with a cooking-grate and oven; the kind of tenement

suitable to very poor working-people. The floors were bare, and there was nothing in the way of furniture beyond the most indispensable articles : a table, two chairs, and a few cups, saucers, and plates on a shelf ; through the half-open door, he saw that the bed-room was equally plain. A fire was burning, and a kettle on it ; and in front, on a little square piece of carpet, lay Ida's inseparable friend, Grim. Grim had lifted his head at Waymark's entrance, and, with gathering curiosity in his eyes, slowly stood up ; then stretched himself, and, looking first at one, then at the other, waited in doubt.

Ida stooped and took him up in her arms.

“ And who's this ? ” she asked, talking to him as one talks to a child, whilst she pressed his warm black cheek against her own. “ Does Grim remember who this is ? We still keep together, ” she added, looking at Waymark. “ He's a dear, good fellow. All day long, whilst I'm away, he keeps house ; I'm often afraid he suffers dreadfully from loneliness, but, you see, I'm obliged to lock him in. And he knows exactly the time when I come home. I always find him sitting

on that chair by the door, waiting, waiting, oh so patiently! And I often bring him back something nice, don't I, Grimmy? You should see how delighted he is as soon as I enter the door; we always have a game before I take my things off."

Ida was changed, and in many ways. She seemed to have grown younger; in her voice and manner there was a girlishness which was quite new to Waymark. Her motions were lighter and nimbler; there was no longer that slow grace of step and carriage which had expressed absolute leisure, and with it had gone, perhaps, something of dignity, which used to sit so well upon her. She laughed from time to time in a free, careless way; formerly she seldom did more than smile. In the old days, there was nothing about her suggestive of what are called the domestic virtues; now she seemed perfectly at home amid these simple surroundings, and, almost as soon as her visitor had sat down, she busied herself in laying the table in a quick, ready way, which came of the habit of waiting upon herself.

"You'll have a cup of tea with me?" she



said, looking at Waymark with the curiosity which seemed to show that she also found something changed in him. "I only get home about eight o'clock, and this is the quietest and pleasantest meal in the day for me."

"What do you do all day, then?" Waymark asked, softening the bluntness of his question with a smile.

She stepped near to him, and held out her hands for him to look at; then, as he met her eyes again, laughed merrily.

"Do you guess?" she asked.

"I believe I can. You have gone back to the laundry again?"

"Yes."

"And how long is it since you did so?"

"How long is it since we last saw each other?"

"Did you begin at once when you returned to London?"

"Yes."

Waymark kept silence, whilst Ida poured out a cup of tea for him, and then took her seat at the table.

“Will you have some bread and butter?” she asked.

“Yes, I will ; a little piece.”

“I’m so glad. I should have been afraid to eat alone, and I’m really hungry.”

As she had sat down, Grim had jumped up on to her lap, and lay there in readiness for the morsels of thickly buttered bread which she offered him ever and again.

“Don’t you think I’m comfortable here?” Ida said. “It’s like having a house of my own. I see nothing of the other people in the building, and feel perfectly independent.”

“Did you buy the furniture yourself?”

“Yes ; just the things I couldn’t do without. I pay only three-and-sixpence a week, and so long as I can earn that, I’m sure at all events of a home, where I can be happy or miserable, as I please.”

Waymark wondered. There was no mistaking the genuineness of her tone. What, then, had been the reason for this astonishing change, a change extending, it would seem, almost to temperament? What intermediate phases had

led up to this result? He wished to ask her for an explanation, but to do so would be to refer to the condition she had left, and that he did not wish to do. All would no doubt explain itself as they talked; in the mean time she told him how her days were ordered, and the details of her life.

“Have you brought your pipe?” she asked, when they had drank their tea.

“May I smoke?”

“Of course,—just as you used to.”

“But it is not the same,” Waymark said, half to himself.

“Are you sorry for the change?” Ida asked, as she handed him a box of matches.

“What induced you to make it?”

“Oh, I have strange fancies. The idea came, just like others do. Are you sorry?”

“The opposite. Did the idea come whilst we were at Hastings?”

“Before that. Do you remember my telling you that I had a letter calling me back to London?”

Waymark nodded.

“It was from the laundry, to say I could go to work as soon as I liked.”

“And why didn’t you tell me that?”

Ida seemed about to reply, but altered her intention, and, after being silent for a moment, asked another question.

“Did you think you would ever hear from me?”

“I had given up hope.”

“And did you wonder what had become of me?”

“Often. Why didn’t you write before?”

“I wasn’t ready.”

“What does that mean?” Waymark asked, looking closely at her.

“Perhaps I shall be able to explain some day. If not, well, it won’t matter.”

“And will you let me see you often?” said Waymark, after thinking a little. “Are we to be friends again, as we used to be?”

“If you would care for it.”

Waymark turned away as their eyes met.

“Certainly I should care for it,” he said, feeling all at once a difficulty in speaking natur-

ally. Then he looked at Ida again; she was bending down and stroking Grim's ears. There was rather a long silence, which Waymark at length forced himself to break.

"Shall I bring you books again?" he said.

"I have very little time for reading," was Ida's reply. "It's better, perhaps, that it is so."

"But why?"

"Perhaps it would make me discontented with my work, and want all sorts of things I couldn't have."

"You have your Sundays free?" Waymark said, after another rather long silence.

"Yes."

"Then we must have some expeditions again, now that the fine days have come. By the bye, do you ever see Sally?"

Ida looked up with a smile and said, "Yes; do you?"

"No; but I hear of her."

"From your friend?"

"Yes, from O'Gree."

"Do your other friends still live near you?"

Ida asked, speaking quickly, as if to interrupt what Waymark was about to say.

“The Castis? Oh yes.”

“What is Mrs. Casti like?” she said, in a tone which drew Waymark’s attention.

“Well,” he replied, “it’s difficult to describe her. There’s nothing very good about her, and I suppose nothing very bad. I see little of her now; she’s almost always ill.”

“What’s the matter with her?”

“Can’t say; general weakness and ill health, I think?”

“But she’s so young, isn’t she? Has she friends to go and see her?”

“Very few, I think.”

“It must be dreadful to be like that,” said Ida. “I’m thankful that I have my health, at all events. Loneliness isn’t so hard to bear, as it must be in illness.”

“Do you feel lonely?”

“A little, sometimes,” said Ida. “But it’s ungrateful to poor old Grim to say so.”

“Have you no acquaintances except the people you work with?”

She shook her head.

“And you don't read?”

“I have only one book, but I read that sometimes. Shall I show it you?”

She went into the other room, and returned, with a curious smile, holding a Shakespeare.

“Do you recognize it?”

“And I thought it was lost!” exclaimed Waymark. “I made up my mind I had left it on the sands that last afternoon.”

“I stole it,” said Ida, nodding. “Will you have it back?”

“Certainly not. It is yours by right of use.”

“Wouldn't you like,” he said presently, “to go on reading as you used to? You have a better head than most women, and it's a pity not to make use of it. That's all nonsense about it making you discontented. You won't always be living like this, I suppose.”

“Why not?” Ida asked, simply.

“Well,” said Waymark, without meeting her look, “even if you do, it will be gain to you to cultivate your mind?”

“Do you wish me to cultivate my mind?”

“You know I do.”

Waymark seemed uneasy. He rose and leaned against the mantelpiece.

“I will do whatever you bid me,” Ida said. “I can get an hour or so each night, and I have all Sunday.”

“But you mustn’t undertake a lot of work just to please me,” Waymark said, speaking rather quickly. “Have you any desire to learn? Will the thing be its own reward?”

Ida was silent, and looked down.

“Yes,” she said at length, in a firm voice, “I think it will be.” Then she added, with still more emphasis, “Yes, I want to understand the world better than I do, and—and I want to understand myself better. I believe I have learnt much from Shakespeare, but there are many things in him I want to ask you to explain.”

She was silent again.

“I shall be glad to do so,” Waymark said, speaking mechanically.

“Then you will teach me? You won’t think it a trouble?”



“It is never troublesome to teach a willing pupil.”

Waymark felt only too well the effect of the tone he was adopting. The situation was by this time clear enough to him, and his own difficulties no less clear. He avoided looking at Ida as much as he could. During the last quarter of an hour a change had again come over her manner; the girlishness was modified, the old sadder tone was audible at moments. When she asked whether it would be a trouble to him, something of reserve in her voice brought back so vividly former conversations that he could not but face her as he replied. And he did so with extreme effort; spoke also with such strained effect that he was startled at his own voice. Ida's look was very steady; he met it with tense muscles and impassive expression, and, having succeeded so far, at once took up his hat and said that it was time to go. Ida was silent still. As he again looked at her, the sense of behaving unkindly became intolerable. At all costs, he could not take his leave in this way.

“If it's fine on Sunday,” he said, “will you

go with me to Richmond, and let us have dinner at the old place?"

"No," was Ida's reply, with a smile, "I can't afford it."

"But I invite you. Of course I didn't mean that it should be any expense."

She still shook her head.

"No, I must take my own share, wherever we go."

"Then I shall certainly refuse your cup of tea next time I come," said Waymark, jestingly.

"That's quite different," said Ida. "But if you like, we can go in the afternoon, and walk about Roehampton; that I can afford."

"As you please. When shall I call for you?"

"Half-past one."

She opened the door for him, and held out her hand. Their eyes did not meet as they said good-bye. The door closed, and Waymark went so slowly down the stone steps that he seemed at every moment on the point of stopping and turning back.

## CHAPTER IV.

## A SUGGESTION.

WAYMARK and Julian Casti were sitting together in the former's room. It was Saturday evening; two days after Waymark's visit to Ida. Waymark had been speaking of the Enderbys. Julian listened in silence, only speaking now and then. He looked pale and troubled. When Waymark ceased, there was quietness for some minutes. Julian had fallen into a sad reverie.

"How is your wife?" asked his friend, after watching the melancholy face for a while.

"She said her headache was worse to-night."

"Curiously," observed Waymark, with a little acidity, "it always is when you have to leave home."

Julian looked up, and seemed to reach a crisis in his thoughts.

"Waymark," he began, reddening as he still

always did when greatly moved, "I fear I have been behaving very foolishly. Many a time I have wished to speak out to you plainly, but a sort of delicacy—a wrong kind of delicacy, I think—prevented me. I can't keep this attitude any longer. I must tell you how things are going on, and you must give me what help you can. And perhaps I shall be telling you what you already know?"

"I have suspected."

"Where is the blame?" Julian broke out, with sudden vehemence. "I cannot think that ever husband was more patient and more indulgent than I have been. I have refused her nothing that my means could possibly obtain. I have given up all the old quiet habits of my life that she mightn't think I slighted her; I scarcely ever open a book at home, knowing that it irritates her to see me reading; I do my best to amuse her at all times. How does she reward me? For ever she grumbles that I can't perform impossibilities,—take her to theatres, buy her new dresses, procure for her friends and acquaintances. My wishes, expressed or under-

stood, weigh with her less than the least of her own caprices. She wantonly does things which she knows will cause me endless misery. Her bosom companions are gross and depraved people, who constantly drag her lower and lower, to their own level. The landlady has told me that, in my absence, women have called to see her who certainly ought not to enter any decent house. When I entreat her to give up such associates, her only answer is to accuse me of selfishness, since I have friends myself, and yet won't permit her to have any. And things have gone from bad to worse. Several nights of late, when I have got home, she has been away, and has not returned till much after midnight. Hour after hour I have sat there in the extremest misery, waiting, waiting, feeling as though my brain would burst with its strain! I have no idea where she goes to. If I ask, she only retorts by asking me where I spend the nights when I am with you, and laughs contemptuously when I tell her the truth. Her suspicions and jealousy are incessant, and torture me past endurance. Once or twice, I

confess, I have lost patience, and have spoken angrily, too angrily; then she has accused me of brutal disregard of her sufferings. It would hurt me less if she pierced me with a knife. Only this morning there was a terrible scene; she maddened me past endurance by her wretched calumnies,—accusing me of I know not what disgraceful secrets,—and when words burst from me involuntarily, she fell into hysterics, and shrieked till all the people in the house ran up in alarm. Can you understand what this means to one of my temperament? To have my private affairs forced upon strangers in this way tortures me with the pains of hell. I am naturally reticent and retiring—too much so, I dare say—and no misery could have been devised for me more dreadful than this. Her accusations are atrocious, such as could only come from a grossly impure mind, or at the suggestion of vile creatures. You, she hates with a rabid hatred—God only knows why. She would hate any one who was my friend, and whose society relieved me for a moment from my ghastly torments!”

He ceased, for very exhaustion, so terribly did the things he described work upon him. His forehead was covered with perspiration; in every limb he quivered like one under torture. There were tears in his eyes; his voice failed.

“And yet,” he resumed, when something of calmness was regained, “she says that she loves me; that it is only her love of me that makes her jealous and suspicious. What can I reply to such words? And who can say how much of this is due to her miserable health? I feel so deeply that her sufferings demand pity, yet often pity is entirely banished from my heart in the face of her monstrous selfishness and reckless cruelty. You know that I went to the expense of having one of the hospital doctors attend her privately; the only result was that he told me his visits were perfectly useless, since she did not and would not obey one of his directions, and upon me he very naturally put most of the blame. I had hoped to take her to the seaside for a week or so in the summer, but our expenses will render that

impossible. What am I to do, Waymark? Can you give me advice?"

Waymark had listened with his eyes cast down, and he was silent for some time after Julian ceased.

"You couldn't well ask for advice in a more difficult case," he said at length. "I had guessed very much of this. Any counsel I could offer would seem little but mockery; it would only amount to this: strengthen yourself and endure. Try the effect of complete passivity. I have studied her character, and I believe I understand it; to oppose her, to try to reform her, will be worse than useless. Doubtless her ailments have much to do with it; this hysteria and the rest of it are the very devil, of course. But, as far as I can see, her health could only be improved by doing the impossible, putting her under entirely new conditions of life. Well then, endure! Force yourself into work. Try to forget her when she is out of sight."

"But," broke in Julian, "this amounts to a sentence of death! What of the life before me, of the years I shall have to spend with her?"



Work, forget myself, forget her,—that is just what I *cannot* do! My nerves are getting weaker every day; I am beginning to have fits of trembling and horrible palpitation; my dreams are hideous with vague apprehensions, only to be realized when I wake. Work! Half my misery is caused by the thought that my work is at an end for ever. It is all forsaking me, the delight of imagining great things, what power I had of putting my fancies into words, the music that used to go with me through the day's work. It is long since I wrote a line of verse. Quietness, peace, a calm life of thought, these things are what I *must* have; I thought I should have them in a higher degree than ever, and I find they are irretrievably lost. I feel my own weakness, as I never could before. When you bid me strengthen myself, you tell me to alter my character. The resolution needed to preserve the better part of my nature through such a life as this, will never be within my reach. It is fearful to think of what I shall become as time goes on. I dread myself! There have been revealed to me depths of passion and

misery in my own heart which I had not suspected. I shall lose all self-control, and become as selfish and heedless as she is."

"No, you will not," said Waymark, encouragingly. "This crisis will pass over, and strength will be developed. We have a limitless faculty for accommodating ourselves to wretchedness; how else would the world have held together so long? What does Evolution mean but development through hardships and dire necessity; and we see the same process in the individual as in the species. If you had a fault, it was this very lack of independent force; you know I have often felt it in your poetry. Your life had been too easy. I wax very teleological at times, in thinking over my own fate; it is so easy to point to this and that misery, which, in the light of subsequent things, are seen to have been indispensable to my growth. I am now using my experience. It is 'material.' Do you try and think in the same way. Who knows but this may make a modern man of you? When you begin to find your voice again, maybe you won't sing of the dead world any

longer, but of the living and suffering. Your schemes, completed or projected, were beautiful; they showed you to be a poet; but I have never hidden from you how I wished that you had been on my side. Art now-a-days must be the mouthpiece of misery, for misery is the key-note of modern life. Yes; you must be passive as regards your wife's irrationality, but strong and independent in your own course. Let us aid each other to live in the mind alone, heedless of external annoyances. You are a poet, and a poet you will remain. Put your suffering into song; speak out what your heart feels. What are we here for, but to make perfect pictures out of the horrors about us, and to modulate our groans till they become melody? You have been an optimist hitherto; become a pessimist, and poetry will have for you a new significance. And verily, you are on the way to pessimism."

Waymark said it with that peculiar smile which was nothing less than unfeeling, the smile of compassionate despair which was so common on his lips. They talked on, and

Julian, so easily moulded by a strong will, became half courageous.

“One of her reproaches,” he said, “is just ; I can’t meet it. If I object to her present companions, it is my duty to find her more suitable ones. She lives too much alone. No doubt it is every husband’s duty to provide his wife with society. But how am I to find it? I am so isolated, and always have been. I know not a soul who could be a friend to her.”

Waymark grew thoughtful, and kept silence.

“One person I know,” he said presently, and in a cautious way, “who might perhaps help you.”

“You do?” cried Julian eagerly. “But it must be no one of culture ; that is impossible.”

“I am not thinking of the Enderbys. You know that I make all sorts of queer acquaintances in my wanderings. Well, I happen to know a girl, of about your wife’s age, who, if she were willing, would be just the person you want. She is quite alone, parentless, and almost without friends. She lives by herself, and supports herself by working in a laundry. For

all this, she is by no means the ordinary London work-girl; you can't call her educated, but she speaks purely, and has a remarkably good intelligence. I met her by chance, and kept up her acquaintance. There has been nothing wrong—bah! how conventional one is, in spite of oneself!—I mean to say, there has been nothing more than a pleasant friendship between us; absolutely nothing. We see each other from time to time, and have a walk, perhaps a meal, together, and I lend her books. Now, do you think there would be any way of getting your wife to accept her society, say of an evening now and then? Don't do anything rash; it is of course clear that *you* must have no hand in this. I must manage it, if it is to be done. Naturally, I can't answer at once for the girl's readiness; but I believe she would do what I asked her to. Do you think it is worth entertaining, this idea?"

"I do, indeed; it would be salvation, I really believe."

"Don't be too sanguine, Casti; that's another of your faults. Still, I know very well that this

girl could cure your wife of her ill propensities if any living creature could. She is strong in character, admirably clear-headed, mild, gentle, womanly; in fact, there is perhaps no one I respect so much, on the whole."

"Respect, only?" asked Julian, smiling.

"Ye-es; yes, I believe I am perfectly honest in saying so, though I couldn't have been so sure about it some little time ago. Our relations, no doubt, are peculiar; on her side there is no more warmth than on mine,"—Waymark tried so to believe,—“and indeed her clear sight has no doubt gauged me fairly well at my true value.”

“This is a *dea ex machina!*” exclaimed Julian. “We must manage it somehow. What plan have you?”

“That will require some thought, and indeed I can't plan anything till I have spoken to her on the subject. Now, how far may I reveal the state of the case?”

“Precisely as far as you think necessary. I will trust you absolutely. You are my friend; you know my terrible position; you have

prudence far beyond mine; you wouldn't do anything to increase my difficulties."

"Not knowingly, be sure; but we so often work to our own defeat. Never mind. The case is desperate, and needs a desperate remedy. I will see her, and will try."

"What is her name?"

"Ida Starr."

"What!" cried Julian, startled. "That is a most singular coincidence! You have noticed the scar on Harriet's forehead?"

"Well?"

"Why, it was a wound given her at school by a girl of that very name! I remember the name as well as possible. It was a blow with a slate, dealt in passion,—some quarrel or other. They were both children then, and Ida Starr left the school in consequence."

"Is it possible that it is the same person?" asked Waymark, wondering and reflecting.

"If so, that puts a new difficulty in our way."

"Removes one, I should have thought."

"Harriet is not of a very forgiving nature," said Julian, gravely.

“I shouldn’t have supposed she was; but a long time has gone by since then, and, after all, one is generally glad to see an old school-fellow. Has she ever expressed herself with resentment on the subject?”

“Not exactly with resentment.”

“Well, it’s worth trying. I’ll hit on some way of speaking of her before your wife.”

At this point the conversation was interrupted by a knock at the door, followed by the announcement that a gentleman named O’Gree wished to see Mr. Waymark. Waymark smiled at Julian.

“Don’t run away,” he said. “You ought to know O’Gree in the flesh.”

The teacher came into the room with a rush, and was much taken aback at the sight of a stranger present. Perspiration was streaming profusely from his face, which was aglow with some great intelligence. After being introduced to Casti, he plunged down on a chair, and mopped himself with his handkerchief, uttering incoherencies about the state of the weather. Waymark made an effort to bring about a



general conversation, but failed; O'Gree was so preoccupied that any remark addressed to him had to be repeated before he understood it, and Julian was in no mood for making new acquaintances. So, in a few minutes, the latter took his hat and left, Waymark going with him to the door to speak a few words of encouragement.

"The battle's won!" cried O'Gree, with much gesticulation, as soon as Waymark returned. "The campaign's at an end!—I'm sorry if I've driven your friend away, but I was bound to tell you."

"All right. Let me have a description of the manœuvres."

"Look here, my boy," said O'Gree, with sudden solemnity, "you've never been very willing to talk to me about her. Now, before I tell you anything, I want to know this. *Why* wouldn't you tell me how you first got to know her, and so on?"

"Before I answer, I want to know this: have you found out why I wouldn't?"

"Yes, I have,—that is, I suppose I have,—"

and from her own lips, bedad! You knew her when she lived near the Strand there, eh?"

"I did."

"Well now, understand, my boy. I don't want to hear anything disagreeable; in fact, I won't listen to anything disagreeable;—all I want to know is, whether I may safely tell you what she has told me. If you don't know it already, there's no need to talk of it."

"I understand, and I don't think you can tell me anything I'm not well aware of."

"Sure, then, I will tell you, and if there's another girl as brave and honest as Sally in all this worruld, I'll be obliged if you'll make me acquainted with her! Well, you know she has a Saturday afternoon off every month. It hasn't been a very cheerful day, but it couldn't be missed; and, as it was too rainy to walk about, I couldn't think of any better place to go to than the British Museum. Of course I wanted to find a quiet corner, but there were people about everywhere, and the best we could manage was in the mummy-room. We looked at all the mummies, and I told her all I knew about

them, and I kept thinking to myself: Now, how can I work round to it? I've tried so often, you know, and she's always escaped me, somehow, and I couldn't help thinking it was because I hadn't gone about it in the proper way. Well, we'd been staring at a mummy for about a quarter of an hour, and neither of us said anything, when all at once a rare idea came into my head. 'Sally,' I said, glancing round to see that there was no one by, 'that mummy was very likely a pretty girl like you, once.' 'Do you think so?' she said, with that look of hers which makes me feel like a galvanic battery. 'I do,' I said, 'and what's more, there may once have been another mummy, a man-mummy, standing by her just as I'm standing by you, and wanting very much to ask her something, and shaking in his shoes for fear he shouldn't get the right answer.' 'Did the mummies wear shoes when they were alive?' she asked, all at once. 'Wear shoes!' I cried out. 'Bedad, I can't tell you, Sally; but one thing I feel very sure of, and that is that they had hearts. Now, suppose,' I said, 'we're those two mummies—'

‘I’m sure it’s bad luck!’ interrupted Sally. ‘Oh no, it isn’t,’ said I, seeing something in her face which made me think it was the opposite. ‘Let me go on. Now, suppose the one mummy said to the other, “Sally—”’ ‘*Were* the girl-mummies called Sally?’ she interrupted again. ‘Sure, I can’t say,’ said I, ‘but we’ll suppose so. Well, suppose he said, “Sally, if I can hit on some means of making a comfortable home here by the Nile,—that’s to say, the Thames, you know,—will you come and keep it in order for me, and live with me for all the rest of our lives?” Now what do you think the girl-mummy would have answered?’”

Waymark laughed, but O’Gree had become solemn.

“She didn’t answer at once, and there was something very queer in her face. All at once she said, ‘What has Mr. Waymark told you about me?’ ‘Why, just nothing at all,’ I said, rather puzzled. ‘And do you know,’ she asked then, without looking at me, ‘what sort of a girl I am?’ Well, all at once there came something into my head that I’d never thought of

before, and I was staggered for a moment; I couldn't say anything. But I got over it. 'I don't want to know anything,' I said. 'All I know is, that I like you better than I ever shall any one else, and I want you to promise to be my wife, some day.' 'Then you must let me tell you all my story first,' she said. 'I won't answer till you know everything.' And so she told me what it seems you know. Well, if I thought much of her before, I thought a thousand times as much after that! And do you know what? I believe it was on my account that she went and took that place in the shop."

"Precisely," said Waymark.

"You think so?" cried the other, delighted.

"I guessed as much when she met me that day and said I might let you know where she was."

"Ha!" exclaimed O'Gree, with a long breath.

"And so the matter is settled?"

"All but the most important part of it. There's no chance of my being able to marry for long enough to come. Now, can you give

me any advice? I've quite made up my mind to leave Tootle. The position isn't worthy of a gentleman; I'm losing my self-respect, bedad! The she-Tootle gets worse and worse. If I don't electrify her, one of these days, with an outburst of ferocious indignation, she will only have my patience to thank. Let her beware how she drives the lion to bay!"

"Couldn't you get a non-resident mastership?"

"I must try, but the pay is so devilish small."

"We must talk the matter over. What are you going to do to-night?"

"Nothing particular."

"Then let's celebrate the day and go to some theatre. I'm at a loose end myself."

"With 'two-on-two' afterwards?"

"'Two-on-two' afterwards," assented Waymark, smiling; and they went out together.

Shall I insult your intelligence, O reader, by offering to explain what is meant by the formula "two-on-two"? Yet it occurs to me that perchance you are no Bohemian, and that there is a whole world outside the limit of

London supper-bars. Know, then, that the phrase denotes a simple, possibly vulgar, yet attractive luxury; in fact, two fried sausages laid gently on the surface of two-pennyworth of mashed potatoes. To Waymark the refreshment was dear of old; he had made O'Gree acquainted with it as soon as they knew each other well enough to go together to the gallery of a theatre, and solace themselves, before returning home, with such supper as their pockets allowed. It had become an institution, and to-night was honoured with the due observance. Perched on the familiar uncomfortable stools at the familiar bar, smiled upon by the two neat-handed damosels, whose faces and whose conversation were so well known to them, they sated their souls on the savoury morsels, and assuaged the wonted thirst from foaming tankards of stout and bitter. Mr. O'Gree's hilarity had been unexampled throughout the evening; just now he bubbled over with irrepressible delight.

“Maggie, my dear,” he whispered across the counter, “can a man indulge in a second ‘two-

on-two', and go home to bed with a clear conscience?"

"At the worst you can only dream of little pigs," was the laughing reply.

"Then, faith, I'll risk that," he declared, and a second supply was forthwith brought him. Waymark lit his pipe, and sipped from the tankard, observant, as usual, of the bustling life around. When they sallied forth again, O'Gree slipped his arm in Waymark's and became sentimental.

"If there's a happy man in London to-night," he said, "sure it's me! I think better of myself than I ever did before. Here's nearly a year I've been screwing up my courage to ask her if she'd condescend to have me, and then to think that after all she should speak in that humble way, as if it was I that was condescending. I feel more of the dignity of a man! The next time old Tootle displays his insolence, I shall stand up to him in a way he'll find surprising! Take my advice, Waymark, and fall in love as soon as possible; you've no idea what an effect it has on a man's spirits."



“It isn’t so easy to find the right person,” said Waymark, with a laugh.

“Well, sure enough, you won’t find another Sally; but no doubt there are girls a man may get on very well with. To-morrow I’ll be writing to my poor old mother in Cork, and letting her know; she’ll send me her blessing, and that’s all she has to give. It’s ten to one I’ll never be rich enough to go and see her, and she’s close on seventy.”

“By the bye,” said Waymark, “remember me to Sally when you see her again.”

“No need to do that, my boy. What do you think she said to me, after it was all over to-day? ‘Mr. Waymark’s a gentleman,’ she said, ‘and I don’t mind if he knows what I think of him.’ Now, what do you say to that?”

“It’s more than I deserve. But I’m tolerably sure that she is better than many we should call ladies.”

“Ladies! Faith, she’s lady enough for me—a good deal more of one than I am.”

After which characteristic observation, Mr. O'Gree, with a hasty shake of the hand, jumped into a 'bus which was just going by, and Waymark pursued his walk alone.

## CHAPTER V.

## DIPLOMACY.

WAYMARK had a good deal of frank conversation with himself before meeting Ida again on the Sunday. Such conversation was, as we know, habitual. Under the circumstances, however, he felt that it behoved him to become especially clear on one or two points; never mind what course he might ultimately pursue, it was always needful to him to dissect his own motives, that he might at least be acting with full consciousness. You of course understand by this time that such introspection had in our friend's case very little to do with commonplace balancing of practical advantages and disadvantages, and just as little with what are commonly called moral considerations. Morality he had none, in the ordinary sense of the phrase;

in other words, he felt neither the power nor the desire to formulate a moral creed, being quite satisfied to judge of each case as it arose, without prejudice or precedent. The immoral man is quite a different being; he is still in the bondage of formulæ, and his sin consists in the conscious violation of principles which in his heart he believes ought to guide him.

One thing was clear enough. The fiction of a mere relation of friendship between himself and Ida was impossible to support. It had been impossible under the very different circumstances of a year ago, and was not likely to last a week, now that Ida could so little conceal how her own feelings had changed. What, then, was to be their future? Could he accept her love, and join their lives without legal bond, thinking only of present happiness, and content to let things arrange themselves as they would in the years to come?

His heart strongly opposed such a step. Clearly Ida had changed her life for his sake, and was undergoing hardships in the hope of winning his respect as well as his love. Would

she have done all this without something of a hope that she might regain her place in the every-day world, and be held by Waymark worthy to become his wife? He could not certainly know, but there was little doubt that this hope had led her on. Could he believe her capable of yet nobler ideas; could he think that only in reverence of the sanctity of love, and without regard to other things, she had acted in this way; then, regarding her as indeed his equal, he would open his heart to her and speak somewhat in this way. "Yes, I do love you; but at the same time I know too well the uncertainty of love to go through the pretence of binding myself to you for ever. Will you accept my love in its present sincerity, neither hoping nor fearing, knowing that whatever happens is beyond our own control, feeling with me that only an ignoble nature can descend to the affectation of union when the real links are broken?" Could Waymark but have felt sure of her answer to such an appeal, it would have gone far to make his love for Ida all-engrossing. She would then be his ideal

woman, and his devotion to her would have no bounds.

But he felt too strongly that in thus speaking he would sadden her by the destruction of her great hope. On the other hand, to offer to make her his legal wife would be to do her a yet greater injustice, even had he been willing to so sacrifice himself. The necessity for legal marriage would be a confession of her inferiority, and the sense of being thus bound would, he well knew, be the surest means of weakening his affection. This affection he could not trust. How far was it mere passion of the senses, which gratification would speedily kill?

In the case of his feeling towards Maud Enderby there was no such doubt. Never was his blood so calm as in her presence. She was to him a spirit, and in the spirit he loved her. With Maud he might look forward to union at some distant day, a union outwardly of the conventional kind. It would be so, not on account of any inferiority to his ideal in Maud, for he felt that there was no height of his own thought whither she would not in time follow

him; but simply because no point of principle would demand a refusal of the yoke of respectability, with its attendant social advantages. And the thought of thus binding himself to Maud had nothing repulsive, for the links between them were not of the kind which easily yield, and loyalty to a higher and nobler nature may well be deemed a duty.

So far logical arguing. But the fact remained that he had not the least intention of breaking off his intercourse with Ida, despite the certainty that passion would grow upon him with each of their meetings, rendering their mutual relations more and more dangerous. Of only one thing could he be sure: marriage was not to be thought of. It remained, then, that he was in danger of being led into conduct which would be the source of grievous unrest to himself, and for Ida would lay the foundation of much suffering. Waymark was honest enough in his self-communing to admit that he could not trust himself. Gross deception he was incapable of, but he would not answer for it that, the temptation pressing him too hard, he might

not be guilty of allowing Ida to think his love of more worth than it really was. She knew his contempt of conventional ties, and her faith in him would keep her from pressing him to any step he disliked; she would trust him without that. And such trust would be unmerited.

It was significant that he did not take into account loyalty to Maud as a help in resisting this temptation. He was too sure of himself as regarded that purer love; let what might happen, his loyalty to Maud would be unshaken. It was independent of passion, and passion could not shake it.

Then came the subject of the proposed acquaintance between Ida and Mrs. Casti. An impulse of friendship had led to his conceiving the idea; together, perhaps, with the recollection of what Ida had said about her loneliness, and the questions she had asked about Mrs. Casti. Waymark had little doubt that those questions indicated a desire to become acquainted with his friends; the desire was natural, under the circumstances. Still, he regretted what he had done. To introduce Ida to his friends would be



almost equivalent to avowing some conventional relations between her and himself. And, in the next place, it would be an obstacle in the way of those relations becoming anything but conventional. Well, and was not this exactly the kind of aid he needed in pursuing the course which he felt to be right? Truly; yet——

At this point Waymark broke into that half-contemptuous, half-indulgent laugh which so frequently interrupted his self-communings, and, it being nearly one o'clock, set out to call for Ida. The day was fine, and, when they left the steamer at Putney, they walked on to the heath in good spirits and with cheerful talk. To be with Ida under these circumstances, in the sunlight and the fresh breeze, was very different from sitting with her yonder in the little room, with the lamp burning on the table, and the quietness of night around. The calm pleasure of passionless intercourse was realized and sufficing. Ida, too, seemed content to enjoy the moment; there was not that wistfulness in her eyes which had been so new to him and so strong in its influence. It was easy to find

indifferent subjects of conversation, and to avoid the seriousness which would have been fatal.

When they had found a pleasant spot to rest awhile before turning back, Waymark made up his mind to fulfil his promise to Julian.

“It’s rather strange,” he said, “that you should have been asking me questions about Mrs. Casti. Since then I’ve discovered that you probably know her, or once did.”

Ida looked surprised.

“Do you remember once having a schoolfellow called Harriet Smales?”

“Is that *her* name?”

“It was, before her marriage.”

Ida became grave, and thought for some moments before speaking again.

“Yes, I remember her,” she said, “and not pleasantly.”

“You wouldn’t care to renew her acquaintance then?” said Waymark, half glad, in spite of himself, that she spoke in this way.

Ida asked, with earnestness, how he had made this discovery. Waymark hesitated, but at length told the truth. He explained that Mrs.

Casti suffered from the want of companionship, and that he had mentioned Ida's name to Julian; whence the discovery.

"Has *she* been told about me?" asked Ida.

"Nothing was to be said till I had spoken to you."

Waymark paused, but presently continued in a more serious tone. In recurring to that conversation with Julian, his friend's trouble spoke strongly to him once more, and overcame selfish thoughts.

"I said that I had come to know you by chance, and that—strange as it might sound—we were simply friends." He glanced for an instant at Ida; her eyes were turned to the ground. "You will believe me," he went on quickly, "when I tell you that I really said nothing more?"

"I never doubt a word of yours," was Ida's quiet reply.

"Casti was overjoyed at the thought of finding such a friend for his wife. Of course I told him that he must not certainly count either on your consent or on his wife's. Hers

I thought to be perhaps more doubtful than yours."

"Could I really be of any use to her," asked Ida, after a silence, "with so little free time as I have?"

"Supposing she would welcome you, I really believe you could be of great use. She is a strange creature, miserably weak in body and mind. If you could get to regard this as a sort of good work you were called upon to undertake, you would very likely be little less than an angel of mercy to both of them. Casti is falling into grievous unhappiness—why, you will understand sufficiently if you come to know them."

"Do you think she bears malice against me?"

"Of that I know nothing. Casti said she had never spoken of you in that way. By-the-by, she still has a scar on her forehead. I often wondered how it came there."

Ida winced.

"What a little termagant you must have been!" exclaimed Waymark, laughing. "How

hard it is to fancy you at that age, Ida.—What was the quarrel all about?”

“I can't speak of it,” she replied, in a low, sad voice. “It is so long ago; and I want to forget it.”

Waymark kept silence.

“Do you wish me to be her friend?” Ida asked, suddenly looking up.

“Certainly not if you dislike the thought.”

“No, no. But you think it would be doing good? you would like me to help your friend if I can?”

“Yes, I should,” was Waymark's reply.

“Then I hope she will be willing to let me go and see her. I will do my very best. Let us lose no time in trying. It is such a strange thing that we should meet again in this way; perhaps it is something more than chance.”

Waymark smiled.

“You think I am superstitious?” she asked, quickly. “I often feel so. I have all sorts of hopes and faiths that you would laugh at.”

“It is often the case,” said Waymark, “even with intelligent people, when their lives are full

of event and change. Did you ever have your fortune told?"

She shook her head.

"Then hold out your palm, and let me examine it."

She did so, and it trembled. Waymark took the hand for a moment, then dropped it, and rose from his seat with a laugh.

"Let us walk on," he said. "We are too old for such nonsense."

Ida's thoughts were busy that night with the past and the future. The first mention of Harriet's name had given her a shock; it brought back with vividness the saddest moments of her life; it awoke a bitter resentment which mere memory had no longer kept the power to revive. That was only for a moment, however. The more she accustomed herself to the thought, the easier it seemed to be to bury the past in forgiveness. Harriet must have changed so much since those days. Possibly there would never be a mention between them of the old trouble; practically they would be new acquaintances, and would be very little

helped to an understanding of each other by the recollections of childhood. And then Ida felt there was so much to be glad of in the new prospects. She longed for a world more substantial than that of her own imaginations, and here, as she thought, it would be opened to her. Above all, by introducing her to his friends, Waymark had strengthened the relations between her and himself. He was giving her, too, a chance of showing herself to him in a new light. For the first time he would see her under the ordinary conditions of a woman's life in a home circle. Ida had passed from one extreme to the other. At present there was nothing she desired so much as the simple, conventional, every-day existence of the woman who has never swerved from the beaten track. She never saw a family group anywhere without envying the happiness which to her seemed involved in the mere fact of a home and relations. Her isolation weighed heavily upon her. If there were but some one who could claim her services, as of right, and in return render her the simple hum-drum affection which goes for so much in easing the

burden of life. She was weary of her solitary heroism, though she never regarded it as heroism, but merely as the path in which she was naturally led by her feelings. Waymark could not but still think of her very much in the old light, and she wished to prove to him how completely she was changed. The simple act of making tea for him when he came to see her had been a pleasure; it was domestic and womanly, and she had often glanced at his face to see whether he noticed it at all. Then the fact of Harriet being an invalid would give her many opportunities for showing that she could be gentle and patient and serviceable. Casti would observe these things, and doubtless would speak of them to Waymark. Thinking in this way, Ida became all eagerness for the new friendship. There was of course the possibility that Harriet would refuse to accept her offered kindness, but it seemed very unlikely, and the disappointment would be so great that she could not bear to dwell on the thought. Waymark had promised to come as soon as he had any news. The time would go very slowly till she saw him.



Waymark had met Harriet very seldom of late. Julian spent regularly one evening a week with him, but it was only occasionally that Waymark paid a visit in turn. He knew that he was anything but welcome to Mrs. Casti, who of course had neither interest nor understanding for the conversation between himself and Julian. Formerly he had now and then tried his best to find some common subject for talk with her, but the effort had been vain; she was hopelessly stupid, and more often than not in a surly mood, which made her mere presence difficult to be endured. Of late, whenever he came, she made her illness an excuse for remaining in her bed-room. And hence arose another trouble. The two rooms were only divided by folding doors, and when Harriet got impatient with what she conceived to be the visitor's undue stay, she would rap on the doors, to summon Julian to her. This rapping would take place sometimes six or seven times in half an hour, till Waymark hastened away in annoyance. And indeed there was little possibility of conversing in Julian's own room. Julian sat

for ever in a state of nervous apprehension, dreading the summons which was sure to come before long. When he left the room for a moment, in obedience to it, Waymark could hear Harriet's voice speaking in a peevish or ill-tempered tone, and Julian would return pale with agitation, unable to utter consecutive words. It was a little better when the meeting was at Waymark's, but even then Julian was anything but at his ease. He would often sit for a long time in gloomy silence, and seldom could even affect his old cheerfulness. The change which a year had made in him was painful. His face was growing haggard with ceaseless anxiety. The slightest unexpected noise made him start nervously. His old enthusiasms were dying away. His daily work was a burden which grew more and more oppressive. He always seemed weary, alike in body and mind.

Harriet's ailments were not of that unreal kind which hysterical women often affect, for the mere sake of demanding sympathy, though it was certain she made the most of them. The scrofulous taint in her constitution was de-

claring itself in many ways. The most serious symptoms took the form of convulsive fits. On Julian's return home one evening, he had found her stretched upon the floor, unconscious, foaming at the mouth, and struggling horribly. Since then, he had come back every night in agonies of miserable anticipation. Her illness, and his own miseries, were of course much intensified by her self-willed habits. When she remained away from home till after midnight, Julian was always in fear lest some accident had happened to her, and once or twice of late she had declared (whether truly or not it was impossible to say) that she had had fits in the open street. Weather made no difference to her; she would leave home on the pretence of making necessary purchases, and would come back drenched with rain. Protest availed nothing, save to irritate her. At times her conduct was so utterly unreasonable that Julian looked at her as if to see whether she had lost her senses. And all this he bore with a patience which few could have rivalled. Moments there were when she softened, and, in a burst of

hysterical weeping, begged him to forgive her for some unusual violence, pleading her illness as the cause; and so sensible was he to compassion, that he always vowed in his mind to bear anything rather than deal harshly with her. Love for her, in the true sense, he had never felt, but his pity often led him to effusions of tenderness which love could scarcely have exceeded. He was giving up everything for her. Through whole evenings he would sit by her, as she lay in pain, holding her hands, and talking in a way which he thought would amuse or interest her.

“You’re sorry you married me,” she would often say at such times. “It’s no good saying no; I’m sure you are.”

That always made Julian think of her father, and of his own promise always to be a friend to the poor, weak, ailing creature; and he strengthened himself in his resolution to bear everything.

Waymark decided that he would venture on the step of going to see Harriet during the day-time, whilst Julian was away, in order to speak

of Ida. This he did on the Monday, and was lucky enough to find her at home. She was evidently surprised at his visit, and perhaps still more so at the kind and friendly way in which he began to speak to her. In a few minutes he had worked round to his subject. He had, he said, a friend, a young lady who was very lonely, and for whom he wanted to find an agreeable companion. It had occurred to him that perhaps he might ask to be allowed to introduce her. Waymark had concluded that this would probably be the best way of putting it; Harriet would perhaps be flattered by being asked to confer the favour of her acquaintance. And indeed she seemed so; there was even something like a momentary touch of colour in her pale cheek.

“Does Julian know her?” she asked, fixing her eyes on his with the closest scrutiny.

“No, he does not.”

He would leave her to what conclusion she liked about his relations to Ida; in reality that mattered little.

“She is some one,” he went on, “for whom I

have a great regard. As I say, she has really no friends, and she earns her own living. I feel sure you would find her company pleasant; she is sensible and cheerful, and would be very grateful for any kindness you showed her. Her name, by-the-bye, is Ida Starr."

"Ida Starr?"

"Is the name familiar to you?"

"I used to know some one called that."

"Indeed? How strange it would be if you knew her already. I have spoken to her of you, but she didn't tell me she knew your name."

"Oh no, she wouldn't. It was years and years ago. We used to go to school together,—if it's the same."

The way in which this was spoken was not very promising, but Waymark would not be discouraged, having once brought himself to the point of carrying the scheme through. Harriet went on to ask many questions, all of which he answered as satisfactorily as he could, and in the end she expressed herself quite willing to renew Ida's acquaintance. Waymark had watched her face as closely as she did his,

and he was able to read pretty accurately what was passing in her mind. Curiosity, it was clear, was her main incentive. Good will there was none; its growth, if at all possible, would depend upon Ida herself. There was even something very like a gleam of hate in her dark eyes when Ida's name was first spoken.

“When may I bring her?” Waymark asked. “Perhaps you would like to talk it over with Julian first? By-the-bye, perhaps he remembers her as your schoolfellow?”

“I don't know, I'm sure,” she said, with a pretence of indifference. “I don't see what he can have to say against it. Bring her as soon as you like.”

“She is not free till seven at night. Perhaps we had better leave it till next Sunday?”

“Why? Why couldn't she come to-morrow night?”

“It is very good of you. I have no doubt she would be glad.”

With this understanding Waymark took his departure.

“Do you remember Ida Starr?” was Harriet's

first question to her husband when he returned that evening.

“Certainly I do,” replied Julian, with complete self-control. “Why?”

“When did you see her last?” followed quickly, whilst she examined him as keenly as she had done Waymark.

“See her?” repeated Julian, laughing. “Do you mean the girl you went to school with?”

“Of course I do.”

“I don’t know that I ever saw her in my life.”

“Well, she’s coming here to-morrow night.”

An explanation followed.

“Hasn’t he ever spoken to you about her?” Harriet asked.

“No,” said Julian, smiling. “I suppose he thought it was a private affair, in which no one else had any interest.”

“I hope you will like her,” he said presently. “It will be very nice to have a friend of that kind, won’t it?”

“Yes,—if she doesn’t throw one of my own plates at me.”

For all this, Harriet showed a good deal of



anticipation as the time drew near on the following evening. She put on her best dress, and even asked Julian about certain points of behaviour on introduction. It was arranged that, after a quarter of an hour or so, Waymark and Julian should go out together for a short time and leave the two to talk alone. The knock at the front door was heard at length, and as the visitors entered, Harriet rose from her chair and looked keenly towards the door. She and Ida had not much difficulty in recognizing each other under the circumstances. Ida was calm and natural, but she reddened a little as she observed the scar on Harriet's forehead. She was the first to speak.

"I am very glad to see you again," she said. "Who could have thought of our meeting in this way?"

"Yes," returned Harriet, doing her best to smile graciously, "it *is* strange, isn't it?"

As she spoke she was not looking at Ida, but at her husband.

Waymark came to the rescue in the silence which naturally followed, and with a little tact

managed to make all feel as much at their ease as possible.

“It won’t be dark for half an hour yet,” Harriet observed, when she saw Julian rising. “Why shouldn’t we all walk together to the Embankment, and come back for supper?”

This was a good idea, and was at once carried out. Harriet and Ida walked together, and the other two followed. The contrast between the two girls could not well have been more striking. Harriet was slightly the taller, but her figure was much inferior; her face too seemed to have its worst characteristics brought out by being viewed side by side with Ida’s pure and perfect beauty. There was nothing natural in her demeanour; her very movements seemed to indicate suspicion and the restlessness of an ignoble nature. Ida was all unaffected grace and sweetness. The look she turned on her companion as she spoke was full of anxious good-will. Harriet’s pale, unhealthy countenance had moved pity in her; if there still remained any shadow of the old resentment, it had no power to interfere with the com-

plete sincerity with which she gave herself to this friendship.

And Julian, walking behind them, let his eyes wander from one to the other. He spoke little, and was pale.

“This is really better than I had hoped,” said Waymark to him, in an undertone.

Julian did not seem to hear.

## CHAPTER VI.

## UNDER-CURRENTS.

“WELL, how do you like her?” Julian asked, when their visitors had left them.

“Oh, I dare say she’s all right,” was the reply. “She’s got a good deal to say for herself.”

Julian turned away, and walked about the room.

“What does she work at?” said Harriet, after glancing at him furtively once or twice.

“I have no idea.”

“It’s my belief she doesn’t work at all.”

“Why should Waymark have said so, then?” asked Julian, standing still and looking at her. He spoke very quietly, but his face betrayed some annoyance.

Harriet merely laughed, her most ill-natured and maliciously suggestive laugh, and rose from her seat. Julian came up and faced her.

“Harriet,” he said, with perfect gentleness, though his lips trembled, “why do you always prefer to think the worst of people? I should be very uncomfortable if I allowed myself to be always searching out possible evil motives. My way of thinking is quite different from yours. I always look for the good rather than the evil in people I meet.”

“We’re different in a good many things, you see,” said Harriet, with a sneer. Her countenance had darkened. Julian had learnt the significance of her looks and tones only too well. Under the circumstances it would have been better to keep silence, but something compelled him to speak.

“I am sure of this,” he said. “If you will only meet her in her own spirit, you will find her a valuable friend—just such a friend as you need. But of course if you begin with all manner of prejudices and suspicions, it will be very hard for her to make you believe in her sincerity. Certainly her kindness, her sympathy, her whole manner, was perfect to-night.”

“You seem to notice her a good deal.”

“Naturally I did, being so anxious that you should at length find a worthy friend and companion.”

“And who is she, I should like to know?” said Harriet, with perfection of subdued acrimony. “How can I tell that she’s a proper person to be a friend to me? I know what her mother was, at all events.”

“Her mother? What do you know of her mother?”

Julian had never known the whole story of that scar on his wife’s forehead.

“Never mind,” said Harriet, nodding significantly.

“I have no idea what you mean,” Julian returned. “At all events I can trust Waymark, and I know very well he would not have brought her here, if she hadn’t been a proper person for you to know. But come,” he added, quickly, making an effort to dismiss the disagreeable tone between them, “there’s surely no need for us to talk like this, Harriet. I am sure you will like her, when you know her better. Promise me that you will try, dear. You are so lonely, and

it would rejoice me so to feel that you had a friend to help you and to be a comfort to you. At all events you will judge her on her own merits, won't you, and put aside all kind of prejudice?"

"I haven't said I shouldn't; but I suppose I must get to know her first?"

Ominous as such a commencement would have been under any other circumstances, Julian was so prepared for more decided hostility, that he was even hopeful. When he met Waymark next, the change in his manner was obvious; he was almost cheerful once more. And the improvement held its ground as the next two or three weeks went by. Ida came to Beaufort Street often, and Julian was able to use the freedom he thus obtained to spend more time in Waymark's society. The latter noticed the change in him with surprise.

"Things go well still?" he would ask, when Julian came in of an evening.

"Very well indeed. Harriet hasn't been out one night this week."

"And you think it will last?"

“I have good hope. It will not be Ida’s fault if it does not. She would subdue the most perverse nature.”

They did not speak much of Ida, however. It was only when three weeks had gone by that Julian asked one night, with some hesitation in putting the question, whether Waymark saw her often.

“Pretty often,” was the reply. “I am her tutor, in a sort of way. We read together, and that kind of thing.”

“At her lodgings?”

“Yes. Does it seem a queer arrangement?”

“She seems very intelligent,” said Julian, letting the question pass by, and speaking with some constraint. “Isn’t it a pity that she can’t find some employment better suited to her?”

“I don’t see what is open. Could you suggest anything?”

Julian was silent.

“In any case, it won’t last very long, I suppose?” he said, looking up with a smile which was rather a trembling of the lip.

“Why?”



They gazed at each other for a moment.

“No,” said Waymark, shaking his head and smiling. “It isn’t as you think. It is perfectly understood between us that we are to be agreeable company to each other, and absolutely nothing beyond that. I have no motive for leading you astray in the matter. However things were, I would tell you frankly.”

There was another silence.

“Do you think there is anything like confidence between your wife and her?” Waymark asked.

“That I hardly know. When I am present, of course they only talk about ordinary women’s interests, household affairs, and so on.”

“Then you have no means of—well, of knowing whether she has spoken about me to your wife in any particular way?”

“Nothing of the kind has ever been hinted to me.”

“Waymark,” Julian continued, after a pause, “you are a strange fellow.”

“In what respect?”

“Do you mean to tell me honestly that—that you—”

“ Well?—You mean to say, that I am not in love with the girl? ”

“ No, I wasn't going to say that,” said Julian, with his usual bashfulness, heightened in this case by some feeling which made him pale. “ I meant, do you really believe that *she* has no kind of regard for you beyond mere friendship? ”

“ Why? Have you formed any conclusions of your own on the point? ”

“ How could I help doing so? ”

“ And you look on me,” said Waymark, after thinking for a moment, “ as an insensible dog, with a treasure thrown at his feet which he is quite incapable of appreciating or making use of? ”

“ No. I only feel that your position must be a very difficult one. But perhaps you had rather not speak of these things? ”

“ On the contrary. You are perfectly right, and the position is as difficult as it well could be. ”

“ You had made your choice, I suppose, before you knew Ida at all? ”

“ So far from that, I haven't even made it

yet. I am not at all sure that my chance of ever marrying Maud Enderby is not so utterly remote, that I ought to put aside all thought of it. In that case—”

“But this is a strange state of mind,” said Julian, with a forced laugh. “Is it possible to balance feelings in this way?”

“You, in my position, would have no doubt?”

“I don’t know Miss Enderby,” said Julian, reddening.

Waymark walked up and down the room, with his hands behind his back, his brows bent. He had never told his friend anything of Ida’s earlier history; but now he felt half tempted to let him know everything. To do so, might possibly give him that additional motive to a clear and speedy decision in the difficulties which grew ever more pressing. Yet was it just to Ida to speak of these things even to one who would certainly not repeat a word? Once or twice he all but began, yet in the end a variety of motives kept him silent.

“Let us talk of this again in a little time,” he said. Then, with an outbreak of impatience:

“How different one’s conduct would be, but for this cursed poverty! How easy it is to be honest when you have money! There is no such cant as that which prates of the soul’s independence of external things. Give me a fortune to-morrow, and I shall be in scarcely one respect the man that I am to-day. I shall act in accordance with my principles, and it will be easy to do so. Now I am a miserable shifting fellow, paltering with my own conscience, and despising myself every other moment for the thought which came the moment before.”

“I think better of you than that,” said Julian, with an earnestness which seemed out of proportion to the other’s tone. “Whatever your promptings might be, you would never do anything unprincipled; you would never lose sight of the result of your conduct on others.”

“Don’t be so sure of that, my dear fellow! Yes; principles I have, of a kind, no doubt; but, as I tell you, I lack the means of giving them play. I am quite capable of the most rascally acts, out of mere spleen, mere irritation and discontent. Every strange soul represents

to me the world. And what do I owe the world, that I should spare any one, when the opportunity comes for gratifying myself?"

"Don't speak in that way, Waymark," said Julian, coming up to face him, and meeting his look with one of agitated earnestness. "You don't really think so; no, indeed you do not! Surely we can speak plainly to each other. All this abstract talk of course has reference to what we both well understand. In *that* matter, you will be led away by no such sophistry! *I* have no right to preach to you, of course, but—"

His voice faltered, and he turned away. Waymark looked at him keenly, and went back to his seat, with a half-smile.

"Well," he exclaimed, shortly, "we'll talk about this another time. Perhaps I shall have more to tell you. Don't be gloomy. Look, here I am just upon the end of my novel. If all goes smoothly I shall finish it in a fortnight, and then I will read it to you."

"I hope you may have better luck with it than I had," said Julian.

"Oh, your time is yet to come. And it's

very likely I shall be no better off. There are things in the book which will scarcely recommend it to the British parent. But it shall be published, if it is at my own expense. If it comes to the worst, I shall sell my mining shares to Woodstock."

"After all," said Julian, smiling, "you are a capitalist."

"Yes, and much good it does me."

Since that first evening, Julian had refrained from speaking to his wife about Ida, beyond casual remarks and questions which could carry no significance. Harriet likewise had been silent. As far as could be observed, however, she seemed to take a pleasure in Ida's society, and, as Julian said, with apparently good result to herself. She was more at home than formerly, and her health even seemed to profit by the change. Still, there was something not altogether natural in all this, and Julian could scarcely bring himself to believe in the happy turn things seemed to be taking. In Harriet herself there was no corresponding growth of cheerfulness or good-nature. She was quiet,

but with a quietness not altogether pleasant ; it was as though her thoughts were constantly occupied, as never hitherto ; and her own moral condition was hardly likely to be the subject of these meditations. Julian, when he sat reading, sometimes became desperately aware of her eyes being fixed on him for many minutes at a time. Once, on this happening, he looked up with a smile.

“What is it, dear ?” he asked, turning round to her. “You are very quiet. Shall I put away the book and talk ?”

“No ; I’m all right.”

“You’ve been much better lately, haven’t you ?” he said, taking her hand playfully. “Let me feel your pulse ; you know I’m half a doctor.”

She drew it away peevishly. But Julian, whom a peaceful hour had made full of kindness, went on in the same gentle way.

“You don’t know how happy it makes me to see you and Ida such good friends. I was sure it would be so. Don’t you feel there is something soothing in her society ? She speaks so

gently, and always brings a sort of sunshine with her."

Harriet's lips curled, very slightly, but she said nothing.

"When are you going to see her again? It's hardly fair to let the visiting be always on her side, is it?"

"I shall go when I feel able. Perhaps tomorrow."

Julian presently went back to his book again. If he could have seen the look Harriet turned upon him when his face was averted, he would not have read so calmly.

That same evening Harriet herself was the subject of a short conversation between Ida and Waymark, as they sat together in the usual way.

"I fear there will never be anything like confidence between us," Ida was saying. "Do you know that I am sometimes almost afraid of her; sometimes she looks and speaks as if she hated me."

"She is a poor, ill-conditioned creature," Waymark replied, rather contemptuously.



“Can you explain,” asked Ida, “how it was that Mr. Casti married her?”

“For my life, I can’t! It astounded me at the time, and has amazed me ever since, whenever I thought of it. I half believe it was out of mere pity; I shouldn’t wonder if the proposal came from her side. Casti might once have done something; but I’m afraid he never will now.”

“And he is so very good to her. I pity him from my heart whenever I see them together. Often I have been so discouraged by her cold suspicious ways, that I half thought I should have to give it up, but I felt it would be cruel to desert him so. I met him in the street the other night just as I was going to her, and he thanked me for what I was doing in a way that almost made me cry.”

“By-the-bye,” said Waymark, “you know her too well to venture upon anything like direct criticism of her behaviour, when you talk together?”

“Indeed, I scarcely venture to speak of herself at all. It would be hard to say what we talk about.”

“Of course,” Waymark said, after a short silence, “there are limits to self-devotion. So long as it seems to you that there is any chance of doing some good, well, persevere. But you musn’t be sacrificed to such a situation. The time you give her is so much absolute loss to yourself.”

“Oh, but I work hard to make up for it. You are not dissatisfied with me?”

“And what if I were? Would it matter much?”

This was one of the things that Waymark was ever and again saying, in spite of himself. He could not resist the temptation of proving his power in this way; it is so sweet to be assured of love, even though every voice within cries out against the temptation to enjoy it, and condemns every word or act that could encourage it to hope. Ida generally met such remarks with silence; but in this instance she looked up steadily, and said—

“Yes, it *would* matter much.”

Waymark drew in his breath, half turned away—and spoke of some quite different matter.

Harriet carried out her intention of visiting Ida on the following day. In these three weeks she had only been to Ida's lodgings once. The present visit was unexpected. She waited about the pavement for Ida's return from work, and shortly saw her approaching.

“This is kind of you,” Ida said. “We'll have some tea, and then, if you're not too tired, we might go into the park. It will be cool then.”

She dreaded the thought of sitting alone with Harriet. But the latter said she must get home early, and would only have time to sit for half an hour. When Ida had lit her fire, and put the kettle on, she found that the milk which she had kept since the morning for Grim and herself had gone sour; so she had to run out to a dairy to fetch some.

“You won't mind being left alone for a minute?” she said.

“Oh no; I'll amuse myself with Grim.”

As soon as she was alone, Harriet went into the bed-room, and began to examine everything. Grim had followed her, and came up to rub

affectionately against her feet, but she kicked him, muttering, "Get off, you black beast!" Having scrutinized the articles which lay about, she quickly searched the pockets of a dress which hung on the door, but found nothing except a handkerchief. All the time she listened for any footfall on the stone steps without. Next she went to the chest of drawers, and was pleased to find that they were unlocked. In the first she drew out there were some books and papers. These she rummaged through very quickly, and at length, underneath them, came upon a little bundle of pawn-tickets. On finding these, she laughed to herself, and carefully inspected every one of them. "Gold chain," she muttered; "bracelet; seal-skin;—what was she doing with all those things, I wonder? Ho, ho, Miss Starr!"

She started; there was a step on the stairs. In a second, everything was replaced, and she was back in the sitting-room, stooping over Grim, who took her endearments with passive indignation.

"Have I been long?" panted Ida, as she

came in. "The kettle won't be a minute. You'll take your things off?"

Harriet removed her hat only. As Ida went about, preparing the tea, Harriet watched her with eyes in which there was a new light. She spoke, too, in almost a cheerful way, and even showed a better appetite than usual when they sat down together.

"You are better to-day?" Ida said to her.

"Perhaps so; but it doesn't last long."

"Oh, you must be more hopeful. Try not to look so much on the dark side of things. How would you be," she added, with a good-humoured laugh, "if you had to work all day, like me? I'm sure you've a great deal to make you feel happy and thankful."

"I don't know what," returned Harriet, coldly.

"But your husband, your home, your long, free days?"

The other laughed peevishly. Ida turned her head away for a moment; she was irritated by this wretched humour, and, as had often been the case of late, found it difficult to restrain some rather trenchant remark.

“It may sound strange,” she said, with a smile, “but I think I should be very willing to endure bad health for a position something like yours.”

Harriet laughed again, and still more unpleasantly. Ida turned the talk to indifferent matters, and, very shortly after tea, her visitor said it was time to go. Ida offered her lips, and they were just touched.

Harriet did not take the nearest way homewards; after a little hesitation, she turned in a quite opposite direction, and walked to Westminster. In twenty minutes she reached the neighbourhood of Litany Lane, and came to the Clock House. Something of an amusing kind seemed to be going forward in front of the house. On drawing near and pressing into the crowd of loitering people, she witnessed a spectacle familiar to her, and one which brought a smile to her face. A man of wretched appearance, in vile semblance of clothing which barely clung together about him, was standing on his head upon the pavement, and, in that attitude, drawling out what was meant for a song, while

those around made merry and indulged in practical jokes at his expense. One such put a sudden end to the exhibition. A young ragamuffin drew near with a handful of rich mud, and carefully cast it right into the singer's inverted mouth. The man was on his feet in an instant, and pursuing the assailant, who, however, succeeded in escaping down an alley hard by. Returning, the man went from one to another in the crowd, holding out his hand. Harriet passed on into the bar.

"Slimy's up to his larks to-night," exclaimed Mrs. Sprowl, with a laugh, as she welcomed her visitor in the bar-parlour. "He'll be losin' his sweet temper just now, see if he don't, an' then one o' them chaps 'll get a bash i' the eye."

"I always like to see him singing on his head," said Harriet, who seemed at once thoroughly at her ease in the atmosphere of beer and pipes.

"It's funny, ain't it? And 'ow's the world been a-usin' you, Harriet? Seen anything more o' that affectionate friend o' yourn?"

This was said with a grin, and a significant wink.

“Have you found out anything about her?” asked Harriet, eagerly.

“Why yes, I have; somethin’ as ’ll amuse you. It’s just as I thought.”

“How do you mean?”

“Why, Luce Waddy was in ’ere th’ other night, so I says to her, ‘Luce,’ I says, ‘didn’t you never hear of a girl called Ida Starr?’ I says. ‘Course I did,’ she says. ‘It’s a girl as Melly was after.’”

“Who’s Melly?” interrupted Harriet, whose face was all greedy attention.

“Fellow as used to keep Lily Crow,—you know her. His real name’s Mellydew, and they call him Melly for short and sweet.”

“Well, go on; what about her?”

“Well, I says to Luce, ‘Was she on the job then?’ I says. ‘Oh yes,’ says Luce, ‘one o’ the ’igh an’ ’aughty lot, an’ she lived by herself somewhere in the Strand.’ So it’s just as I told you.”

“But what is she doing now?”

“You say she’s turned modest.”

“I can’t make her out quite,” said Harriet,



reflecting, with her head on one side. "I've been at her lodgings to-night, and, whilst she was out of the room, I happened to get sight of a lot of pawn-tickets, for gold chains and seal-skins, and I don't know what."

"Spouted 'em all when she threw up the job, I s'pose," suggested Mrs. Sprowl. "She must be dead nuts on some one. You're sure she does go to work?"

"Yes, I've had somebody to follow her and watch her. There's Waymark goes to see her often, and I shouldn't wonder if she half keeps him; he's just that kind of fellow."

"You haven't caught no one else going there?" asked Mrs. Sprowl, with another of her intense winks.

"No, I haven't, not yet," replied Harriet, with sudden vehemence, "but I believe he does go there, or else sees her somewhere else."

"Well," said the landlady, with an air of generous wisdom, "I told you from the first as I 'adn't much opinion of men as is so anxious to have their wives friendly with other women. There's always something at the bottom of it,

you may bet. It's my belief he's one too many for you, Harriet; you're too simple-minded to catch him."

"I'll have a good try, though," cried the girl, deadly pale with passion. "Perhaps I'm not so simple as you think. I'm pretty quick in tumbling to things,—no fear. If they think I don't notice what goes on, they must take me for a damned silly fool, that's all! Why, I've seen them wink at each other, when they thought I wasn't looking."

"You're not such a fool as to leave them alone together?" said the woman, who seemed to have a pleasure in working upon Harriet's jealousy.

"No fear! But they understand each other; I can see that well enough. And he writes to her; I'm dead sure he writes to her. Let me get hold of a letter just once, that's all!"

"And he's orful good-natured to her, ain't he? Looks after her when she has tea with you, and so on?"

"I should think he did. It's all—'Won't Miss Starr have this?' and 'won't Miss Starr

have that?' He scarcely takes his eyes off of her, all the time."

"I know, I know; it's allus the same! You keep your eyes open, Harriet, and you'll 'ave your reward, as the Scriptures says."

In talking, Mrs. Sprowl had been constantly moving backwards and forwards, helping to serve customers at the bar. At this point she had to be away for several minutes, settling a matter of disputed payment with a drunken woman, whose clamours had been incessant. In her absence, a change suddenly came over Harriet's face; her eyelids drooped, and her mouth began to work convulsively. Then her arms fell to her sides, and in a moment she was stiffening on the chair; her head fell back, and, with a low moaning and a struggling, she slipped sideways, and at length fell heavily to the ground. When Mrs. Sprowl reappeared, she was lying there in convulsions, her lips covered with a thin foam, her limbs violently distorted. The woman looked at her with a sort of quiet curiosity for a moment, then stooped to put some object under her head,

and at the same time loosened the front of her dress. Presently the fit passed away, and consciousness slowly returned.

“Are y’ all right again?” asked Mrs. Sprowl, when she had helped her up into the chair. “See, drink this drop. You’ve been over-excitin’ yourself. Why can’t you take things easier?”

Harriet drank a glass of hot spirits. She was a little hysterical now, and began to cry. Mrs. Sprowl comforted her in a rough-and-ready way, and, the glass being empty, presently refilled it. One or two friends began to look in, whom Harriet knew well, and with whom she was evidently in the habit of discussing freely all her private affairs. Not till nearly twelve o’clock did she think of leaving. During the latter part of the evening she was quieter than usual, and seemed to be brooding deeply.

When at length she reached home, Julian was in the uneasy condition always brought about by these late absences. To a remark he made about the time, she vouchsafed no answer.

“Have you been with Ida all the evening?” he asked.

“No, I haven’t,” was her reply.

She went into the bed-room, and was absent for a few minutes; then reappeared.

“Do you know where my silver spoon is?” she asked, looking closely at him.

“Your silver spoon?” he returned, in surprise. “Have you lost it?”

The article in question, together with a fork, had been a wedding-present from Mrs. Sprowl, whose character had in it a sort of vulgar generosity, displayed at times in gifts to Harriet.

“I can’t find it,” Harriet said. “I was showing it to Ida Starr when she was here on Sunday, and now I come to look for it, it’s gone.”

“Oh, it can’t be very far off,” said Julian. “You’ll find it if you look.”

“But I tell you I’ve looked everywhere. It’s gone, that’s all I know.”

“Well, but,——what do you mean? How can it have gone?”

“I don’t know. I only know I was showing it her on Sunday.”

“And what connection is there between the two circumstances?” asked Julian, almost sternly. “You don’t wish me to understand that Ida Starr knows anything about the spoon?”

“How can I tell? It’s gone.”

“Come,” exclaimed Julian, with a laugh, “this is too absurd, Harriet! You must have taken leave of your senses. If it’s gone, then some one in the house has taken it.”

“And why not Ida Starr?”

Julian stared at her, with mingled anger and alarm.

“Why not? Simply because she is incapable of such a thing.”

“Perhaps *you* think so; no doubt. You think a good deal of her, it seems to me. Perhaps you don’t know quite as much about her as I do.”

“I fancy I know much more,” exclaimed Julian, indignantly.

“Oh, do you?”

“If you think her capable of stealing your spoon, you show complete ignorance of her character. What do you know of her that you should have such suspicions?”

“Never mind,” said Harriet, nodding her head obstinately. “Perhaps you’ll know some day.”

Julian trembled in every limb, and seemed unable to speak. When his eyes fell on her, they turned away again, with a contempt which had even something of hatred. He walked up and down the room once or twice, before breaking the silence.

“In this case,” he said at length, abruptly, “it is of course impossible for any further intercourse to exist between you.”

“I didn’t say it was,” replied Harriet, with something of concession in her voice all at once.

“But if you accuse her—”

“I didn’t accuse her. You’re a deal too sharp.”

“But you grossly calumniate her. You regard it as a possible thing, and hint all manner of slanders I don’t at all understand, Under these circumstances, it’s impossible to keep up any pretence of friendship.”

“Now don’t begin to storm at me in that way. I’ve had one fit already to-night, and I don’t feel well; so keep quiet.”

There was again a long silence. Julian reflected.

“We will talk about this again to-morrow,” he said, “when you have had time to think. You are under some strange delusion. After all, I expect you will find the spoon, and then you’ll be sorry for having been so hasty.”

Harriet became obstinately silent. She cut a piece of bread and butter, and took it into the other room. Julian paced up and down.



## CHAPTER VII.

## THE OPPORTUNITY.

ONE or two days after this, Ida Starr came home from work with a heavy heart. Quite without notice, and without explanation, her employer had paid her a week's wages and dismissed her. Her first astonished questions having been met with silence by the honest but rather hard-grained woman who kept the laundry, Ida had not condescended to any further appeal. As it happened, there had been for some little time an evident lack of friendliness towards her in the laundress's daughter, a feather-headed girl who had taken offence at some trifle or other, and this she was obliged to accept as in some way the origin of her dismissal. Of course that was not the real cause. The fact was that the laundress

had received a visit from a certain Mrs. Sprowl, who had represented herself as under a moral obligation to inform the laundress that Ida was no better than she should be, advancing at the same time what appeared to be incontestable proofs of her assertion; adding, moreover, that Ida was strongly suspected of certain thefts, and was being watched with a view to her detection. This visit, be it understood, was the result of a little chat between the landlady of the Clock House and Harriet Casti.

Several circumstances united to make this event disastrous to Ida. Her wages were very little more than she needed for her week to week existence, yet she had managed to save a shilling or two now and then. The greater part of these small savings she had just laid out in some new clothing, the reason for the expense being not so much necessity, as a desire to be rather better dressed when she accompanied Waymark on those little country excursions which had re-established themselves of late. By no means the smallest part of Ida's heroism was that involved in this matter of

external appearance. A beautiful woman can never be indifferent to the way in which her beauty is arrayed. In the former times, when her means allowed comparative luxury, she had dressed with perfect taste and with great advantage. That Waymark was not indifferent to such things she knew well, and often she suffered from the thought that one strong means of attraction was lost to her. Love has its pride, but no less its humilities. If at one moment Ida was conscious of her claim to inspire a noble enthusiasm, at another she fell into the saddest self-distrust, and, in her hunger for love, would gladly have sought every humblest aid of grace and adornment. So she had yielded to the needs of her heart, and only this morning was gladdened by the charm of some new clothing which became her well, and which Waymark would see in a day or two. It lay there before her now that she returned home, and, in the first onset of trouble, she sat down and cried over it.

She suffered the more, too, that there had been something of a falling off of late in the

perfect health she had generally enjoyed. She had had sleepless nights, and her early rising was often with a dizzy head and eyes which ached at the daylight. The day's work seemed long and hard; she felt an unwonted need of rest. And these things caused trouble of the mind. With scarcely an hour of depression she had worked on through those months of solitude, supported by the sense that every day brought an accession of the strength of purity, that the dark time was left one more stage behind, and that trust in herself was growing assured. It will not have been hard to guess why she kept secret from Waymark the plans which lay before her when she left Hastings. There was so much doubt whether she would have the strength to fulfil them. Should she fail in endurance, should she find that the noble purposes conceived in those eager days were but a gleam from some world in which she was unworthy to constantly dwell, then it would be better that Waymark knew nothing of her failure. Doubtless some ignoble consolation would be discovered, that she might live her life with at

least something of the old indifference. But time had proved her, and her strength had not failed. When she wrote to him, it was in assurance that the time for relinking their acquaintance had come; she doubted herself no longer, and felt that, whatsoever might be her future relations with him,—whether he came back to her with all the old appearance of passion, or only with friendship to offer,—she had learnt the sources of moral strength and self-reliance, that in any event she would no longer be unworthy of him.

Yet she had not fully realized the effect of a possible change in Waymark; perhaps because her hopes would not let her dwell on that possibility. He had changed, and she recognized it from the first moment. Disappointment followed, and a struggle through a night of misery; in which, however, she as yet suffered no defeat. Only she must get used to the reversal of her anticipations; only she must draw new strength from depths of her nature where might be untested powers. Since then, however, she had no longer known that

unbroken course of glad effort which had become her means of health and cheerfulness. It was so much harder than she had foreseen, to maintain reserve and reticence when her heart was throbbing with passion; the effect upon her of Waymark's comparative coldness was so much harder to bear than she had imagined. Her mind tortured itself incessantly with the fear that some new love had taken possession of Waymark in the interval. And now there had befallen her this new misfortune, which, it might be, would once more bring about a crisis in her life.

Of course she must forthwith set about finding new work. It would be difficult, seeing that she had now no reference to give; clearly it was impossible to ask any favour of this kind from the woman who had behaved to her with such injustice. Reflection had convinced her that it must have been some discovery of her former life which had led to her sudden dismissal, and this increased her despondency. Yet she would not give way to it. On the following morning she began her search for employment,

and day after day faced without result the hateful ordeal. / If you, dear madam, who read this in the ease of assured leisure, should ever feel disposed to vary the monotony of your life with a distinctly new sensation, permit me to suggest that you should disguise yourself as a simple work-girl, and, supposing yourself for the moment quite friendless and "character"-less, go about from place to place begging for leave to toil. Of course there will be lacking the real piquancy of despair, yet I doubt not a very tolerable misery will be produced in the process. Here you will be met with an indifferent negative, perhaps expressed by a mere careless shake of the head; there, after being gauged in a manner clearly indicative of certain opinions about you, you will be rebuffed with frank insolence; everywhere you will be given to understand that you are altogether superfluous, and that your existence is clearly a matter of no concern to any soul on earth. A few hours of such experience will suffice to you; Ida had to endure it day after day, till the days grew to weeks. Sometimes she would

come home after a morning thus spent, and, throwing herself on her bed, lie there in blank misery till darkness filled the room. Hope failed as she saw her painfully-eked-out coins become fewer and fewer. In a day or two she would have nothing, and what would happen then?

When she returned to London to begin a new life, now nearly a year ago, she had sold some and pawned the rest of such possessions as would in future be useless to her. Part of the money thus obtained had bought the furniture of her rooms; what remained had gone for a few months to supplement her weekly wages, thus making the winter less a time of hardship than it must otherwise have been. One or two articles yet remained capable of being turned into small sums, and these she now disposed of at a neighbouring pawnbroker's,—the same she had previously visited on the occasion of pawning one or two of the things, the tickets for which Harriet Casti had so carefully inspected. She spoke to no one of her position. Yet now the time was quickly coming when she must



either have help from some quarter or else give up her lodgings. In food she was already stinting herself to the verge of starvation. And through all this she had to meet her friends as hitherto, if possible without allowing any trace of her suffering to become visible. Harriet, strange to say, had been of late a rather frequent visitor, and was more pressing than formerly in her invitations. Ida dreaded her coming, as it involved the unwarrantable expense of obtaining luxuries now unknown in her cupboard, such as tea and butter. And, on the other hand, it was almost impossible to affect cheerfulness in the company of the Castis. At times she caught Julian's eyes fixed upon her, and felt that he noticed some change in her appearance. She had a sense of guilt in their presence, as if she were there on false pretences. For, together with her daily work, much of her confidence had gone; an inexplicable shame constantly troubled her. She longed to hide herself away, and be alone with her wretchedness.

If it came to asking for help, of whom could she ask it but of Waymark? Yet for some time

she felt she could not bring herself to that. Instincts of delicacy shrank before the thought. In the consciousness of her own attitude towards him, it seemed to her that Waymark might well doubt the genuineness of her need, might think it a mere feint to draw him into nearer relations. She could not doubt that he knew her love for him; she did not desire to hide it, even had she been able. But him she could not understand. A struggle often seemed going on within him in her presence; he appeared to repress his impulses; he was afraid of her. At times passion urged her to break through this barrier between them, to bring about a situation which would end in clear mutual understanding, cost her what it might. At other times she was driven to despair by the thought that she had made herself too cheap in his eyes, that the very completeness of her self-surrender had had the effect of making him cold. Could she put off the last vestige of her independence, and, in so many words, ask him to give her money?

A fortnight had gone by, the third week was beginning, and her means were at an end.

Through the whole of two days she sat at home ; on the second without food. She did not feel the want of it indeed. There was no longer any use in torturing herself with seeking for work ; even if she found it, it would not remove the necessity of getting money for immediate needs. This evening she expected Waymark, but the usual time of his coming went by. She sat in the twilight, listening with painful intentness to every step on the stairs ; again and again her heart leaped at some footfall far below, only to be deceived. She had not even now made up her mind how to speak to him, or whether to speak to him at all ; but she longed passionately to see him. The alternations of hope and disappointment made her feverish. Illusions began to possess her. Once she heard distinctly the familiar knock. It seemed to rouse her from slumber : she sprang to the door and opened it, but no one was there. She ran half-way down the stairs, but saw no one. It was now nearly midnight. The movement had dispelled for a little the lethargy which was growing upon her, and she suddenly came to a

resolution. Taking a sheet of note-paper, she wrote this :—

“I have been without work for a fortnight. All my money is done, and I am in want. Can you *send* me some, for present help, till I get more work? *Do not bring it yourself, and do not speak a word of this when you see me, I beg you earnestly.* If I still fail to get work, I will speak to you of my own accord.

“ I. S.”

She went out and posted this, though she had no stamp to put on the envelope; then, returning, she threw herself as she was on the bed, and before long passed into unconsciousness.

Waymark's absence that evening had been voluntary. The conflict in him between passion and what may perhaps be called prudence was reaching a climax, and it seemed that passion would prevail. His work had come to a stand-still; his waking hours were passed in a restless misery which threatened to make him ill. And to-night he had not dared to go to Ida; in his

present state the visit could have but one result, and even yet he hoped that such a result might not come about. He left home and wandered about the streets till early morning. All manner of projects occupied him. He all but made up his mind to write a long letter to Ida and explain his position without reserve. But he feared lest the result of that might be to make Ida hide away from him once more, and to this loss he could not reconcile himself. Yet he was further than ever from the thought of giving himself wholly to her, for the intenser his feeling grew, the more clearly he recognized its character. This was not love he suffered from, but mere desire. To let it have its way would be to degrade Ida. Love might or might not follow, and how could he place her at the mercy of such a chance as that? Her faith and trust in him was absolute; could he take advantage of it for his own ends? And, for all these fine arguments, Waymark saw with perfect clearness how the matter would end. Self would triumph, and Ida, if the fates so willed it, would be sacrificed. It was detestable, but

a fact; as good already as an accomplished fact.

And on the following morning Ida's note reached him. It was final. Her entreaty that he would merely send money had no weight with him for a moment; he felt that there was a contradiction between her words and her wishes. This note explained the strangeness he had noticed in her on their last evening together. He pitied her, and, as is so often the case, pity was but fuel to passion. He swept from his mind all obstinate debatings. Passion should be a law unto itself. Let the future bring things about as it would.

He had risen late, and by the time he had finished a hasty breakfast it was eleven o'clock. Half an hour after he went up the stairs of the lodging-house and knocked at the familiar door.

But his knock met with no answer; nay, at that door never again would be answered. Ida herself had left home an hour before. Upon waking, and recalling what she had done, she foresaw that Waymark would himself come, in spite of her request. She could not face him.

For all that her exhaustion was so great that walking was slow and weary, she went out and strayed at first with no aim; but presently she turned in the direction of Chelsea, and so came to Beaufort Street. She would go in and see Harriet, who would give her something to eat. She cared little now for letting it be known that she had left her employment; with the step which she had at last taken, her position was quite changed; she had only kept silence lest Waymark should come to know. Harriet was at first surprised to see her, then seemed strangely glad.

“I have come to have lunch with you,” Ida said, as she sank trembling upon a chair. “You are surprised to see me at this time?”

“Why, yes, I am. I’ve only a minute ago sent a note, asking you to be sure to come round to-night. I wanted you to help me with this new hat; you have such good taste in trimming.”

Ida would have been astonished at another time; for Harriet to be paying compliments was indeed something novel. There was a flush on

the latter's usually sallow face; she did not sit down, and kept moving aimlessly about.

"Give me your hat and jacket," she said, "and let me take them into the other room."

She took them away, and returned. Ida was not looking at her; otherwise she must surely have noticed that weird pallor which had all at once succeeded to the unhealthy flush, and the unwonted gleaming of her eyes. Of what passed during those next two hours Ida had afterwards no recollection. They ate together, and they talked, Ida as if in a dream, Harriet preoccupied in a way quite out of her habit. Ida explained that she was out of employment, news which could scarcely be news to the listener, who would in that case have heard it with far less composure. There were long silences, generally brought to an end by some outburst of forced merriment from Harriet. Ida was without consciousness of time, but her restless imagination at length compelled her to go forth again. Harriet did not urge her to stay, but rose and watched her as she went into the other room to put her things on. In a few moments they had parted.



The instant Harriet, from the head of the stairs, heard the front-door close, she ran back into her bed-room, put on her hat, and darted down. Opening the door, she saw Ida moving away at a short distance. Turning her eyes in the opposite direction, she perceived a policeman coming slowly down the street. She ran towards him.

“I’ve caught her at last,” she exclaimed, as she met him, pointing eagerly after Ida. “She’s taken a brooch of mine. I put it in a particular place in my bed-room, and it’s gone.”

“Was she alone in the room?” inquired the constable, looking keenly at Harriet, then down the street.

“Yes, she went in alone to put her things on. Be quick, or she’ll be off!”

“I understand as you give her in charge?”

“Of course I do.”

“Come along o’ me then.”

A brisk walk of two or three minutes, and they had caught up Ida, who turned at the sound of the quick footsteps, and stood in surprise.

“This lady charges you with stealing some articles of hers,” said the constable, looking from face to face. “You must come with me to the station.”

Ida blanched. When the policeman had spoken, she turned to Harriet, and gazed at her fixedly. She could neither speak nor move. The constable touched her arm impatiently. Her eyes turned to him, and she began to walk along by his side.

Harriet followed behind in silence. There were not many people on the way to the police-station in King’s Road, and they reached it speedily. They came before the inspector, and the constable made his report. Formalities were gone through.

“Have you got this brooch?” asked the inspector, looking at Ida.

Ida put her hand into one of her jacket-pockets, then into the other, and from the second brought out the object in question. It was of gold, and had been given by Julian to his wife just after their marriage. As she laid it before her on the desk, she seemed about to

speak, but her breath failed, and she clutched with her hands at the nearest support.

“Look out,” exclaimed the inspector. “Don’t let her fall.”

Five or six times, throughout the day and evening, Waymark had knocked at Ida’s door. About seven o’clock he had called at the Castis’, but found neither of them at home. Returning thence to Pimlico, he had walked for hours up and down in front of the lodging-house, in vain expectation of Ida’s coming. There was no light at her window.

Just before midnight he reached home, having on his way posted a letter with money in it. As he reached his door, Julian stood there, about to knock.

“Anything amiss?” Waymark asked, examining his friend by the light of the street-lamp.

Julian only made a sign to him to open the door. They went up-stairs together, and Waymark speedily obtained a light. Julian had seated himself on the couch. His face was

ghastly, his eyes glared wildly, his teeth were set as in a paroxysm of physical pain.

“What’s the matter?” Waymark asked, anxiously. “Do you know anything about Ida?”

“She’s locked up in the police cells,” was the reply. “My wife has accused her of stealing things from our rooms.”

Waymark stared at him, convinced at first that he was in delirium and speaking without consciousness. The hoarse, dry voice, the deadly pallor, the inflamed eyes, seemed the very expression of a violent fever.

“Casti, what’s the matter with you?” he exclaimed, overcome with fear, in spite of his strong self-command. “Are you ill? Do you know what you’re saying?”

Julian rose and made an effort to control himself. He began to shiver, and his words were severed by the chattering of his teeth.

“I know what I’m saying, Waymark. I’ve only just heard it. She has come back home from somewhere,—only just now,—she seems to have been drinking. It happened in the middle

of the day, whilst I was at the hospital. She gave her in charge to a policeman in the street, and a brooch was found on her."

"A brooch found on her? Your wife's?"

"Yes. When she came in, she railed at me like a fury, and charged me with the most monstrous things. I can't and won't go back there to-night! I shall go mad if I hear her voice. I will walk about the streets till morning."

"And you tell me that Ida Starr is in custody?"

"She is. My wife accuses her of stealing several things."

"And you believe this?" asked Waymark, under his voice, whilst his thoughts pictured Ida's poverty, of which he had known nothing, and led him through a long train of miserable sequences.

"I don't know. I can't say. She says that Ida confessed, and gave the brooch up at once. But her devilish malice is equal to anything. I see into her character as I never did before. Good God, if you could have seen her face as

she told me! And Ida, Ida! I am afraid of myself, Waymark. If I had stayed to listen another moment, I should have struck her. It seemed as if every vein was bursting. How am I ever to live with her again? I dare not! I should kill her in some moment of madness! What will happen to Ida?"

He flung himself upon the couch, and burst into tears. Sobs convulsed him; he writhed in an anguish of conflicting passions. Waymark seemed scarcely to observe him, standing absorbed in speculation and the devising of a course to be pursued.

"I must go to the police station," he said at length, when the violence of the paroxysm had passed and left Julian in the still exhaustion of despair. "You, I think, had better stay here. Is there any danger of her coming to seek you?"

Julian made a motion with his hand, otherwise lay still, his pale face turned upwards.

"I shall be back very quickly," Waymark added, taking his hat. Then, turning back for a moment, "You mustn't give way like this,

old fellow ; this is horrible weakness. Dare I leave you alone ? ”

Julian stretched out his hand, and Waymark pressed it.

“ This is dramatic,” he said to himself, as he went out into the quiet street. “ A situation, decidedly.”

And, for all that, his heart was beating violently.

## CHAPTER VIII.

## JUSTICE.

WAYMARK received from the police a confirmation of all that Julian had said, and returned home. Julian still lay on the couch, calmer, but like one in despair. He begged Waymark to let him remain where he was through the night, declaring that in any case sleep was impossible for him, and that perhaps he might try to pass the hours in reading. They talked together for a time; then Waymark lay down on the bed and shortly slept.

Waymark was to be at the police court in the morning. Julian would go to the hospital as usual.

“Shall you call at home on your way?”  
Waymark asked him.

“No.”



“But what do you propose to do?”

“I must think during the day. I shall come to-night, and you will tell me what has happened.”

Then, as Waymark stood in thought, Julian added—

“This is a turning-point in my life. I scarcely know myself. I feel that my future will be something I can't in the least foresee. Every thought and plan has been overturned; I am at the mercy of impulses of which I knew nothing.”

So they parted, and Waymark somehow or other whiled away the time till it was the hour for going to the court. He found it difficult to realize the situation; so startling and brought about so suddenly. Julian had been the first to put into words the suspicion of them both, that it was all a deliberate plot of Harriet's; but he had not been able to speak of his own position freely enough to let Waymark understand the train of circumstances which could lead Harriet to such resoluteness of infamy. Waymark doubted. But for the unfortunate

fact of Ida's secret necessities, he could perhaps scarcely have entertained the thought of her guilt; as it was, he could not but balance two probabilities, and, in spite of himself, he felt it easier to believe that Ida had stolen these things to supply her needs, than that Harriet had possessed the courage and skill to develop this plot. And, what is more, such a doubt could hardly be said to involve a degradation of Ida in his mind. To Waymark the word "guilt", applied to such circumstances, connoted no moral reprobation; had he used it, in speech or thought, it would merely have borne the technical sense. In his habitual conviction of the relativity of all names and things, he could not possibly bring himself to regard this act as a crime. It was an imprudence, a grievous imprudence, regard had to its almost inevitable results; but that Ida should commit such an imprudence, in her difficult position, seemed not at all impossible. He was led on, however, to other doubts. What was the explanation of her being without employment? Why had she hesitated to tell him, as soon as she lost her

work? Was there not some mystery at the bottom of this, arguing a lack of complete frankness on Ida's part from the first?

The actual pain caused by Ida's danger was, strange to say, a far less important item in his state of mind than the interest which the situation inspired; "situation" might almost be used in the purely artistic sense. Through the night he had thought more of Julian than of Ida. What he had for some time suspected had now found confirmation; Julian was in love with Ida, in love for the first time, and under circumstances which, as Julian himself had said, might well suffice to change his whole nature. Waymark had never beheld such terrible suffering as that depicted on his friend's face during those hours of talk in the night. Something of jealousy had been aroused in him by the spectacle; not jealousy of the ordinary gross kind, but rather a sense of humiliation in the thought that he himself had never experienced, was perhaps incapable of, such passion as racked Julian in every nerve. This was the passion which Ida was worthy of

inspiring, and Waymark contrasted it with his own feelings on the previous day, and now since the calamity had fallen. He had to confess that there was even an element of relief in the sensations the event had caused in him. He had been saved from himself; a position of affairs which had become intolerable was got rid of without his own exertion. Whatever might now happen, the old state of things would never be restored. There was relief and pleasure in the thought of such a change, were it only for the sake of the opening up of new vistas of observation and experience. Such thoughts as these indicated very strongly the course which Waymark's development was taking, and he profited by them to obtain a clearer understanding of himself.

The proceedings in the court that morning were brief. Waymark, from his seat on the public benches, saw Ida brought forward, and heard her remanded for a week. She did not see him; seemed, indeed, to see nothing. The aspect of her standing there in the dock, the beautiful head bowed under intolerable shame,

made a tumult within him. Blind anger and scorn against all who surrounded her were his first emotions; there was something of martyrdom in her position; she, essentially so good and noble, to be dragged here before these narrow-natured slaves of an ignoble social order, in all probability to be condemned to miserable torment by men who had no shadow of understanding of her character and her circumstances. Judgment and justice, forsooth! Well, after all these were only names to him, as to every one else; and no doubt these worthy justices of the peace really believed that the words represented some eternal fact; they would only be acting in accordance with their lights, and as society bade them. Perhaps they were right; who knows? If society is to be held together, at all events, it could only be on these terms. Whether society is worth being held together on such conditions,—why, that of course was quite another question.

Waymark was enabled, whilst in court, to make up his mind as to how he should act. When he left he took his way northwards,

having in view St. John Street Road. Reaching Mr. Woodstock's house, he was disappointed in not finding that gentleman at home. He would wait, however, and did so in the study up-stairs.

The friendship between Mr. Woodstock and himself had continued to grow in cordiality. Waymark had come to find in the old man powers of sympathy and appreciation which he had not suspected. Of course they differed enormously in their views of life, and Waymark had never cared to be perfectly sincere in their occasional talks, knowing that his position would have no chance of being understood; but he was often surprised at the results to which the hard-headed old politician was led by mere dint of independent thought. Of more importance, however, than such chance points of intellectual sympathy was the apparently strong liking which Abraham had conceived for Waymark. Little by little the last traces of the former harshness had vanished from his behaviour to the young man. About once a fortnight Waymark dined with him by invitation, generally at some restaurant, and the evening was frequently

finished at the theatre. The gift of the Hogarth, moreover, had been succeeded at intervals by a few other presents of the same kind. But, save in these agreeable ways, Mr. Woodstock interfered not at all with Waymark's course of life. Very rarely indeed he made an inquiry about the progress of what he called the literary speculation; otherwise his young friend's future appeared a matter of indifference to him.

When Waymark had waited about half an hour, the old man appeared. He gave his hand in silence. Something seemed to be preoccupying him; he went to his chair in a mechanical way.

"I have come on rather serious business," Waymark began. "I want to ask your advice in a very disagreeable matter,—a criminal case, in fact."

Abraham did not at once pay attention, but the last words presently had their effect, and he looked up with some surprise.

"What have you been up to?" he asked, with rather a grim smile, leaning back and thrusting his hands in his pockets in the usual way.

“It only concerns myself indirectly. It’s all about a girl, who is charged with a theft she is perhaps quite innocent of. If so, she is being made the victim of a conspiracy, or something of the kind. She was remanded to-day at Westminster for a week.”

“A girl, eh? And what’s your interest in the business?”

“Well, if you don’t mind I shall have to go a little into detail. You are at liberty?”

“Go on.”

“She is a friend of mine. No, I mean what I say; there is absolutely nothing else between us, and never has been. I should like to know whether you are satisfied to believe that; much depends on it.”

“Age and appearance?”

“About twenty,—not quite so much,—and strikingly handsome.”

“H’m. Position in life?”

“A year ago was on the streets, to put it plainly; since then has been getting her living at laundry-work.”

“H’m. Name?”



“Ida Starr.”

Mr. Woodstock had been gazing at the toes of his boots, still the same smile on his face. When he heard the name he ceased to smile, but did not move at all. Nor did he look up as he asked the next question.

“Is that her real name?”

“I believe so.”

The old man drew up his feet, threw one leg over the other, and began to tap upon his knee with the fingers of one hand. He was silent for a minute at least.

“What do you know about her?” he then inquired, looking steadily at Waymark, with a gravity which surprised the latter. “I mean, of her earlier life. Do you know who she is at all?”

“She has told me her whole story,—a rather uncommon one, full of good situations.”

“What do you mean?”

The words were uttered with such harsh impatience that Waymark started.

“What annoys you?” he asked, with surprise.

“Tell me something of the story,” said the

other, regaining his composure, and apparently wishing to affect indifference. "I have a twinge of this damned rheumatism every now and then, and it makes me rather crusty. Do you think her story is to be depended upon?"

"Yes, I believe it is."

And Waymark linked briefly the chief points of Ida's history, as he knew it, the old man continually interrupting him with questions.

"Now go on," said Abraham, when he had heard all that Waymark knew, "and explain the scrape she's got into."

Waymark did so.

"And you mean to tell me," Abraham said, before the story was quite finished, "that there's been nothing more between you than that?"

"Absolutely nothing."

"I don't believe you."

It was said angrily, and with a blow of the clenched fist on the table. The old man could no longer conceal the emotion that possessed him. Waymark looked at him in astonishment, unable to comprehend his behaviour.

"Well, if you don't believe me, of course I

can offer no proof; and I know well enough that every presumption is against me. Still, I tell you the plain fact; and what reason have I for hiding the truth? If I had been living with the girl, I should have said so, as an extra reason for asking your help in the matter."

"What help can I give?" asked Woodstock, again cooling down, though his eyes had in them a most unwonted light. He spoke as if simply asking for information.

"I thought you might suggest something as to modes of defence, and the like. The expenses I would somehow or other meet myself. It appears that she will plead not-guilty."

"And what's your belief?"

"I can't make up my mind."

"In that case, it seems to me, you ought to give her the benefit of the doubt; especially as you seem to have made up your mind pretty clearly about this Mrs. What's-her-name."

Waymark was silent, looking at Mr. Woodstock, and reflecting.

"What are your intentions with regard to the girl?" Abraham asked, with a change in his

voice, the usual friendliness coming back. He looked at the young man in a curious way; one would almost have said, with apprehensive expectation.

“ I have no intentions.”

“ You would have had, but for this affair ? ”

“ No ; you are mistaken. I know the position is difficult to realize.”

“ Have you intentions, then, in any other quarter ? ”

“ Well, perhaps yes.”

“ I’ve never heard anything of this.”

“ I could scarcely talk of a matter so uncertain.”

There was silence. A sort of agitation came upon the old man ever and again, in talking. He now grew absorbed in thought, and remained thus for several minutes, Waymark looking at him the while. When at length Abraham raised his eyes, and they met Waymark’s, he turned them away at once, and rose from the chair.

“ I’ll look into the business,” he said, taking out a bunch of keys, and putting one into the lock of a drawer in his desk. “ Yes, I’ll go and

make inquiries." He half pulled out the drawer and rustled among some papers.

"Look here," he said, on the point of taking something out; but, even in speaking, he altered his mind. "No; it don't matter. I'll go and make inquiries. You can go now, if you like;—I mean to say, I suppose you've told me all that's necessary.—Yes, you'd better go, and look in again to-morrow morning."

Waymark left the room. He walked as far as Holborn, then took an omnibus, and rode to Pimlico. Reaching the block of tenements which had been Ida's home, he sought out the porter's abode. When the door opened at his knock, the first face that greeted him was that of Grim, who had pushed between the man's legs and was peering up, as if in search of some familiar aspect.

"Could I have a word or two with you?" Waymark asked.

The porter was a pleasant enough fellow, and his wife talkative even beyond the wont of her kind. From them Waymark learned that the police had made that afternoon an inspection

of Ida's rooms, though with what result was not known. The couple had clearly formed their own opinion as to Waymark's interest in the accused girl, but took the position in a very matter-of-fact way, and were eager to hear more than they succeeded in getting out of the police. They spoke with much kindness of Ida; they had seen very little of her at any time, but never anything but what they deemed favourable; they found it very hard to believe her guilty of theft.

"My main object in coming," Waymark explained, "was to look after her cat. I see you have been good enough to anticipate me."

"The poor thing takes on sadly," said the woman. "Of course I shouldn't have known nothing if the hofficers hadn't come, and it 'ud just have starved to death. It seems to know you, sir?"

"Yes, yes, I dare say. Do you think you could make it convenient to keep the cat for the present, if I paid you for its food?"

"Well, I don't see why not, sir; we ain't got none of our own."

“And you would promise me very seriously to be kind to him? I don't mind the expense; keep him well, and let me know what you spend. And of course I should consider your trouble.”

So that matter was satisfactorily arranged, and Waymark went home.

Julian spent his day at the hospital as usual, finding relief in fixing his attention upon outward things. It was only when he left his work in the evening that he became aware how exhausted he was in mind and body. And the dread which he had hitherto kept off came back upon him, the dread of seeing his wife's face and hearing her voice. When he parted with Waymark in the morning, he had thought that he would be able to come to some resolution during the day as to his behaviour with regard to her. But no such decision had been formed, and his overtaxed mind could do no more than dwell with dull persistency on a long prospect of wretchedness. Fear and hatred moved him in turns, and the fear was as much of himself as of the object of his hate.

As he approached the door, a man came out whom he did not know, but whose business he suspected. He had little doubt that it was a police officer in plain clothes. He had to stand a moment and rest, before he could use his latch-key to admit himself. When he entered the sitting-room, he found the table spread as usual. Harriet was sitting with sewing upon her lap. She did not look at him.

He sat down, and closed his eyes. There seemed to be a ringing of great bells about him, overpowering every other sound ; all his muscles had become relaxed and powerless ; he half forgot where and under what circumstances he was, in a kind of deadly drowsiness. Presently this passed, and he grew aware that Harriet was preparing tea. When it was ready, he went to the table, and drank two or three cups, for he was parched with a hot thirst. He could not look at Harriet, but he understood the mood she was in, and knew she would not be the first to speak. He rose, walked about for a few minutes, then stood still before her.

“What proof have you to offer,” he said,



speaking in a slow but indistinct tone, "that she is guilty of this, and that it isn't a plot you have laid against her?"

"You can believe what you like," she replied, sullenly. "Of course I know you'll do your worst against me."

"I wish you to answer my question. If I choose to suspect that you yourself put this brooch in her pocket—and if other people choose to suspect the same, knowing your enmity against her, what proof can you give that she is guilty?"

"It isn't the first thing she's stolen."

"What proof have you that she took those other things?"

"Quite enough, I think. At all events, they've found a pawn-ticket for the spoon at her lodgings, among a whole lot of other tickets for things she can't have come by honestly."

Julian became silent, and, as Harriet looked up at him with eyes full of triumphant spite, he turned pale. He could have crushed the hateful face beneath his feet.

"You're a good husband, you are," Harriet went on, with a sudden change to anger;

“taking part against your own wife, and trying to make her out all that’s bad. But I think you’ve had things your own way long enough. You thought I was a fool, did you, and couldn’t see what was going on? You and your Ida Starr, indeed! Oh, she would be such a good friend to me, wouldn’t she? She would do me so much good; you thought so highly of her; she was just the very girl to be my companion; how lucky we found her! I’m much obliged to you, but I think I might have better friends than thieves and street-walkers.”

“What do you mean?” asked Julian, starting at the last word, and turning a ghastly countenance on her.

“I mean what I say. As if you didn’t know, indeed!”

“Explain what you mean,” Julian repeated, almost with violence. “Who has said anything of that kind against her?”

“Who has? Why I can bring half a dozen people who knew her when she was on the streets, before Waymark kept her. And you knew it, well enough—no fear!”

“It’s a lie, a cursed lie! No one can say a word against her purity. Only a foul mind could imagine such things.”

“Purity! Oh yes, she’s very pure—you know that, don’t you? No doubt you’ll be a witness, and give evidence for her, and against me;—let everybody know how perfect she is, and what a beast and a liar I am! You and your Ida Starr!”

Julian rushed out of the room into the adjoining one, to save himself from some mad outbreak in word or deed. There he stood motionless in the middle of the floor, deafened by the fierce throbbing of his blood, whilst temptations of the wildest kind rushed through his brain. Strongest of all was that which bade him save his soul by flight, disappear from all who knew him, forget every responsibility in a new life, perhaps in a new country. To endure through what lay before him if he stayed would be beyond his strength; it would end in madness or suicide. Was all his life to be ruined because in a foolish moment he had promised to love and cherish one who had proved herself utterly unworthy

of him? What claim had this wretched creature upon him, now that the last links of affection and confidence, always fatally frail, were broken for ever? What were law and the opinion of men to one wrapped in the flame of despair? What duty was left for him, save to deliver himself from these hideous conditions, which befouled the current of his being? He had sacrificed enough; he had made every effort a man could make; it was time to consider himself.

There was a noise in the next room; it caught his ear, and with a shudder he came back to his waking life. He passed through the doors, and saw that Harriet had fallen into a fit. For a moment he watched her from a distance, and only slowly drew to her side, and stooped by her. He could not bear to look into her face, rendered yet more dreadful to him by the convulsions. But he raised her head, and let it rest against him till the fit was over. Then he helped her to rise.

“You had better get to bed,” he said, when she could understand him. “I have to go out for a time, but I shall come back.”

“It makes no difference to me,” she replied, arranging her disordered dress.

Waymark could not but observe the peculiarities in Mr. Woodstock's behaviour during the conversation about Ida. At first it had occurred to him—knowing a good deal of Abraham's mode of life—that there must be some disagreeable secret at the bottom, and for a moment the ever-recurring distrust of Ida rose again. But he had soon observed that the listener was especially interested in the girl's earliest years, and this pointed to possibilities of a different kind. What was it that was being taken from the drawer to show him, when the old man suddenly altered his mind? Mr. Woodstock had perhaps known Ida's parents. Waymark waited with some curiosity for the interview on the morrow.

Accordingly, he was surprised when, on presenting himself, Mr. Woodstock did not at first appear to remember what he had called about.

“Oh, ay, the girl!” Abraham exclaimed, on being reminded. “What did you say her name was? Ida something,”——

Waymark was puzzled and suspicious, and showed both feelings in his looks, but Mr. Woodstock preserved a stolid indifference which it was very difficult to believe feigned.

“I’ve been busy,” said the latter. “Never mind; there’s time. She was remanded for a week, you said? I’ll go and see Helter about her. May as well come along with me, and put the case in ‘artistic’ form.”

It was a word frequently on Waymark’s lips, and he recognized the unwonted touch of satire with a smile, but was yet more puzzled. They set out together to the office of the solicitor who did Abraham’s legal business, and held with him a rather lengthy colloquy. Waymark stated all he knew or could surmise with perfect frankness. He had heard from Julian the night before of the discovery which it was said the police had made at Ida’s lodgings, and this had almost confirmed him in the belief that Harriet’s accusation was genuine.

“How did she lose her place at the laundry?” asked Mr. Helter.

Waymark could not say; for all he knew it was through her own fault.

“Her antecedents make the matter shady,” opined the solicitor, biting the end of his quill. “How about the antecedents of Mrs. Casti?”

“I know nothing against her; believe she has always been ‘respectable’.”

“H’m.”

“And that’s all you’ve got to say, Waymark?” observed Mr. Woodstock, who had listened with a good deal of indifference. “Well, I have no more time at present. Look the thing up, Helter; and, by-the-bye, I want to show you that correspondence with Hurst and Co.; could you look in to-night?”

Mr. Helter agreed to do so, and his clients took their leave.

“I wouldn’t bother your head much about this,” Mr. Woodstock said, as they parted shortly after. “I’m afraid there’s not much of a case; but we must see.”

On reaching home, Waymark wrote a few

lines to Ida, merely to say that Grim was provided for, and assure her that she was not forgotten. In a day or two he received a reply. The official envelope almost startled him at first. Inside was written this :

“ You have been kind. I thank you for everything. Try to think kindly of me, whatever happens ; I shall be conscious of it, and it will give me strength.

“ I. S.”

The week went by, and Ida again appeared in court. Mr. Woodstock went with Waymark, out of curiosity, he said. The statement of the case against the prisoner sounded very grave. What Harriet had said about the discovery of the pawn-ticket for her silver spoon was true. Ida's face was calm, but paler yet and thinner. When she caught sight of Harriet Casti, she turned her eyes away quickly, and with a look of trouble. She desired to ask no question, simply gave her low and distinct “ Not guilty.” She was committed for trial.

Waymark watched Mr. Woodstock, who was



examining Ida all the time ; he felt sure that he heard something like a catching of the breath when the girl's face first became visible.

“That Mrs. Casti's a —— —— !” exclaimed Abraham, as they left the court. The expressions he used were picturesque and forcible, too much so for repetition in mixed society. “If the jury don't read perjury in that face, they'll be damned thickheads.”

“And what's your opinion of Ida herself?” asked Waymark.

“I couldn't see her very well,” said the old man, coldly.

“She hasn't quite a fortnight to wait.”

“No.”

“You're sure Helter will do all that can be done?”

“Yes.”

Mr. Woodstock nodded his head, and walked off by himself.

Julian Casti was ill. With difficulty he had dragged himself to the court, and his sufferings as he sat there were horribly evident on his white face. Waymark met him just as Mr.

Woodstock walked off, and the two went home together by omnibus, not speaking on the way.

"She will be convicted," was Julian's first utterance, when he had sat for a few minutes in Waymark's room, whilst Waymark himself paced up and down. The latter turned, and saw that tears were on his friend's hollow cheeks.

"Did you sleep better last night?" he asked.

"Good God, no! I never closed my eyes. That's the third night without rest. Waymark, get me an opiate of some kind, or I shall kill myself; and let me sleep here."

"What will your wife say?"

"What do I care what she says!" cried Julian, with sudden excitement, his muscles quivering, and his cheeks flaming all at once. "Don't use that word 'wife,' it is profanation; I can't bear it! If I see her to-night, I can't answer for what I may do. Curse her to all eternity!"

He sank back in exhaustion.

"Julian," said Waymark, using his friend's first name by exception, "if this goes on, you will be seriously ill. What the deuce shall we do then?"

“No, I shall not be ill. It will be all right if I can get sleep.”

He was silent for a little, then spoke, with his eyes on the ground.

“Waymark, is this true they say about her,—about the former time?”

“Yes; it is true.”

Waymark in turn was silent.

“I suppose,” he continued presently, “I owe you an apology.”

“None. It was right of you to act as you did.”

He was going to say something else, but checked himself. Waymark noticed this, watched his face for a moment, and spoke with some earnestness.

“But it was in that only I misled you. Perhaps I have forfeited your credit? Do you believe me when I repeat that she and I were never anything but friends?”

Julian looked up with a gleam of gratitude in his eyes.

“Yes, I believe you!”

“And be sure of this,” Waymark went on,

“whether or not this accusation is true, it does not in the least affect the nobility of her character. You and I are sufficiently honest, in the true sense of the word, to understand this. Now would you like me to tell you all her story, as she once told it me?”

“Yes, yes! Thank you a thousand times!”

“I will do so, then. It will help you to get rid of many doubts, which I know are troubling you.”

Every detail of that narrative was clear in Waymark’s mind, and he related it well. Julian followed with interest which absorbed him. At the end, he sighed and leaned back with a sad smile.

“You are blest as never man yet was,” he said, but little above a whisper, “and you have realized it too late,—perhaps do not realize it now.”

It was agreed presently that Julian should remain where he was during the night, and Waymark should go to apprise Harriet of the arrangement. He went very shortly, and was struck with the irrepressible glow of triumph on

Harriet's countenance. She received the communication almost cheerfully. For her own part, she spent her evening at the Clock House.

Waymark only saw Mr. Woodstock once or twice in the next fortnight, and very slight mention was made between them of the coming trial. He himself was not to be involved in the case in any way; as a witness on Ida's side he could do no good, and probably would prejudice her yet more in the eyes of the jury. It troubled him a little to find with what complete calmness he could await the result; often he said to himself that he must be sadly lacking in human sympathy. Julian Casti, on the other hand, had passed into a state of miserable deadness; Waymark in vain tried to excite hope in him. He came to his friend's every evening, and sat there for hours in dark reverie.

“What will become of her?” Julian asked once. “In either case,—what will become of her?”

“Woodstock shall help us in that,” Waymark replied. “She must get a place of some kind.”

“How dreadfully she is suffering, and how dark life will be before her !”

And so the day of the trial came. Helter had come to the conclusion that the best way of serving his client was to allow all the facts of her history to be known without reserve ; in the event of conviction, they might possibly become a plea for mitigation of judgment. Moreover, he would act throughout on the assumption that Ida was the victim of a conspiracy. Clearly it was the easiest thing in the world for Harriet to have put the brooch in the pocket where it was found ; and the ascertained fact that the drawers in Ida’s rooms were always left unlocked made it perfectly possible for Harriet to have bestowed the incriminating pawn-ticket among the genuine ones on either of two occasions on which Ida had left her alone there.

Unfortunately, the pawnbroker’s evidence was damaging. The silver spoon had been pledged, he asserted, at the same time with another article for which Ida possessed the duplicate. The inscriptions on the duplicates supported him in

this, and he professed to have not the least doubt as to the prisoner's identity. Pressed in cross-examination, he certainly threw some suspicion on the trustworthiness of his assertions. "You positively swear that these two articles were pledged by the prisoner, and at the same time?" asked the cross-examiner. "Well," was the impatient reply, "there's the same date and name, and both in my writing." But even thus much of doubt he speedily retracted, and his evidence could not be practically undermined.

Harriet's examination was long and searching, but she bore it without the slightest damage to her credit. Plain, straightforward, and stubborn were all her replies and assertions; she did not contradict herself once. Waymark marvelled at her appearance and manner. The venom of malice had acted upon her as a tonic, strengthening her intellect, and bracing her nerves. Once she looked directly into Ida's face and smiled.

Mrs. Sprowl had been summoned, and appeared in all the magnificence of accumulated

rings, bracelets, necklaces, and watch-chains. Helter hoped to make good use of her.

“Did you on a certain occasion go to the person in whose employ the prisoner was, and, by means of certain representations with regard to the prisoner’s antecedents, become the cause of her dismissal?”

“I did. I told all I knew about her, and I consider I’d a right to do so.”

Mrs. Sprowl was not to be robbed of her self-assurance by any array of judicial dignity.

“What motive led you to do this?”

“A good enough one, I think. She’d been imposed on Mr. Casti and his wife as a respectable character, and she was causing trouble between them. She had to be got rid of somehow, and that was one step to it.”

“Was Mrs. Casti aware of your intention to take this step?”

“No, she wasn’t.”

“But you told her when you had done it?”

“Yes, I did.”

The frankness of all this had its effect, of course. The case was attracting much interest



in court, and the public seats were quite full. Mrs. Sprowl looked round in evident enjoyment of her position. There was a slight pause, and then the examination continued.

“Of what nature was the trouble you speak of, caused by the prisoner between this lady and her husband?”

“Mr. Casti began to pay a good deal too much attention to her.”

There was a sound of whispers and a murmuring.

“Did Mrs. Casti impart to you her suspicions of the prisoner as soon as she missed the first of these articles alleged to be stolen?”

“Yes, she did.”

“And did you give any advice as to how she should proceed?”

“I told her to be on the look-out.”

“No doubt you laid stress on the advantage, from a domestic point of view, of securing this prisoner’s detection?”

“Certainly I did, and I hoped and prayed as she might be caught!”

Mrs. Sprowl was very shortly allowed to retire.

For the defence there was but one witness, and that was Mrs. Tree, the laundress who had employed Ida. Personal fault with Ida she had none at all to find; the latter's character had appeared perfect during both the periods of her employment in the laundry. The sole cause of her dismissal was in the representations made by Mrs. Sprowl. Perhaps she had acted hastily and unkindly, but she had three daughters of her own working in the laundry, and it behoved her to be careful of them.

Julian's part in the trial had been limited to an examination as to his knowledge of Ida's alleged thefts. He declared that he knew nothing save from his wife's statements to him. He had observed nothing in the least suspicious.

The judge's summing-up was very brief. It was not difficult to see that Ida's position had awakened in him a certain sympathy, and he did not fail to draw attention to the danger of her case being prejudiced by her antecedents. The jury, however, had to weigh the value of the prisoner's assertion of innocence against the

evidence which had been offered ; this assertion was, indeed, all that she had to depend upon, unless any solid suspicion had been aroused of foul play on the part of the accuser. This latter, it seemed, the jury did not deem to be the case. Domesticities and the evidence carried the day. A verdict was returned of " Guilty."

Had the prisoner anything to say ? Nothing whatever. Ida shook her head, and, standing with her hands crossed before her on the wall of the dock, calmly looked at the judge. There was a pause, a longer pause than seemed necessary. Then, without remark, she was sentenced to be imprisoned for six months with hard labour.

Waymark had been drawn to the court in spite of himself. Strangely quiet hitherto, a fear fell upon him the night before the trial. From an early hour in the morning he walked about the streets, circling ever nearer to the hateful place. All at once he found himself facing Mr. Woodstock. The old man's face

was darkly anxious, and he could not change its expression quickly enough.

“Are you going in?” he asked, sharply.

“Are you?”

“Yes.”

“Then I shall not,” said Waymark. “I’ll go to your office, and wait there.”

But when Abraham, whose eyes had not moved from the prisoner throughout the proceedings, rose at length to leave, a step or two brought him to a man who was leaning against the wall, powerless from conflicting excitement, and deadly pale. It was Waymark. Mr. Woodstock took him by the arm and led him out.

“Why couldn’t you keep away?” the old man exclaimed, hoarsely, and with more of age in his voice than any one had ever yet heard in it.

Waymark shook himself free, and laughed, as one laughs under torment.

“Do you believe her guilty?” asked the other, with a human earnestness quite unlike him.

“Not if every court in England proclaimed her so!” repeated Waymark, between his teeth.

“I saw her face as she went away.”

“So did I.”

They looked at each other.











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