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EUNICE

A NOVEL

BY

ISABEL C. CLARKE

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	Roman Days	7
II	Introduces the Parmeter Family	15
III	Eunice Goes Out to Tea	29
IV	An Expedition	38
V	"How beautiful upon the mountains. . ."	48
VI	Julian	55
VII	The First Confession	63
VIII	Julian Writes a Letter	71
IX	The Return to Brighton	79
X	Julian Overhears a Conversation	90
XI	A Momentous Decision	100
XII	The Coming of Eunice	107
XIII	Eunice Makes a Friend	114
XIV	Lady Eliot Interferes	123
XV	Enter Major Dampier	136
XVI	Father and Daughter	147
XVII	In London	155
XVIII	Unhappy Days	162
XIX	A Holiday and Its Consequences	169
XX	A House of Cards	180
XXI	Consulting Mrs. Parmeter	186
XXII	Gilfrid Eliot	193
XXIII	The Storm Breaks	208
XXIV	Mysterious Changes	219

CHAPTER		PAGE
XXV	The Disappearance of Eunice	230
XXVI	The Twins Return Home	242
XXVII	The Finding of Eunice	251
XXVIII	Darkening Shadows	261
XXIX	A Journey Abroad	274
XXX	A Chance Meeting	284
XXXI	Old Friends	292
XXXII	Julian's Dreams	303
XXXIII	Eunice Consults Geoffrey	312
XXXIV	Hard Sayings	320
XXXV	A House-Party at Denscombe	328
XXXVI	A Marriage is Arranged	344
XXXVII	Julian Learns the Truth	354
XXXVIII	Gilfrid Makes Conditions	362
XXXIX	The Skeleton in the Cupboard	373
XL	A Problem	388
XLI	A Meeting	396
XLII	Geoffrey Speaks His Mind	409
XLIII	Lady Mirton at Home	414
XLIV	Eunice Makes Her Choice	422
XLV	Colonel Dampier's Vineyard	428
XLVI	In Rome Again	431
XLVII	"Because There is a Green Door"	444
XLVIII	A Two-fold Duty	451
XLIX	Julian Makes Plans	460
L	With Burning Lamps	466

EUNICE

CHAPTER I

MRS. DAMPIER stood in front of the long, narrow mirror set into a panel of the painted wardrobe that occupied almost all of the wall space on one side of her hotel bedroom. The room was small and high up, and from the window, now darkened by green wooden shutters, could have been seen a wide view of the close-clustered roofs, towers, and domes of Rome lying under a brilliant April sky.

The floor of red tiles was partially covered with some worn rugs. Several trunks standing open afforded glimpses of a disordered collection of personal belongings. The labels on the trunks revealed the fact that their owner had recently made a voyage of some length, and from this it might be deduced that she was only a bird-of-passage in Rome.

Mrs. Dampier was a pale woman of middle height, bigly made, but with that suggestion of emaciation which is often the result of long residence in tropical climates. She had very thick, fair hair and large, unquiet, grey eyes. The grey-green twilight produced by the closed shutters was not becoming to her. It showed too plainly the shadows under her eyes, the droop of her discontented mouth, the sharp little perpendicular lines between the brows. The mirror, which was an imperfect one, revealed these things to her now with a touch of grotesque and distorted exaggeration . . . She went impatiently to the window, flung back the *persiennes,* and looked out at the scene beyond.

The first swifts of the year were wheeling about in that sky of incomparable blue. The beautiful

pale city gleamed tranquilly in the strong spring sunlight. There was a touch of sirocco in the air, making it soft with an almost unhealthy softness. Beyond the houses she could see the dark line of trees that marked the Passeggiata Margherita and the green swelling outline of Monte Mario spreading toward the north. Here and there in the streets and on the hills there were distinct patches of young bright green, the glimmer of newly-opened leaves.

Mrs. Dampier shut the window again, for the sun was bright enough to make her eyes ache. She flung herself down on the sofa upholstered in red velvet, and closed her eyes.

A little tap at the door and the handle was cautiously turned, and a light footstep came across the room. A child of about seven years old stood hesitatingly beside the sofa, finger on lip, in a watchful attitude. She wore a short-sleeved, low-necked muslin frock, a blue sash, and a string of coral beads that she had persuaded her mother to buy for her the day before at a shop in the Piazza di Spagna. Her legs were bare down to the short white socks, and were thin and rather brown. She was an attractive-looking little creature with a mop of black gipsy curls, and she had strange dark eyes, darker even than those of the little Roman children.

Mrs. Dampier opened her eyes and looked at her small daughter with a certain irritation.

"Why are you not lying down? I told ayah to put you to bed. You ought to be asleep!"

"I did try, but it's too hot. And ayah's snoring so." She slurred over the *r* a little.

"Well, you can't stay here. You fidget me," said Mrs. Dampier.

"Where's papa's photo?" asked the child, going over to the dressing-table and apparently taking no notice of her mother's speech.

"I don't know. On the table, I suppose. What do you want it for?"

"I want to kiss it and say good-morning. He said I wasn't to forget him."

"I can't get up and look for it now, Eunice. If it isn't there you can't have it. Now run back to your room and tell ayah to give you your tea and take you back to the Pincio."

"I like the Borghese Gardens best," said Eunice, moving the various toilet accessories with which the table was literally strewn with her small delicate fingers.

"I don't care which it is," said Mrs. Dampier, closing her eyes. She did not want to get up and remove the child forcibly from the room, and yet she knew it was improbable that Eunice would go away unless some effort of the kind were made.

"I like to look at the ducks on the lake. And there are lots of other children. But they all have English nurses—at least almost all the English ones do. I'm the only one who's got an ayah. There was a boy called Geoffrey yesterday who laughed at her."

"You can't stay here. You are disturbing me," said Mrs. Dampier.

"Let me stay a little. Ayah's always cross if I wake her. And I'll be very quiet."

She sat down on one of the boxes near the window, clasping her knee with her hand. She looked like a diminutive statue. For a few minutes there was silence in the room, and then she began to croon softly to herself, one of the monotonous melancholy coolie-songs of the East. A thin wailing trickle of sound filled the room.

"If you're not quiet this moment, Eunice, I shall get up and put you out of the room!"

The sound ceased abruptly, but the child continued

to sit there in the shadows, patient and watchful. There was something in her attitude of the indolent, concentrated patience of the peoples of the East among whom the short seven years of her life had been for the most part spent. She and her mother were on their way home for the first time since they had gone out to India when Eunice was a baby.

Eunice was sharp and developed beyond her years. She had already shown signs of playing off one parent against the other, as precocious children will in a household that is slightly divided against itself. She preferred her father, who was uniformly kind to her. Mrs. Dampier possessed an imperfectly governed temper, and her notions of discipline were summary and drastic.

At the back of the drawer of the dressing-table Eunice finally discovered, after much adroitly-silent searching, the desired photograph of her father. It portrayed a typical English officer with a keen, thin face and steady, penetrating eyes. Eunice lifted it to her lips and whispered a greeting. Then she took a piece of soft paper, wrapped it up, and put it back in the drawer. Having done this, she quietly crossed the room and slipped out on to the darkened hotel landing with its rows of numbered doors on each side. At the farther end she opened another door brusquely; the sound aroused the ayah from her slumbers.

"Mamma says I'm to have my tea. And then we are to go out—to the gardens where we went yesterday."

The ayah arose and proceeded to light the spirit-lamp, over which she placed a small kettle of water. From a tin she produced biscuits. A little tray was put in readiness for Mrs. Dampier; for, although she generally had her tea elsewhere, she liked a cup before she went out. The ayah was a fat, good-

natured woman clad in voluminous and brilliant draperies. She was a Tamil whom Mrs. Dampier had picked up in Colombo, and she was already devoted to Eunice, whom she called Little Missy.

This afternoon Eunice was impatient to go out. The hotel was a dull place; she had to stay all the time in one of the two bedrooms except when they went downstairs to the big dining-room for their meals. And, although there were other children sitting at some of the little square tables, she was not allowed to talk to any of them. Besides, they were for the most part Italian children, who would not understand her.

Eunice dominated the ayah with a child's instinctive tyranny. The moment tea was finished they went out and climbed the hill that separated them from the Borghese Gardens. The immense umbrella-pines waved their lustrous, mop-like heads against a sky of pure sapphire. The grass was a carpet of bright emerald. Here and there a Judas-tree flaunted purple boughs. A fountain flung up delicious crystal sprays. It was an enchanting world, to which the dark, spreading branches of the ilex-trees lent a shadowy mystery. Eunice, however, bestowed scant attention upon the beauty of the scene, although with her childish love of rich color, she found the Judas-trees attractive. The Girardino del Lago was her objective—the place where so many children congregated, and where yesterday she had seen the little English boy, Geoffrey.

Besides, the lake itself was an object of the most fascinating character. There was a temple at one end, and on the water there were ducks which performed interesting nautical exercises, as if for the sole purpose of amusing the children of many nations who assembled there.

The sun-warmed air was full of delicate spring

scents. Little groups of laughing, shouting children ran hither and thither under the great ilex-trees that formed a deep avenue of shade. Many curious eyes turned to look at the ayah as she waddled down the broad pale path with Eunice's slight little figure skipping by her side. The stiff, white-clad English nurses mingled contempt with their astonishment, and murmurs of "Well, I never!" "Such a sight!" were freely exchanged.

Eunice soon distinguished Geoffrey sitting on a seat with another boy who was reading a book. They were both dressed alike in blue sailor suits. Their nurse—an elderly, formidable-looking person—was standing a little way off talking to a companion.

Eunice approached without shyness. All her life she had been accustomed to people. She went up to Geoffrey and held out her hand. He slipped off his seat. The other boy glanced up quickly from his book. He looked at Eunice with dreamy dark eyes. Then he went on reading.

"Come and look at the ducks," Eunice said to Geoffrey. They went down the path together. Suddenly she gave a quick glance backward.

"Who is that boy?" she said; "he wasn't here yesterday."

Her crisp, clear little voice reached the ears of the boy who sat there reading. He too heard Geoffrey's answer.

"It's my twin brother, Julian."

"Why doesn't he come and play?" demanded Eunice.

"He likes reading best," said Geoffrey.

"I want him to come. Ask him." There was the imperious note in her voice that so often characterized it when she addressed the ayah.

Julian did not wait to be asked. He shut up his

book, slipped it into his pocket, and came toward them. He was taller than Geoffrey, and rather slender, with a pale face and dark brown eyes and hair. Geoffrey was plump and rosy, with yellow hair and big blue eyes; he was a very pretty boy, and his English fairness always attracted admiring attention in Rome.

"Who is that woman? Why does she wear those clothes?" asked Geoffrey, indicating the ayah, who was following them, by a slight gesture of his yellow head.

"That's my ayah. Mamma engaged her in Colombo because she said she couldn't be bothered with me on board ship," said Eunice.

"Nurse said she wouldn't speak to her for all the world," said Geoffrey.

"I'm sure ayah doesn't want to be spoken to!" said Eunice, indignantly.

"Why do you repeat what nurse says?" said Julian, speaking for the first time. "What can it matter? If they did speak they wouldn't probably understand each other."

Now they were standing by the edge of the little lake. At the opposite end stood the temple embowered in brilliant spring verdure. An early butterfly floated across the water looking like a detached white flower impelled by the breeze. There were little ripples on the surface of the water. The three children stood there for a few minutes in silence.

"Are you going to live in Rome?" said Julian at last.

Eunice shook her head.

"We shall go to London next week. We're staying at the hotel. I don't like it. I'm all day nearly in the bedroom. It's dull. I liked India best."

"We have been here for two years," said Julian;

"we have an apartment. Perhaps you would be allowed to come to see us."

"And then nurse would *have* to speak to the ayah," put in Geoffrey in an exultant tone. He had a youthful ambition to "score off" nurse whenever such a process was practicable.

"We'll ask mother when she comes. She said she would meet us here this afternoon," said Julian.

Geoffrey said: "How can mother ask her when we don't even know her name?"

Julian looked at Eunice inquiringly.

"It's Eunice. Eunice Dampier."

"Have you got a father as well as a mother?" asked Geoffrey.

"Yes, but he isn't here. He stayed behind in India. That is because he is in the army and he couldn't get leave."

"I'm going into the army when I'm big," announced Geoffrey. "Father says I may."

"Is he in the army too?" asked Eunice.

Julian shook his head.

"He's a poet," he said. "His name is Norman Parmeter. Haven't you ever heard of him?"

"No," said Eunice, feeling terribly ashamed of her ignorance. "I don't think I've ever seen a poet. I don't even quite know what it means."

"There's mother!" said Geoffrey, darting away.

Eunice's first impression of Mrs. Parmeter was that she looked very young—almost like a girl. She was very pretty, with quantities of soft brown hair and laughing brown eyes. She wore a grey dress with a white fur that she had slipped slightly off her shoulders. She had on a broad-brimmed white hat trimmed with blue wings. She bent down and kissed Geoffrey, and Eunice heard her say, "Well, my cherub!" When she raised her head again she was

laughing, and she ran toward Julian and kissed him too.

"And who's your little friend?" she asked, touching Eunice on the shoulder.

"Tell her your name, please," said Julian, who had a nervous fear of mispronouncing the unfamiliar words.

"Eunice Dampier."

"Oh, I think I met your mother at tea yesterday. Wasn't she at Mrs. Millward's?"

"She went out to tea," said Eunice.

"And she said she had just arrived from India?"

"Yes, that was mamma," said Eunice.

"You must come to tea with my two boys," said Mrs. Parmeter. "I'll write to your mother."

"She says she's never seen a poet," put in Geoffrey.

Mrs. Parmeter laughed.

CHAPTER II

THE Parmeters lived high up in an old Roman palace, occupying the whole of the top floor. They had lived there for more than two years, always promising themselves that when the twins should arrive at the age of nine they would return to England for purposes of education. That time was now rapidly approaching, and they were already talking of going back to their house in Brighton, which had been let during their long absence.

Geoffrey had forgotten Brighton; he seldom alluded to any events prior to their sojourn in Rome. With Julian it was different. He had a very accurate memory for past things, and often referred to them in a way which tantalized Geoffrey, who disliked these reminiscences. He had been to the same

place at the same time; his mind, he would indignantly affirm, was just as old as Julian's, but he couldn't remember either the pier or the aquarium, or going out for an hour or two in the little rocking steamer. It was all nonsense to say that Julian was so much cleverer. He could not read to himself till at least six months later than Geoffrey; he was very stupid about the multiplication table—just try him with eight times seven! Perhaps he had invented all that part about the sea-lions and the octopus and the fish swimming about behind great glasses in what seemed to be green mysterious caves! However, Mrs. Parmeter was able to assure Geoffrey that Julian had really remembered these details and had described them accurately.

"Then why can't I remember far back like Julian?" Geoffrey asked the question in an aggrieved tone, as if the blame ought rightly to be attached to some one else.

"Perhaps he's got a better memory," suggested Mrs. Parmeter.

"Then why can't he remember eight times seven? *I* can remember!"

"It's a different kind of memory," said Mrs. Parmeter, kissing his flushed, bewildered face.

The twins were very unlike, both in appearance and in character. Julian always managed to be the taller of the two—not very much, barely half an inch, yet enough to make the matter a bone of contention during the noisy nursery years. They had an English governess, who came to teach them every morning. She reported very favorably always about Geoffrey's quickness; his marvelous progress, his rapid assimilation. Julian was slow and plodding. He liked reading, was seldom without a book in his hand, but he didn't seem able to learn his lessons.

They were the only two children. Once, it is true, there had been a person who was still sometimes cautiously, almost reverently, alluded to as Baby Sister. Even Geoffrey remembered the brief episode vaguely, but he had no recollection, as Julian had, of a cradle trimmed with pink ribbons and little pink cluster roses, and a mass of white, soft, fluffy things in the midst of which a tiny dark head was visible. When you approached the cradle, Julian had told him, mother or nurse would pull aside a white covering so that you might "look at Baby." Julian and Geoffrey had both continually wanted to look at Baby. There was a queer scent about her of violet-powder, and she was very soft to touch and had tiny crumpled-up hands. "Just the very image of Master Julian, ma'am," nurse used to say, and Geoffrey would look jealously at his brother and lisp out: "Why isn't she like me? I want her to be like me." They would ask why she was like that—so small and soft, and sleeping nearly all the time, and awakening only to cry. Why didn't she get up and run about and talk, instead of indulging in that senseless, purposeless weeping? They were told to wait. Next year, nurse would wisely prophesy, she might run about and try to say a few words. But there was, alas, no next year for Baby Sister. She had died when she was only two months old, when the twins were not quite six. Although Geoffrey had forgotten all about that time, Julian remembered it perfectly. He could never be induced, however, to relate any details of Baby Sister's illness and death, and Geoffrey had long ago given up questioning him on those topics, which he felt might yield matter of surpassing interest. He did not believe that Julian's silence was due to lack of memory. He would always grow angry in the end if you persisted in questioning him.

Julian indeed remembered it all with a curious distinctness. There had been puzzling things at the time, but then a great deal that concerned Baby Sister was immensely mysterious. He had always felt, however, that later on they would be capable of explanation. It was no use asking nurse to enlighten him, for she had been the first to check any manifestation of curiosity on his part or on Geoffrey's, and she had told them, "like good boys," never to mention Baby Sister to Poor Mummy unless she mentioned her first.

There was, however, one thing which Julian remembered, and which he had never mentioned to any one; and therein lay the secret of his sudden wrath when Geoffrey questioned him. He always felt that if it were known, even after more than two years—since no Statute of Limitations absolves from punishment the sins of the nursery—some terrible but merited Nemesis would overtake him. He had been disobedient, and his disobedience, like that of his earliest forefathers, had resulted in the eating of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, and it would be hard to say whether the sin or its result weighed the more heavily upon the smarting conscience of Julian.

When Baby was first taken ill—with an illness that was alluded to in hushed voices as *It*—she was taken up, cradle and all, to a vast, unfamiliar chamber called the Spare Room, sometimes but very rarely inhabited by a Visitor who must never be Disturbed. Its windows looked straight out upon the English Channel and upon the crowds of people that moved perpetually up and down the Brighton front. Baby Sister shared this attribute peculiar to visitors, for after she had been carried up to the spare room the twins were told she must not be disturbed, and they never again had an opportunity of

asking to "look at Baby." Mother was always in the spare room, and you hardly ever saw her during those mysterious, unexplained days. She was with Baby, and she did not come into the nursery even to say good night to the twins. Geoffrey cried a little —he missed the comforting touch, the plans for to-morrow which she would whisper, and which always sounded so delightful. Julian did not cry; he was too busy with his thoughts.

He could still remember how perplexed his thoughts were at that time, continually spinning round questions that seemed to have no answers. The doctors, for instance. At first there had been one—the usual one who had come so often to see mother during that very mysterious period which had immediately followed the sudden appearance of Baby Sister, although she had continually assured the twins that she was perfectly well. When Baby Sister had been ill a few days two doctors came, and on one never-to-be-forgotten afternoon there were three. The third was an elderly man with piercing eyes, of whom Julian had felt afraid. He had met him on the stairs when he and Geoffrey were going out for their walk. Julian had hated the walks on those days, when so many strange, unusual things were going on in the house. He remembered the weather quite well, and the sound of a high wind would recall it to him to that day. It was in November, and there was a high, blustering wind and a brown, ugly-looking sea with great waves all darkened and discolored with long snakes of seaweed. On that afternoon nurse had refused to go down to the sea; she turned up Brunswick Square and walked along the Western Road as far as Ship Street. At every corner they saw an oblong-shaped space of dark sea and paler sky between the two rows of houses, and the wind blew up through it as if through

an open window. Each time nurse would put up her hand to her bonnet and murmur something that sounded like being blown about. Julian did not pay much attention to nurse. She was a person who habitually grumbled, and the weather, of whatever quality, was seldom to her liking. He walked briskly along and never once stopped to look at anything attractive that was displayed in shop-windows because mother had begged him to be a very good boy. But his thoughts were full of the strangely silent, oddly changed house in Brunswick Terrace. It was more than a week since he had been allowed to look at Baby. She hardly ever cried now. He had overheard nurse whispering mysteriously to one of the maids about its being Something Catching. What the Something was he did not hear, but assuredly it formed part of the unexplained happenings of the Spare Room. On the following day he and Geoffrey did not go for a walk at all, although the day was fine and there was no wind. They were left alone in the nursery and were given their paint-boxes with some old numbers of the *Graphic* to color. This was a pastime reserved as a rule for wet days. Julian could remember that henceforward the amusement lost something of its savor; it was associated with that desolate time when no one came near them except to bring their meals. They wanted mother there to tell them which colors to use and to do a bit every now and then. She could mix such wonderful greens, and she knew how to make the brush into a sharp point that never strayed beyond the edge of the picture. Two sad little boys, gloomy and dejected and supremely puzzled, sat demurely, scarcely speaking, at the big nursery table. They were still painting when the door opened and mother came into the room. Her

dark hair was roughened, she looked very tired and pale, there were tears in her eyes.

"Darling Julian—darling Geoff," she said. "Baby Sister——." Her voice broke; she looked wildly round as if she had not the courage to go on. Then with a visible effort she added: "Dear little Baby Sister has gone to heaven."

She drew them close to her when she had taken a seat in the big arm-chair by the fire. They sat, both of them, on her knees, their arms around her. Sometimes she kissed them and a hot tear fell on their wondering little faces. Geoffrey cried a little; he did not quite know why. Julian felt a strange lump in his throat. He wasn't satisfied with being told that Baby Sister had gone to heaven; he wanted, achingly, to know much more. Most children experience a passionate curiosity with regard to the mysteries of birth and death. Did it mean, for instance, he asked himself, that she wasn't upstairs any more? Had she floated out into the sky just as such a short time ago she must have floated into the house, escorted, perhaps, by shining angels? Was the pink-and-white cradle quite empty? If he pulled aside the flimsy veil would there be now no dark, fluffy little head against the diminutive pillow? These were some of the questions he desired to ask, but with a child's intuitive delicacy in the presence of grief he did not utter them. Mother was evidently very unhappy, and he could never remember seeing her cry before. And, besides, she was very tired. They had not been sitting there long when the door opened, and Norman Parmeter stood hesitatingly on the threshold in the falling autumn dusk.

"Come, Ivy darling," he said gently. "I'm going to insist upon your lying down."

The children slid from her knees. Julian re-

membered feeling half afraid to look at his father for fear of discovering that he too had been crying. But there were no signs of unusual emotion on his hard, finely-cut face.

"Come, Ivy," he said again; "those great boys will tire you." Mrs. Parmeter rose and went toward him.

"Oh, they never tire me," she said. When she reached the door she turned and called the children to her as if to make amends to them for anything wounding in their father's speech. She stooped down and kissed them, first Geoffrey and then Julian. That was always her way, although Julian was the elder. It was a long time before he realized that she put Geoffrey first because he wasn't really first. He might be hurt, and Julian couldn't be hurt—because he knew.

"And look here, boys, you're to stay here." Mr. Parmeter's voice held its rare authoritative ring. "Nurse is very busy—she can't be with you this evening. You're not to go to the spare room. Do you understand?"

"Yes, father," they said in chorus, in obedient little treble voices.

When Mr. Parmeter spoke in that sharp, incisive tone they never disobeyed him. Julian used to say he "had sparks in his eyes," a danger-signal. But when their parents had both left the nursery—mother a little unwillingly, as they both in their hearts believed—the two boys stared at each other in silence. A sense of mysterious upheaval impressed them with a deep melancholy. Geoffrey was the first to speak.

"Why mayn't we go there, Ju? Is *she* still there?"

Julian would have given worlds to know the answer to that question. He said evasively:

"Mother said she'd gone to heaven."

"All of her?" persisted Geoffrey.

"I s'pose so," said Julian, unconvinced.

"Did she have wings to fly? I'd love to have wings!"

Julian shook his head.

"If she'd had wings we should have seen them."

"They might have grown while she was ill. Perhaps that's why we weren't allowed to see her."

"Nurse said it was something catching. Wings aren't catching," said Julian.

They were put to bed early that night. Nurse came up to perform this ceremony, and said she was "dog-tired." She invited them to be good and as quick as possible. No loitering by the fire. Although she sniffed a little and her nose was rather red, she hadn't that dreadful white look that had been on mother's face; to Julian she had even an air of secret enjoyment. She was full of importance, and seemed to emphasize purposely the mysterious quality of the activities upon which she was engaged. Julian and Geoffrey at that time slept in a room by themselves, and nurse in an adjoining apartment, with the communicating door left open. Geoffrey fell asleep quickly, but Julian remained awake far into the night. He heard nurse go quietly into her room, and after a short interval the light was switched off. There was a moon, and a slanting silver ray slipped through the clinks of the shutters and filled the room with a cold, bluish, unearthly light. It made Geoffrey's little cot look very pallid. Julian sat up in bed, his heart beating. From the adjoining room he could hear the steady, rhythmic rise and fall of nurse's snoring, and to-night he felt that there was something actually comforting and reassuring in the sound. It was familiar and commonplace amid so much that was bewildering and confusing. About Baby Sister, for instance, Baby

in heaven—Julian knew as much about religion as most carefully-brought-up Catholic children of six. He said his prayers night and morning; he recited grace both before and after meals, crossing himself with closed eyes. He went to Mass on Sundays, and sometimes to Benediction in the afternoon. But he was too young to associate the thought of death with the explanations of religion, beyond the fact that the dead went to heaven. An overpowering curiosity that was so keen as to resemble pain came over Julian. His brain had been stirred to an unwonted, half-feverish activity by the happenings of the day. He found himself impelled by an almost overpowering force to go upstairs to the spare room and look at Baby Sister. If she wasn't there, then Geoffrey was right perhaps about the wings. And if she was still lying there in the pink-and-white cradle it would show him that not all of her had gone to heaven. And in that case he would see again the dear little dark head, the small puckered face, the tiny crumpled hands. A cold sweat accompanied by violent beating of the heart came over Julian as he thus deliberately contemplated disobeying his father. He felt certain of one thing—they had been forbidden to go into that room, not because Baby Sister had gone to heaven, but because she was still there. Baby was dead, had gone to heaven—he could take his mother's word for that—but all these strange terrifying events hadn't removed her from her little bed. He slipped out of his cot. Geoffrey was sleeping the profound, noiseless slumber of healthy childhood. The door into the passage was ajar, and, although the one into nurse's room was half open, he was sure that she would not hear the soft tread of his bare feet upon the floor. Julian stood shivering in the passage. Gas was burning low in a shaded lamp. It illuminated obscurely the long

flight of steep stairs that led to the spare room on the next floor. It was a long journey for a nervous little boy of six to make alone, and Julian in looking back upon it had only a hazy impression of being pursued as in a dreadful nightmare. He reached the top of the stairs and paused on the square landing. The spare room door was shut. Would it be dark in there? He might perhaps reach the switch and turn on the electric light. He opened the door very cautiously. The room was not dark. Two tall candles were burning, one on each side of the pink-and-white cradle that stood in the middle of the room. There was no fire, and the room was curiously, eerily cold. Julian was struck by something unnatural and penetrating in that chill feeling which seemed to touch him with frozen fingers. He went a little nearer. The whole adventure had become like a dream; he could not believe that he was really here, actually here, and alone. It seemed to him, too, almost as if he had come against his will. Now he was standing by the cradle. The light from the candles made a checkered pattern on the flimsy covering. Beneath the thin, soft sheet he discerned something that looked rigid, like a doll—a long, narrow doll. He lifted up a corner of it very carefully. Yes, Baby Sister was still there, lying upon her back. Her hair was very dark against the pillow, as dark as his own. Her face had an odd, white look, and she was asleep. He put out his hand and touched her face very gently, as if he were afraid of rousing her. Julian never forgot the thrill of cold that ran through him then, freezing his heart, and filling him with a terror that even then seemed degrading, so completely did it master him. He ran out of the room. He had just sense enough to close the door, but after that he remembered absolutely nothing of the return journey to his own

room. He was between the still warm sheets of his bed trembling so that his very cot shook, before he had regained anything of composure. For he had looked upon death and gained a premature knowledge of its awful mystery.

Nurse was still snoring in the next room. Geoffrey's deep breathing had become a little irregular, as if some vague disturbance had reached across his dreams. Julian hid his face under the bed-clothes. He had been very wicked. But whatever happened he must keep the awful knowledge of what he had done and seen locked up in his own heart.

It was the sense of guilt, perhaps, that burned the episode into his memory and made him feel for many months like a criminal escaping arrest.

But God knew. He wondered what God thought of him.

Although Julian could remember with an almost terrifying precision of detail the events of that night up to the time of his fleeing from the spare room like one pursued, all that immediately followed remained only in his mind as a blurred and confused impression of pain.

It was the time spoken of in the family always as "when Julian was ill;" it saved them from counting from that sadder event, the death of Baby Sister. The two events had indeed been practically simultaneous. Mother did not go to the funeral because she could not leave Julian. It was not until a few days later that his illness really declared itself, but he was already strange and feverish and perhaps "sickening." For, in spite of all their precautions in keeping the elder children away from infection, Julian had caught scarlet-fever from Baby Sister and for a time the distracted parents thought that a second victim would be claimed. He was indeed

desperately ill. No one had ever told him about it—they were all too wise for that—but he had wandered continually in his mind, had cried out in terror that Baby Sister was chasing him like a great cold white butterfly with wings. She mustn't, *mustn't* touch him! They must save him from her. Soon she would chase him right into the sea. If she touched him he would freeze to death like the old shepherd on the downs. . . . There had been something horrible in the delirium of Julian, the raving of a helpless, frightened child. . . .

The servants, nurse especially, were closely questioned, but all denied having told the twins anything about Baby Sister's illness and death. Geoffrey's complete ignorance—for they questioned him delicately—seemed to prove that no indiscretion had been committed. Whatever had frightened Julian had left Geoffrey unscathed.

Mrs. Parmeter was distracted and puzzled. She had always known that Julian was an imaginative, reticent child with the accurate memory of reserved people who contemplate the past even more than the present, in the silence of their hearts. But here was something, alas, which she did not understand, and to which she held no clue. She could not believe that this fear which he evinced in his delirium was a reasonless one. But she foresaw the difficulty of questioning him about it hereafter; it was a thing best left alone, and if possible forgotten. He was very dear to her heart, and in those days when the fear of losing him was acute he seemed more passionately precious than ever before. She could hardly be persuaded to leave him.

Geoffrey was kept in a distant part of the house. He understood that Julian was very ill, but he hoped that he would not go away to heaven like Baby Sister. He asked nurse if this were likely to happen

and she only answered: "Goodness gracious, what put such an idea as that into your head?" He felt snubbed and came to the conclusion that boys—like Julian and himself—didn't go to heaven, at least not till they were old. They grew up to be men—tall men with oddly fierce, flashing eyes like father, impatient and perhaps angry if not immediately obeyed. Even now Julian liked to be obeyed because he was the elder. And there had been something mysterious about Baby Sister, her apparently unsuspected advent—since no one had remotely alluded to her coming—her constant sleeping, her purposeless angry weeping, her inability to walk and talk.

So Julian was not questioned, even when convalescence had given place to a further slow renewal of strength and activity. No one, except perhaps his mother, suspected how sorely tormented was his conscience. Once or twice he had tried to "tell mother," a process that always ended in being taken to her heart and kissed an unusual number of times. If there had been only mother it is certain that the miserable little history would have been confessed. But there was father. Although Mr. Parmeter had never punished his little sons, they were in great awe of him. He stood for some remote, unmeasured force that yet had to be reckoned with. One obeyed—as fast as one's legs could carry one. One never entered rooms that were forbidden; there was the nursery example of Bluebeard to suggest the peril of so doing. Anything rather than see a queer light flash in those dark eyes, at the merest hint of hesitation. The coward that exists in nearly all children suggested to Julian the immense prudence of silence.

Besides, he *had* been punished. God had punished him. God had seen and known. Known, too, that he wasn't going to tell. You could not hide

anything from Him. That was why He had sent Julian a long, long illness, with cruel pain in his ears and singing noises in his head. Julian in his saner moments used to watch with horror the bottles of evil-tasting medicine being brought in and placed on the mantelpiece, knowing that at appallingly frequent intervals their contents would be proffered. But, from a queer sense of expiation, of reparation, he had swallowed everything without a single remonstrance. In his conscious moments he had a brave determination to bear his punishment like a man. But the mental allied to the physical suffering wrought havoc with the child's none too strong constitution. Julian emerged from the experience, frail, wizened, wretchedly nervous. The doctor, suspecting something yet feeling that the very youth of his patient gave the lie to his theories, advised a complete change. Early in the new year the Parmeters left England and took up their residence in Rome.

CHAPTER III

NURSE was not, after all, exposed to the disagreeable necessity of speaking to the ayah, for Mrs. Dampier brought Eunice herself to tea with the Parmeter boys. Eunice had thought Mrs. Parmeter "a most beautiful lady," and had begged to be allowed to buy a great bunch of pink carnations for her in the Piazza di Spagna. Mrs. Dampier permitted the purchase; she was often indolently good-natured in her dealings with her child.

They were shown into a large room with ancient faded silk hangings and with three big windows that overlooked Rome. Mrs. Parmeter was already there with Julian and Geoffrey, who were looking at

some illustrated papers that had just come from England. They jumped down from their chairs, and, although Geoffrey was self-possessed enough, Julian felt a little shy of Eunice. She looked different to-day and more dignified. She went straight up to Mrs. Parmeter and lifted the flowers toward her, instinctively raising herself a little on tip-toe and stretching up her arms. The unconscious pose was so charming that Julian was struck by it. It reminded him of some slight figure on an ancient sarcophagus offering sacrifices. For a second he shut his eyes and thought, "I must remember her just like that." He often already made these conscious efforts to memorize, and he thought he would always remember her in this pose as of one offering sacrifices—the slender lifted arms, the head sharply tilted back, the dark curls falling to her neck.

"You can take Eunice to the school-room," said Mrs. Parmeter, presently.

They all three moved sedately away. When the door was closed Mrs. Dampier said half enviously:

"You are very lucky to have boys. They are much less trouble than girls. They can be sent to school and they soon learn to look after themselves."

She leaned back in her chair and glanced round the room with its fine antique furniture. Everywhere there were bowls of beautiful spring flowers. There were bookcases full of books. Evidently it was the home of rich people of settled occupations. And Mrs. Dampier had never since her marriage owned a settled home. It had been a perpetual moving from one place to another; from one small, inconvenient, cheap bungalow to another. And always there had been Eunice, increasing the expense and difficulty of each succeeding move. Mrs. Dampier considered herself an injured woman.

"I'm very fond of children," said Mrs. Parmeter

smiling, "I don't want the boys to go away to school. But we mean to send them in the autumn."

"That second boy of yours is very pretty," said Mrs. Dampier. "Is he much younger than his brother?"

"No—they are twins. They are getting on for nine. We came here first because Julian, the elder one, was ill. We liked it so much that we stayed on. But we shall go back to Brighton, I think, next summer."

"Go back to Brighton? Do you live at Brighton?" inquired Mrs. Dampier, with a slight accession of interest. "I've often thought of going there this summer. My husband told me if possible to take Eunice to the sea. He's always in a fidget about her because he thinks her too thin. Men are so scared about their children, and half the time they do not care or even notice if their wives are ill and want a change." She spoke in a discontented, petulant tone.

"Shall you be in England long?" asked Mrs. Parmeter.

"As long as Herbert will let me stay. It's the first time I've been home for about six years. I hate India. I never want to see it again!"

"I have always wished to go there. But with two children one can't do much traveling," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Oh, it's tolerable perhaps if you have lots of money," said Mrs. Dampier, still in the same aggrieved, discontented tone; "but it isn't a cheap place to live in now; and for people with small means it is odious."

There was something in the faded dignified splendor of this old Roman room that made her look back upon the small bungalow she had left with additional ill-humor.

"The worst of it is," she continued, while Mrs. Parmeter was still thinking of something comforting to say, "that Herbert is so attached to the life there that he is never likely to leave it and try for an appointment in England. Yet he knows that I am almost always ill there. The climate is ruin to one's hair and complexion. You must have noticed how women who are all the rage in Simla and Calcutta aren't even looked at in London. It's because they are washed out—gone to seed. I used to have such a brilliant color!"

She leaned back in her chair and looked, Mrs. Parmeter thought, very like a spoiled, and undisciplined child. Yet she was certainly very pretty still and looked less than her thirty-two years, with her extremely fair hair and pale, colorless skin and unquiet grey eyes. Mrs. Parmeter felt interested in her. She seemed unhappy, and evidently she did not get on very well with her husband. It was one of those petty, apparently useless little tragedies that are so common. And it made Mrs. Parmeter feel a little ashamed of having so much—an adoring husband, two beloved clever children, a beautiful home, besides those spiritual things which helped one to bear the crosses that must come to all.

She poured out some tea and gave it to her guest. It was a relief, perhaps, when some other visitors came in, and the conversation became general. At the sight of one or two men, Mrs. Dampier's spirits improved considerably; she always found it difficult to talk to women, reserving for them all her complaints against husband, child, and servants. Now, with a youthful secretary from the Embassy, whose parents were old friends of Norman Parmeter's, she became engaged in an animated conversation in which all her domestic woes seemed to slip out of sight. He happened to be interested in India, and

the amusing description she gave him of her experiences in that country retained him by her side for the rest of the afternoon. And the other visitors were all people of a world that was more or less new to her. There were one or two ecclesiastics, a white-haired Catholic bishop whose ring Mrs. Parmeter dutifully kissed, a lean, dark-eyed Roman *monsignore,* a very beautiful Italian marchesa with the delicate features and luminous dark eyes of her race, a couple of young Italian officers who talked their own language with amazing rapidity. Then one or two English people came in, old residents of the colony which in those days still existed, and the wife of an American millionaire, whose clothes and jewels threatened again to arouse Mrs. Dampier's passionate discontent.

When nearly everyone had gone she rose and said:

"May Eunice be sent for, please? I think we ought to be going."

Mrs. Parmeter rang the bell. After a short delay the three children appeared. Eunice's eyes were red; Julian looked perturbed and unhappy; Geoffrey guilty and abashed. Mrs. Parmeter, with her quick mother's instinct, saw that something had gone awry.

"Why, Eunice, what on earth have you been doing to yourself?" said Mrs. Dampier, pushing back her disheveled hair till it was hidden under her broad-brimmed hat.

"It—it was that boy—" said Eunice with sudden passion and bursting into tears. She indicated Geoffrey with her little forefinger.

Fortunately most of the other visitors had by this time taken their leave. Only Mr. Saumarez, the young diplomat, remained, watching the little scene with clever, attentive eyes. He was well acquainted

with the Parmeter boys and knew them to be equable, good-tempered people, who seldom fell out among themselves. It was obvious that this dark, passionate-looking child had been the firebrand in the scene that must have recently taken place in the purlieus of the school-room.

"It wasn't my fault," said Geoffrey stoutly, "was it, Ju?" He turned to his brother.

Julian's immobile white face was set. He did not speak. It was clear that he did not intend to exonerate his twin from blame. Could it be possible that his sympathies were with Eunice?

"You know it wasn't," said Geoffrey, who was again getting angry.

"You did tease her," said Julian in the slow manner of one delivering judgment. "You saw she didn't like it."

Eunice was sobbing almost hysterically. She clung to her mother, who gave her every now and then a little irritated shake and whispered a threat in her ear. "Stop crying at once. Do you hear me, Eunice? Wait till we get home!"

Mrs. Parmeter came to the rescue. She drew the child to her and kissed the flushed little tear-stained face.

"Oh, I'm so sorry Geoffrey has been teasing you," she said. "It was very naughty of him. I hoped you were going to be great friends. Geoffrey must tell you how sorry he is before you go."

There was a little note of authority in her clear voice; it made the boy step forward and say half-reluctantly,

"I'm sorry I made you cry."

He tried to take her hand, but Eunice shook it off.

"I won't say good-by to you. I'll only say good-by to Julian!"

Geoffrey retired sulkily. His face was still smarting a little from a blow she had given him in the school-room.

Mrs. Dampier was irritated by the little scene. Eunice did not often behave badly when she was out, although she was so tiresome at home. And she had just been speaking of her with a certain tenderness to Mr. Saumarez, upon whom she feared her daughter could not have made a very good impression.

"Eunice, say good-by to Geoffrey at once!" she commanded.

Eunice was seized with one of those fits of apparently useless obstinacy which affect the very young.

"No," she said, stamping her foot a little on the marble floor.

"Eunice, do you hear me?" Mrs. Dampier's eyes flashed dangerously.

Eunice stood there, motionless. She was not crying now, and her little face had assumed obstinate, rebellious lines.

"Very well, then," said Mrs. Dampier, in a menacing tone.

She made her own farewells and took the little girl out of the room. Mrs. Parmeter followed them into the hall.

"I simply can't tell you how sorry I am," she said in her charming way. She felt a little nervous, and wondered in what way Eunice would be punished.

"I must apologize for Eunice," said Mrs. Dampier, in a hard, bright tone. "But she will have a good whipping the moment she gets home!"

"Oh, don't whip her. I'm sure it was Geoffrey's fault," said Mrs. Parmeter, feeling uncomfortable. She disliked violence in any form; towards little children it seemed to her almost unpardonable. She

felt suddenly sorry for Eunice with a sharp pity that almost stabbed her.

"She knows quite well what will happen when she's naughty," said Mrs. Dampier. "I assure you it isn't the first time."

They passed through the great door that led out to the wide, stately marble staircase, and as they vanished Mrs. Parmeter caught a sound of renewed sobbing.

Mr. Saumarez was standing in the middle of the room when she re-entered it, evidently listening to an animated account related by Geoffrey of the stormy happenings of that afternoon. Julian was sitting apart, turning over the leaves of a book.

"I imagine there's a rod in pickle for Miss Eunice when she gets home," said Saumarez, in his slightly indolent and ironic voice.

"Yes, I'm afraid there is," said Mrs. Parmeter restlessly. The little scene between mother and daughter had made her feel extremely uncomfortable. She hoped that Geoffrey had not been too much to blame. They were generally to be thoroughly depended upon in their intercourse with other children. Julian had an innate sense of hospitality which made him anxious to offer everything he possessed to his guests, and if Geoffrey were ever inclined to be selfish his brother invariably checked him.

"Now, boys, tell me what happened," she said, when Mr. Saumarez had taken his departure. "Geoffrey, what did you do?"

"She said she didn't like her mother," said Geoffrey, "and I told her she was very wicked. Then she got angry and said she wasn't. And I said she was—and she hit me—twice on the cheek."

"I hope you didn't hit her back," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"I didn't let him," said Julian, looking up from his book. "He shouldn't have gone on saying she was wicked when he saw it made her angry."

"She oughtn't to have talked like that about her mother," said Geoffrey. "She says her father doesn't like her to be whipped and now that he isn't there her mother whips her very often."

"Well, I'm afraid she's going to be whipped now," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"There!" said Julian, with sudden passion, to his brother. "See the mischief you've done!"

Mrs. Parmeter was a little astonished at his unusual anger. It was very unlike him, too, to speak violently to Geoffrey.

"I couldn't help it. It wasn't my fault," said Geoffrey, with tears in his eyes. "I don't like her. I hope she'll never come here again."

"And I hope she'll come every day—always," retorted Julian.

"I'm not sure that I shall ask her again if you're going to quarrel like this," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"She flew at me," said Geoffrey, "you should have seen her! And Ju takes her part." He controlled a sob with difficulty. Why had Julian taken her part? He must have seen that she was in the wrong.

"You ragged her. You shouldn't have ragged her," said Julian sullenly.

"Well, it's time to go to bed," said Mrs. Parmeter looking at the clock. "And remember you are not to speak to each other again to-night except to say goodnight. I can't have any more discussions. Do you understand? You must both be perfectly silent. Promise."

They promised, but there was reluctance in their voices. She kissed them both and sent them away

to bed. Two rather subdued little figures went out of the room.

But when they had gone Mrs. Parmeter scarcely thought of them at all. Her mind was full of Eunice. She could never bear to see little children treated with any harshness or cruelty. And there had been rather a cruel look in Mrs. Dampier's eyes.

"Poor little girl—poor little girl," she said aloud to herself.

CHAPTER IV

EVERY night after the boys had gone to bed Mrs. Parmeter went into the room where they slept in two little white cribs and made the sign of the cross on their foreheads and murmured the words of a blessing. She sometimes wondered if they would ever grow too old for the continuance of this custom. Already she did not hear them say their prayers any more; that break had come a few months ago when she had been kept in bed by some slight illness. It was Julian who had first asked to be allowed to say his prayers alone. "I can spend longer over them," he explained, "when I don't feel I'm keeping you and Geoff waiting." He did as a rule spend a very long time over them; Geoffrey was often asleep before Julian got into bed.

To-night they were both awake when she went into the room. Geoffrey had been crying; his fair baby face was flushed and tear-stained. Julian lay there looking white and anxious. When it was his turn to be blessed and kissed he suddenly put out his two thin little arms and drew her face almost passionately down to his.

"Do you think she'll be hurt much?" he said, and

she felt that his body was quivering a little, as if with some violent emotion. "I've prayed and prayed that her mother might forgive her."

"Oh, I don't think she'll really hurt her, Julian dear," she said consolingly. "Just enough to make her remember to be good next time."

"I wish it hadn't happened here," whispered Julian.

"So do I, darling. Now try to go to sleep. Remember we are going up to the Villa Pamphili to-morrow with Mr. Saumarez in his motor."

"I wish Eunice could come," said Julian.

"I'm afraid her mother wouldn't let her after what happened to-day."

"But you could ask. . . ."

"Well, I must see . . . Vernon may not have room for so many."

This thought comforted Julian and he fell asleep much more quickly than usual. Generally the two boys talked in a low tone when nurse was safely out of the way. But to-night there was to be no talking, and the little necessary discipline had a quieting effect upon them both.

Mrs. Parmeter rang Vernon Saumarez up on the telephone.

"May I ask Mrs. Dampier and Eunice to go with us to-morrow?" she said, her voice having a full, rich sound that made it quite clear.

"Oh, yes, do," came Vernon's indolent voice. "I liked that angry little lady—she amused me. And the Anglo-Indian child too. Let 'em all come! How are your Heavenly Twins?"

"Oh, they're both in bed ages ago. They've calmed down," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Very well then. To-morrow," said Vernon, and hung up the receiver.

Before she went to bed that night Mrs. Parmeter

wrote a little note to Mrs. Dampier. She had a shrewd suspicion that the invitation would be accepted because Mrs. Dampier was to be included. So she put it in this way so as to make it clear that the expedition had been arranged on the children's account:

"Dear Mrs. Dampier: My twins are going up to the Villa Pamphili to-morrow at three o'clock with Mr. Saumarez, who is kindly taking us in his car. We should be so glad if you would let Eunice come too, and if you have no other engagement we hope you will bring her yourself. My boys are so penitent for what happened to-day.

"Yours sincerely,
"Ivy Parmeter."

Mrs. Dampier had not many days to spend in Rome, and she always liked to extract as much pleasure from the present as possible. Of course, it was a great nuisance having to drag Eunice with her, but there seemed to be no escape; she could hardly accept for herself and refuse for her little girl. Mrs. Dampier was not yet dressed when the note was brought to her. She was enjoying her days of freedom, the exemption from all fixed hours, the liberty to do exactly as she liked. Ayah had been in to say that Little Missy was not very well . . . Little Missy had cried most of the night and had fever this morning.

Mrs. Dampier was irritated with the ayah and sent her abruptly away. "She's only telling me this because she knows I punished Eunice last night and she wants to put me in the wrong," she thought complacently, and began to eat the rolls and drink the coffee which had just been brought in to her room.

"Ayah spoils her so—I shall be glad to get rid

of that woman," was her next thought. "Mrs. Parmeter seemed quite against my punishing her too. That's why her two children are such dreadful little prigs. I could see they are the kind of happy, adoring family that never has any rows. I wonder what Mr. Parmeter is like. Still, I'm sure she is happy. And she wears such lovely clothes." Mrs. Dampier sighed. "It must be so odd to get on well like that —I suppose I must go to see Eunice."

She put on a loose white wrapper and went down the passage to Eunice's room. The doors on each side of the passage were still shut and outside almost every one of them stood a pair of boots or shoes. Some of the shoes were so tiny that Mrs. Dampier felt envious and then comforted herself by thinking, "It is all nonsense—they must belong to a child. No one ever had such a small foot as that." She turned the handle of Eunice's room and entered abruptly.

"Well, what's the matter with you?" she said.

"Ayah says it's fever," said Eunice, who was lying in bed looking white and pinched.

Mrs. Dampier stooped down and took Eunice's little hand in her firm white one.

"Nonsense," she said carelessly, "you haven't got any fever. Get up at once and don't be so lazy!"

If she had been a more sensitive woman she would have observed that Eunice seemed to shrink away from her touch and her eyes were lifted to her face with a bright look of fear.

They never had any reconciliations. Mrs. Dampier extracted no expressions of contrition. Eunice was naughty and Eunice was punished, and thus a proper retribution absolved the offence.

"Get up and go for a walk. All you want is fresh air."

Mrs. Dampier went out of the room. She would

not tell Eunice yet about the intended expedition. It would be time enough to do so at luncheon. She was rather glad now that the child should have this little pleasure, to make up for yesterday. Mrs. Dampier was not ordinarily troubled with twinges of conscience, but she felt perhaps that Eunice's punishment on their return last night had been unnecessarily severe. A nervous English lady in the opposite room had sent her maid to ask if the little girl had hurt herself and whether she could be of any use . . .

It was a splendid afternoon in late April. The sky was very blue above the massed pine-trees, whose straight, rose-grey stems looked like the slender columns in some dusky old cathedral. Beneath, the turf was very vividly green, and the sound of splashing fountains lent a soft agreeable accompaniment of sound. The deep and long avenue of ilex-trees framed a delicious picture of the Alban hills, the snow on their summits shining silverly against the blue of the sky. There was a fresh wind that stirred among the pines and blew back the growing grass like fine long hair. There was a scent not only of flowers but of the damp rich earth that was putting forth its new store of wonderful spring growths.

Mrs. Parmeter walked beside Mrs. Dampier, and on that lady's other side was Vernon Saumarez, moving with swift, elastic strides, which Geoffrey, who clung close to him, tried in vain to keep up with. Julian and Eunice walked ahead sedately, neither of them speaking. They all stopped to look across the ancient Via Aurelia at the view—that wonderful panorama of Rome with St. Peter's, immense and blond, in the foreground. To the left, Monte Mario showed its soft green curves; while straight in front of them there was a pale, solitary mountain in the distance—Monte Soracte, lying alone like a

lion resting upon its paws. Mrs. Parmeter pointed out one or two of the principal churches to Mrs. Dampier, among the clustering domes that arose above the roofs. She knew Rome very well and could enumerate them without hesitation. But Mrs. Dampier was not really interested in the pale, beautiful city shining in the brilliant April sunshine. She stood there looking very pretty and saying only: "Oh, is it really?" from time to time. She wanted to stroll about with Mr. Saumarez and exact a due amount of admiration from him. Yesterday he had seemed quite willing to bestow it in his indolent, indifferent way, that rather piqued her. To-day he struck her as slightly less inclined to be interested, and he bestowed far more attention upon Geoffrey's shrill little remarks than could possibly be good for such a young child. Perhaps he, too, blamed her for the little episode of yesterday. If she could only talk to him alone she meant to tell him how wrong it was to spoil children—it wasn't any kindness to them really. Children were such a heavy responsibility. Yes, she knew just what she would say to make her action seem quite plausible and inevitable. She suspected him of admiring Mrs. Parmeter and her suave, gentle methods of education. But that kind of thing would be worse than useless with Eunice.

Julian moved a little apart with Eunice.

"Don't you think St. Peter's is beautiful?" he said, his eyes fixed not upon her but upon the dome rising in front of them in all its pastel hues of palest grey and mauve.

"Yes," agreed Eunice.

"Have you been there to Mass yet?" he inquired.

"Mass? What do you mean?"

He flushed at the unexpected ignorance.

"You're not a Catholic, then?"

She shook her head. "I don't understand."

"When you're a Catholic," he explained cautiously, "you have to go to Mass on Sundays and holy-days of—of obligation." He stumbled a little over the long word. "We go to St. Peter's sometimes. It's lovely down in the crypt."

"Is it?" said Eunice. "I don't often go to church. And I don't like it much except the hymns."

They walked under the pine-trees, and the children became less demure and sedate, and ran hither and thither playing games and shouting to one another. Eunice looked like a little fairy thing, so light and fleet of foot. She threw off her hat, and her dark hair flew wildly in the wind. All her movements were full of a kind of innate delicate grace; one could never picture her doing anything that looked awkward and clumsy. They played together without quarrelling, and Vernon Saumarez, who was devoted to children, joined them in running races under the tall, beautiful columns of the pine-trees. Mrs. Parmeter and Mrs. Dampier sat and watched them, for the air was warm and in this sheltered spot they could hardly feel the wind, although they could hear it blowing in the tops of the tall trees with a continuous stirring sound that was pleasant and musical.

"You see what a good child Eunice can be when she likes," said Mrs. Dampier presently. "I don't want you to think she's always naughty and quarrelsome like she was yesterday."

"It was Geoffrey's fault," said Mrs. Parmeter, rather quickly, "he was teasing her. I didn't let them speak to each other again last night after they went upstairs to bed. It's a punishment they can't bear," she added.

"Oh, it would never do to treat Eunice softly like that. Last night she got what she'd been asking

for," said Mrs. Dampier, with a short, hard laugh.

Mrs. Parmeter was silent. She was a woman who generally liked every one and saw naturally all that was good in them, shutting her eyes to the rest, and avoiding the contemplation of what was not quite pleasing. But she felt something like an active dislike to Mrs. Dampier stirring in her heart, mingled with an impulse of pity for Eunice so sharp that it was almost pain.

"When we get to England I shall engage a good strict nursery-governess for her. She's quite beyond the ayah now. And she's dreadfully backward —she can't read yet." Mrs. Dampier's voice was growing every moment more discontented and bored. She did not in the least wish to sit there discussing children with Mrs. Parmeter.

At last the children were tired and sat down to rest, and Mr. Saumarez joined the others. Mrs. Dampier declared that she was cold and would like to walk about. She went on ahead with Mr. Saumarez and Mrs. Parmeter followed with Geoffrey. They left Julian sitting there with Eunice, who kept close to him all the afternoon. She had begun to feel that there was safety in his presence. Geoffrey might lead her again into the paths of iniquity and punishment.

As he leaned back with his head against the trunk of a pine-tree he lifted his eyes a little and presently said:

"Does the wind ever sing songs to you? Real songs, Eunice?" His face wore a grave, listening expression.

"No, I don't think so. But tell me about it."

"When it blows through the pines like that it sings about the sea. I can almost hear the waves. I like to listen to the wind—especially out of doors. It seems to have a message that it wants to bring

quickly. Indoors it isn't so nice—it cries when one is lying in the dark like a little child that has lost its way. I go under the bed-clothes then, so as not to hear it."

He had a curious, unchildlike way of speaking that interested Eunice. She listened to him as she would have listened if he had told her an enthralling fairy-tale. Long afterward, when she was grown up, she could always picture Julian as a little boy in a sailor-suit telling her that when one was lying awake in the dark the wind seemed to cry like a lost child.

"I wish I could think of things like that," she confessed, enviously. "I can never think of anything interesting when I'm lying awake in bed. Generally I can only think of all the times I've been naughty that day."

"Are you always naughty—every day?" he asked.

"Lots of times every day," said Eunice unashamedly. "That's why I'm always getting into rows."

Julian was silent. He thought of his one great offence and wondered if Eunice had ever committed anything so flagrant as that.

"She whipped me last night when we got home," continued Eunice, indicating her mother's retreating form. "Ayah said it was a shame. I cried and cried and couldn't sleep."

"I'm sorry," said Julian. "I think it was a shame, too. You didn't do anything really bad." He looked at her pityingly. "It was Geoffrey's fault really."

"I'm always getting punished," said Eunice miserably; "it must be lovely to be happy and good with no one to hurt you."

She seemed to have described in a few words his own lot. He suddenly realized his own immense

happiness. He had never thought much about it; now it rose before him like a picture drawn with a few deft touches. He felt almost that he might have missed the surprising knowledge if Eunice had not disclosed it to him in this impersonal way. He knew himself to be surrounded by love and tenderness, and an understanding that was quick to forgive his faults. And for the last two years and a half he had striven consciously to be good, never really to offend nor disobey. He had imposed this discipline, this mortification, upon himself in his endeavor to expiate his great sin that lay still unconfessed and so heavy upon his conscience. He had envied Geoffrey because he had nothing like that to conceal. It was a part of their daily training that they should own their faults, and their mother, wise in her extreme tenderness, used to have them with her each evening, but always separately, so that she might learn and forgive those small offences. She never guessed what her own grief had once constrained her to miss.

"Aren't you ever naughty?" said Eunice at last, wondering at his long silence.

"Of course I am," he said quickly, flushing as he spoke.

"Don't they punish you?"

"Not like that," he said.

"I'd like to change places with you," said Eunice, "if it weren't for papa. But I love papa. He's always kind to me. I wish he could be here now. We shan't see him again for ever so long. Not perhaps till next winter."

"Tell me about him," said Julian.

"He's got two medals," said Eunice, "and he rides a grey charger. I like it best when he's in full uniform. He looks splendid then." Her dark eyes shone.

She did not know that she was putting before Julian a picture utterly different from any that had come within his own small experience. He could never visualize his own father without a pen in his hand and a table burdened with books in front of him. Never could his imagination have conjured up such fantasies as a grey charger and a splendid shining uniform. He could only form a mental picture of one of those resplendent young officers of the Italian cavalry whom he had seen riding past on some of his morning walks. Eunice, in spite of all the disadvantages of her present life, certainly possessed enviable memories. Some day he would get her to tell him about India, and that long voyage she had made across the sea. To-day there was no time, for already Vernon Saumarez was coming toward them, shouting their names and telling them that it was time to go home.

CHAPTER V

It was a terrible disappointment to Julian to learn a day or two later that they would in all probability not see Eunice again. Mrs. Dampier wrote a little note to Mrs. Parmeter saying that she had met some friends who were leaving at once for England, and she had resolved to travel with them. She added at the end of the letter that she hoped perhaps they might meet again later on in Brighton, and regretted that she had not time to bring Eunice to say good-by. Her plans were always made very abruptly, and she liked the unusual sensation of being able to obey her own least whim, to go and come as she chose. Rome had been charming; she had enjoyed the glimpse she had had of the life

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there, but she was tired of living in hotels with only her child to keep her company, and she was longing to get home.

"Perhaps we shall see them some day in Brighton," said Mrs. Parmeter, aware that Julian's face had suddenly become slightly gloomy.

"I hope not," said Geoffrey, "I don't care a pin about Eunice. She wasn't really a bit nice!"

Julian did not say a word. He knew that Geoffrey's intention had been to get a rise out of him, and he refused to be drawn into a discussion. Eunice had gone, and it would only make matters worse to talk about it. And there was some hope of seeing her again in Brighton. He had never met any one quite like her before. He could talk to her without any fear of being ridiculed; he had told her of his own dreams and fancies, had liked the look of interest in her dark, attentive eyes.

Soon another event was to put Eunice rather in the background of his thoughts. This was the arrival of their uncle, Father Parmeter, a Jesuit priest who was on his way to China. He was Mr. Parmeter's only brother, and they had not seen him for some years. He was an austere, ascetic-looking man, with dark flashing eyes very like his brother's, but there the resemblance ceased. He had all those qualities of zeal, initiative, and energy which Norman Parmeter rather conspicuously lacked. With the priest they were directed solely toward that one channel of activity which absorbed the whole of his life and thoughts; his spiritual ardor, as well as his physical strength, being all royally spent for the Vineyard in which he labored. His thin and spare form was capable of the most heroic exertions; he thirsted secretly for martyrdom, and there was something about him so fiercely earnest that many people considered him fanatical. As

far as he could be said to retain any family affection, he was devoted to his only brother; he admired the wisdom and tenderness of Ivy, and he was deeply interested in the two boys.

He had obtained leave to stay with them during his brief sojourn in Rome, primarily arranged in order that he might have an audience with the Holy Father before his departure for his apostolic labors in the East. He arrived only a few days after Mrs. Dampier had departed.

At luncheon one day he said suddenly:

"Have these two youngsters of yours made their first communion yet, Norman?"

Mr. Parmeter looked up quickly, glanced at the two boys sitting demurely one on each side of their mother, and answered,

"No—they have never been to confession yet. We were rather waiting till we got home."

Julian turned quite scarlet and looked miserable. His uncle, however, did not observe him, and said: "Well, it's high time they did. How old are they?"

"Oh, they're only just eight, you know," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Seven's the right age," said the priest.

Julian's heart sank, and he felt a strange shock as of icy water touching his spine. The perspiration stood on his brow like little beads. The child looked the picture of guilt and misery. He could only hope with almost the force of a prayer that no one would notice him.

"I think you're quite right," said Norman Parmeter. "You must see about it, my dear," he added turning to his wife.

"Much better get it over before they go to school," said Father Parmeter, in his decisive way.

Mrs. Parmeter looked quickly at Julian and then lowered her eyes.

"I have been thinking of it too," she said.

Seven years old—the age of reason. She thought perhaps that Julian might suffer very much in anticipation of that discipline, as sometimes highly nervous and imaginative children will. Of Geoffrey she had no fear. He would go through life carelessly, always full of eagerness for what the present and the immediate future might hold for him.

"You might give them a little preliminary instruction while you are here, John," said Norman Parmeter.

"Very well. I'll see them in your study after lunch," said Father Parmeter. "Do they know their catechism?"

"Not very well yet," said Mrs. Parmeter. "At least Geoffrey does better than Julian." She was always very careful to give Geoffrey his due.

She was rather relieved to find that the matter had been so completely taken out of her hands. She had often said to herself, "I ought to make them go. I wish I could make up my mind." And always there had been some thought of Julian to make her reluctant and hesitating. And they were still so little—such babies in so many ways. They had seemed so specially young in comparison with a modern, experienced child like Eunice Dampier.

"Well, we must have a talk about it, mustn't we, boys?" said Father Parmeter.

Geoffrey said "Yes, uncle," in his shrill treble: Julian opened his lips but no sound came. He had the feeling that he had suddenly discovered himself without warning in a dentist's chair preparatory to having a tooth out.

"What's the matter, Julian?" said Norman Parmeter.

"Nothing," said Julian almost sullenly.

Would they remember—when they knew all—

the heroic attempts he had made to "keep good" ever since that dreadful episode which rose like a ghost from the past to confront him? Would they make excuses for him in the kindness of their hearts? He had always felt there had been something unforgivable about his offence. His mother, knowing of it, might never love him so well, trust him so completely again. He would be marked as disobedient and deceitful.

"You can run away, children," said Mrs. Parmeter, as soon as dessert was over, "I'll send for you when Uncle John is ready." She smiled at them, but Julian's stony little face never relaxed.

When the door had closed behind the two little figures Norman said: "Why, what's the matter with Julian, Ivy?"

"I think it's the idea of going to confession. I've always felt it might frighten him. He's so sensitive and nervous." She made the excuse she always made whenever he appeared less courageous and manly than Geoffrey. "It's since his illness, you know."

"My dear, his illness is ancient history," said Norman, rather impatiently.

"I dare say he has a sensitive conscience," said Father Parmeter, "many children have, you know; and, then, the prospect of confession alarms them."

She had a word with him alone before she sent the boys down to him.

"Be very gentle with Julian," she whispered, "you see how it is with him. You can say what you like to Geoffrey . . . "

Father Parmeter was alone in the study when the boys came in. He had been glancing at the paper and as they entered he looked up and regarded them attentively. Geoffrey was smiling, but Julian was still very pale. Evidently the boy had something

on his mind—something much more definite than a mere shrinking from the thought of going to confession. The priest took a little book from his pocket and began to examine them in their catechism. He was a little astonished at Geoffrey's rapid and accurate answers. Julian's words were slow and hesitating, often he stumbled and had to be helped. At last he completely failed and Father Parmeter said: "You'll have to learn that again, Julian. I'll hear you say it to-morrow." He shut up the book, closed his eyes for a second, and then began to give them a simple instruction on the sacrament of Penance. He spoke very kindly, but in a grave, impressive way, as if he were anxious that they should remember what he said. Julian listened, never taking his eyes from his uncle's face. In its thin darkness it reminded him of some old portrait in one of the galleries, harsh, resolute, and yet with something of sadness in it, as if he had seen many things that had made him sorry. And gradually, as he listened, something of Julian's overwhelming fear left him. For what was he saying? "The Church has fixed the age of reason at seven years. That is why children under seven years of age are not held to be capable of committing a mortal sin, and therefore it is not usual for them to approach the sacrament of Penance until they have reached that age. . ."

For some minutes Julian heard no more. The words had fallen like a healing hand upon his tormented little heart; he was meditating upon them, fitting them to his own case, applying them to himself. He had learned that part of the catechism which deals with mortal sin, and he had come to the bitter conclusion that his own premeditated act of disobedience, with its train of consequences, had been indeed a mortal sin, for which God had justly pun-

ished him. Whenever he had read or learned that part of the catechism he had felt a sense of chill and physical sickness. And now—it was as if a great weight had been lifted from his heart. He had been barely six years old at the time of Baby Sister's death; he could not, therefore, be deemed capable of committing a mortal sin. The Church said so. He had never since that time deliberately committed the slightest fault of disobedience or deception. Nurse had often said he had been a "different boy" since his illness; she would sometimes invite Geoffrey—who was really her favorite—to imitate his brother's admirable behavior. But Julian, knowing the reason of the change in himself, felt humbled rather than elated by the praise.

As he sat there looking at his uncle, with steadfast and shining eyes full of a new light of hope, some words from the Bible came back to his mind. He could not remember them exactly, but they were, he thought, a little like this: *"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace." How beautiful upon the mountains* . . . He had always been fascinated by the words; had even pictured the messengers arriving in Rome across the lovely snow-clad summits of the Alban hills. Young, joyous messengers, swift and fleet of foot . . . Now the text hammered upon his brain. He could have knelt down and worshiped at the feet of this dark-faced priest with the hollow, smouldering eyes that seemed to hold hidden fires. . . .

"So, you see, it isn't anything to be afraid of," said Father Parmeter, smiling kindly upon them. "The only thing to be afraid of is to do wrong—to offend God, to separate ourselves deliberately from Him by sin in any shape or form. But if we *have* sinned, He has in His great mercy given us this

sacrament of Penance, by which we can regain His friendship and receive His grace once more. . . ."

He became aware that Julian was looking at him with a changed and softened expression.

"And I would like you to remember one thing," he went on, "and that is never all through your lives to put off going to confession when you know that you have offended. That makes two sins instead of one. You won't forget that, either of you, will you?"

"No, Uncle John," they both said in chorus, and this time Julian's voice was quite as audible and distinct as Geoffrey's.

"Well, I think that's enough for to-day. Julian, you'll learn that part I showed you again for to-morrow?"

"Yes, Uncle John," said Julian. He slid off his chair and approached Father Parmeter with a curious shy eagerness.

"Oh, thank you—thank you," he said.

Then, without waiting for Geoffrey, he turned and went out of the room, for the tears had gathered thickly in his eyes.

CHAPTER VI

"EUNICE'S father is in the army," said Geoffrey that evening when they went into the drawing-room for an hour before going to bed.

When there were no visitors, Norman Parmeter generally joined them, for he saw little enough of his boys. But sometimes, too, his work kept him in that mysterious room called "the study," to which the children only went by invitation.

"She asked what father was," he continued, look-

ing up into his father's face. He was much less afraid of Norman than Julian was; his imagination never invested him with mysterious and alarming attributes, and it was perhaps for this reason that if Norman had a preference it was for Geoffrey. He was the kind of boy that a man would naturally prefer, he was hardy, vigorous, manly, and full of careless courage.

His dark eyes held a gleam of sardonic amusement.

"And what did you say?" inquired Norman.

"It was Ju told her you were a poet," said Geoffrey.

"Thanks awfully, Ju!"

"She didn't know what it meant," confessed Geoffrey. Her ignorance on the point had made him feel momentarily ashamed of his father's calling. Now, every one knew what being in the army meant; it required no explanation.

"I feel sure," cried Norman, "that you were able to explain it to her."

"Yes," said Geoffrey eagerly, "and afterward she told Mrs. Dampier who asked if you were in the Golden Treasury!"

"My dear boy, I'm not quite a classic yet," said Norman. "No one has ever heard of me!" There was a touch of bitterness in his voice. He was a man of quiet but intense ambition; yet it was true that few people had even heard his name or could repeat by heart one single line from those little grey booklets that once a year found their way to the old Roman palace. Perhaps few realized their beauty and artistry as Mrs. Parmeter did. Some day she believed that the poet would stir in Julian.

"Eunice doesn't learn poetry yet," continued Geoffrey, "she hardly does any lessons. She's *frightfully* ignorant."

"She will have regular lessons when she's in England," said Mrs. Parmeter.

Now it was time for bed, and to-night she had something to say to each of the boys to supplement in some measure Father Parmeter's little discourse. Evidently he had been most kind and tactful, for all the dreadful haunted look had gone from Julian's face; he was for him in almost wild spirits this evening. She was glad that the task had been taken out of her hands, and accomplished with such good results.

She took Julian first into her little sitting-room beyond the big *salotto* and closed the door of communication.

"Julian, darling, I hope you've been thinking of what Uncle John has told you about your first confession?" Those were her words as she drew the little boy to her. He stood there leaning against her shoulder. Only by turning her head could she see his face.

"Yes, mummy."

"And you realize that it's nothing so very alarming—nothing that you need be really afraid of."

"Yes, mummy. I felt very happy when he was talking. I like Uncle John—I wish he wasn't going away to China."

"Oh, you mustn't wish that. He is going to teach very poor, neglected, ignorant people to be good Catholics. He will be a messenger."

His own very word! Yes, a messenger swift and eager to deliver his good tidings, his word of peace. Julian's pale little face was alight. "How beautiful upon the mountains." He murmured the words aloud.

"I shall never forget what he told us," he said presently.

She was a little surprised, though relieved, to find

that Julian had emerged from the interview comforted and no longer afraid. She ought to have trusted her brother-in-law to make it easy for the children; he had such an immense experience of souls. Even the delicate, timid souls of young children.

"I'm glad you paid attention," she said brightly. "And now you'll think about it sometimes, won't you, Julian? Begin your examination of conscience this very night."

"Just the things I've done to-day?" he asked.

"Yes. But think too of all the wrong things you can remember having done—all the times you can think of when you have been disobedient, or untruthful or angry—all the times you have quarreled and fought with Geoffrey, and have been rude to nurse . . ."

"All the times? In all my life?" he asked, looking blank.

"Yes. You've got such a good memory for past things it ought to be quite easy for you. Easier than for Geoffrey."

She was still holding him, but now she felt that his little body pressed against her rather more heavily, as if for support, and that he was trembling a little.

One sin stood out blackly. Nothing else mattered.

"And then—as I'm sure Uncle John told you—you must try to feel very very sorry."

He stood there, pale, speechless.

"And you must make very strong resolutions to try never to be naughty—to do anything wilfully wrong again."

"But must I think of things that happened before I was seven years old?"

"Yes, if you can remember anything very particu-

larly. Anything that you feel very sorry for. If there's something that hurts your conscience to remember, I think you ought to make up your mind to be brave—and confess it."

"I can't do it, mummy," he said at last, "I simply can't." At that moment he was nearer to telling her than he had ever been before.

Mrs. Parmeter put her arm more closely about him in an endeavor to draw him nearer. But she could feel that now he held himself stiffly; his body did not yield to the caress, and he seemed to be instinctively withdrawing himself, by an interior hardening process. Yes, his little body was against her arm; his soul miles away in its own imprisoned solitude. The thought hurt her; she had believed him to be so close to her heart.

"Dear, don't say that," she told him gently. "After all, you must remember that what you tell the priest is an absolute secret. He can never speak of it, even to you again except in the confessional. Even if it hurts, we all have to go through it. Your father and I—even Uncle John. Even the Holy Father himself."

His face brightened perceptibly.

"Then you'd never know?" he said quickly.

"Never from the priest. Only—only if you told me yourself."

He was back now in the chilly, shadow-haunted spare room at Brighton. Its unfamiliar spaces were pale with moonlight, blue, ghostly moonlight. He was stooping over the pink-and-white crib, looking at Baby Sister with a fearful searching for wings.

"I wish you hadn't any secrets from me, Ju," she said.

He stirred under her touch, trembling a little again. She thought: "What a bundle of nerves he

is. It's since his illness." But he did not speak; he was as far as ever now from confiding in her.

"You're not afraid of me?" she said.

"No—no," he reassured her eagerly. If they two had been alone in the world, how gladly would he have told her everything!

"You must try to take things as simply as Geoffrey does," she said.

"Geoff won't mind going to confession. He'll rather like it. He likes new ex—experiences," said Julian, stumbling over the word. But he had summed his brother up with delicate accuracy.

"Try to be a little like that."

"I'm not Geoffrey. Something inside me is quite different."

"Perhaps it's something you must learn to change."

"It's like this. If you were to punish Geoff he would be happy again in about half an hour—he would laugh about it. If you were to punish me I should be miser*ruble* for ages and ages. I shouldn't ever not remember."

"But you mustn't be a coward about punishment. If you've done wrong you must face the consequences and bear them bravely."

He surprised her by saying suddenly: "But I did."

"Why, I don't remember that you've ever been really punished, Ju."

"Not by you and father," he admitted slowly.

"Not—by nurse?"

Nurse was a strict disciplinarian, even a little too strict; but she had been positively forbidden ever to lay a finger upon her charges.

He shook his head.

"Then what do you mean, darling? Who punished you?"

"I mean—it was God who punished me." His

eyes were strange, and held an almost mystical expression. She thought he must be dreaming.

"What makes you think that, Julian?"

"Because it came so quickly—the punishment, I mean. He didn't wait."

She was puzzled beyond endurance. She kissed his brown head and cried: "Darling, do tell me what you mean. I don't even know what you are talking about!"

While she held and kissed him in this comforting, understanding way he could have told her all. But there was father. The thought of his father's eyes, gleaming, sardonic, commanding, drove him back to his safe silence.

"It wasn't a mortal sin, mummy," he told her with perfect gravity.

She caught him to her. "Oh, my darling baby!"

"Because I wasn't old enough. Uncle John said you can't commit a mortal sin before you are seven."

"And this wrong thing that you did, Julian, happened before you were seven?"

"I was nearly six," he answered.

"But you're very, very sorry now?"

"Very sorry."

"Shall I tell you something, Ju?"

"Yes, please, mummy."

"You'll be much happier when you've been to confession. If this thing has hurt your conscience for two years you must know that you did something that was very wrong. So you must make up your mind to tell it when you go to confession for the first time. Explain it to the priest—don't keep anything back. Be very sorry and then try never to think about it again. That's the best way."

She kissed him on both flushed cheeks.

"Now go and tell Geoff to come!"

It was all plain sailing with Geoffrey. He un-

derstood what would be required of him and was quite prepared to do it. That was how he would go through life, simply and efficiently, with plenty of courage to meet the difficult moment.

Julian went to bed that night feeling as if the day had been very long and heavy with the promise of doom.

Mrs. Parmeter lay awake far into the night, pondering over the cryptic utterances of Julian. She, his mother, who had watched over him almost hourly ever since he was born, held no clue to this mysterious delinquency, which so evidently was still harassing his conscience. It was true that before his illness he had been more like Geoffrey in character, hardier, less self-controlled, less serious. Something of his childhood had been left behind then, and she had attributed it to the very severe pain he had sometimes suffered. She had been struck even then by his grim powers of endurance, his patience under the pain that had sometimes to be inflicted on this tortured little body. Another child would probably have forgotten all about it more readily, but Julian had a curiously retentive memory. From that time there had certainly been a change in him, but she could not remember that either before or after he had been guilty of any childish misdemeanor. They were both truthful and obedient children; she had never had any trouble with them. Geoffrey, it is true, was sometimes wild and unmanageable and had a sudden passionate temper; his faults were surface faults, easily corrected. He was as much like other boys—other healthy manly boys—as Julian was unlike them.

She had not forced Julian's confidence; she was afraid of spoiling the really beautiful and deep intimacy that existed between herself and her elder boy. Some day he would come and tell her, of his

own free will. Until that time came she would show him by a thousand signs how dear he was to her, how nothing he could ever do could separate him from that mother-love that went straight from her own heart to his.

CHAPTER VII

"MUMMY's birthday" was an event only second to their own, which fell in November. Hers came at the end of April, and the twins always saved up their pocket-money. For a month they bought no sweets. It was odd that during that month Mummy very often gave them sweets; still, it was impossible she could have divined their sacrifice. It would have spoiled it all if she had even remotely guessed what was in store for her.

This year Julian was reticent on the subject; he only declined when Geoffrey proposed it, to make a joint gift; he wouldn't even say what he intended to give her. Geoffrey, in revenge, tried to be silent, too, but after a week of this policy he grew tired of the mystery and told Julian he was going to give her a vase. Julian accepted the information without comment; if Geoffrey had intended to provoke him into a counter-confidence, he failed signally.

This year the birthday fell on a Sunday, and Mrs. Parmeter on her return from an early Mass with Norman discovered on her breakfast-tray the two parcels. Geoffrey's vase imperfectly concealed by a wrapping of soft paper was the first to be opened. The other, a flat, narrow parcel, might have contained anything. She opened it and a piece of note-paper fell out. Julian had written upon it in care-

ful round hand: *"Corban—which is a gift. From Julian."* And the gift was a little silver paper-cutter darkened with age and worn thin. He had seen it in a tray with other small antique articles in an old shop, and had decided that Mummy, with her love for everything old, would certainly like it. She was glad Julian was not there, for the inscription made her laugh till the tears ran down her cheeks.

"Twinnies!" She went to the door and called them, and they, evidently awaiting the summons with impatient eagerness, came helter-skelter down the long passage. First Geoffrey was kissed, and then Julian, who never tried to reach her first but stood aside as if conscious of Geoffrey's prerogative. But did she hold Geoffrey quite so long and quite so tightly to her heart as she was holding Julian now? "Darling, I do like it—Corban and all," she whispered.

"I rubbed it up," said Julian, "but it wouldn't come bright."

"Never mind. I'll give it to Giuseppe and tell him to rub it up."

"Yes, now; but I wasn't going to let him see it before I gave it to you. It was a secret from all the world."

Whereat he was kissed again in that tender, half-wistful way with which she always greeted any manifestation of his childish love for her. So it had been his own thought—Corban and all. Geoffrey watched the repeated embrace with some surprise. After all, it was nothing very wonderful—nothing worth making a secret about—this little dirty piece of old silver. He preferred his own glittering crystal vase, that would stand always on Mummy's writing-table filled with beautiful flowers.

Norman Parmeter came into the room, his thin, bitter face twisting into a smile as he looked at the

little group. Ivy never appeared so delicious, so animated, as she did when she was with her children. She adored these callow, undeveloped little boys. He pulled her to him almost resentfully, and kissed her in the way that always told her she had somehow unconsciously hurt him. What *had* she done? Ivy was never morbid, and she always tried to show him her wise and most practical side, as if to protect them both with a solid weatherproof cloak, impervious to too much poetry. But it was the boys, of course! He had seen that long, wistful embrace bestowed upon Julian. How supersensitive he was, just as if he had no room in his heart for any one in the world except herself! She freed herself from his embrace and said:

"Twinnies, you must go for a walk early to-day. The sun's lovely."

It was not quite a dismissal, and they were eager to stay a little longer. They were both also intensely curious to see what father was going to give her.

"So it's a birthday, Ivy. Twenty-nine—you ought to be ashamed of yourself for looking like eighteen. Who'd take you for a responsible British matron, the mother of twins?" His eyes softened. "Do you want a birthday present at your time of life, my dear?"

"Of course I do, Norman. Always from you—"

He dived into his pocket and drew out a tiny parcel. The boys watched breathlessly. A little blue velvet box, and then within, on a white satin lining, the loveliest diamond ring! Ivy was fond of rings, it was her only vanity.

"Oh, Norman—how too lovely! And how wrong of you."

She slipped it on to her finger and turned it this way and that. The man watched her, loving her

beauty, loving something elusive in her that he never felt he could make his own.

"When I'm grown up I shall give my wife a diamond ring," shrilled Geoffrey, with a challenging glance at Julian.

"I shall never give one to any one but Mummy," announced Julian.

"Oh yes, you will. You'll give one to Eunice!" mocked Geoffrey.

Julian flushed darkly. "That's all you know about it, silly billy."

Mrs. Parmeter said:

"Hush, darlings—don't quarrel."

"It's true—I'll never give one to any one except to you. I shall save up my money." Julian's voice was determined.

Norman wheeled round.

"So you think Mummy would want a ring from you?"

Julian raised his eyes to his father. "Yes, father."

He crept up to his mother. She put her arm round his neck and caressed his cheek with her hand —the hand with the new ring sparkling on it.

"Now run along to nurse."

They obeyed. Julian went quietly and Geoffrey followed. He nearly always took his cue from his brother. The door closed on their two meek, obedient backs.

"My dear—that boy's a terror!" said Norman.

"Julian?" She looked up sharply.

"Yes. Where does he get his wisdom from?"

"From you, Norman. I often think you must have been very like that. It's made me—" she wanted to explain that softness, those caresses of hers— "so fond of Julian!"

"Oh, Ivy," he said reproachfully, "you *have*

cheated me! I never thought you'd let those two brats take such a huge share of your heart."

"One never knows," she laughed, "what maternity will do!"

"I'm beastly jealous of Julian," he confessed.

"You mustn't be." She lifted her face.

"It's odd, but I never feel like that about Geoff." He said this when he had kissed and released her.

"Try not to feel it. It hurts us all—you and me and Ju. I've seen him shrink—as if he knew."

"Let him go to school! Let him learn to be like other boys! Do get him to stop thinking, Ivy."

"Did they ever stop you?"

"They didn't set about it the right way. A private tutor till I went to Oxford—John was even against my doing that. And anyhow, we don't want two poets in the family."

Was he afraid that this strange and silent son of his might touch heights unattainable by himself—grasp too the sweets of success and fame that he had missed? She could not believe him envious, and yet his tone was embittered as if he were suffering.

"We'll send him into the navy—far the best thing for a boy. The army for Geoff, since he's so set on it."

Ivy grew a little pale.

"Darling—they're only just eight. And we must let them have some say in the matter."

She was a little depressed; the joy seemed to have gone out of the day. She stood there hesitating.

"Ivy—Ivy—" he said penitently, suddenly aware that he had hurt her.

"By the way, John is to take them to Father Benedict to-day," she said. "You know he has been seeing him about them. He wants them to make their first communion on Corpus Christi."

Norman smiled.

"So you've let John settle things?" he said.

"Yes. He thinks we have delayed too long. I'm beginning to agree with him."

"John has certainly set our house in order," he remarked.

But he was in reality devoted to his brother, and invariably followed his advice. He was glad that Ivy never resented that zealous interference. They both were accustomed to bow before that indomitable will.

The Jesuit had not much longer to spend in Rome. He gave the children regular daily instructions, and they were perfectly prepared to make their confessions. To this end he had approached an old friend of his, Father Benedict, who for the present was to be entrusted with the direction of these two young souls.

"We couldn't have arranged everything half so well ourselves," said Mrs. Parmeter. "John's prepared the boys beautifully. Even Julian isn't nervous any more."

Ever since that first day she had not again approached the subject to Julian. Whatever it was that was fretting his conscience, it would soon cease to torment him. He had been happier and brighter ever since that talk they had had together.

Norman kissed her again. "I must go back to my work. Come presently, won't you, Ivy? I want you to run through the proofs of those new lyrics."

"Of course I'll come," she said.

* * *

It was Father Parmeter who took the two boys to the church where Father Benedict was to be found, so that they might make their confessions. Julian never forgot that day; the walk in the bright May

sunshine through the crowded streets of Rome, past the great fountain of Trevi and up the flights of steps that led to the Quirinal Palace, its warm golden walls bathed in the afternoon sun. They paused there on the piazza to look at St. Peter's, and then followed their uncle along the Via Venti Settembre. Julian was very thoughtful and silent, and hardly said a word. He envied Geoffrey's light-heartedness, the eagerness with which he seemed to approach this new and fearful experience.

"Which of us will go first?" inquired Geoffrey.

Father Parmeter looked down upon the two boys from his great height.

"Julian will, of course. He's the elder."

Julian felt his heart sink again. He began to wish that his mother had accompanied them, to whisper a few words of encouragement. It was odd that she hadn't come.

He had sometimes gone with his mother when she went to confession, had waited sitting or kneeling in the church while she slipped into one of the dark boxes where he could only see her figure half lost in the shadows while her face was hidden from him. He had sometimes wondered at her calm, the absence of effort that characterized her on those occasions. He had sometimes said to himself, as a child will when contemplating some difficult situation or experience: "This can never happen to me." And now it was actually coming. Julian pinched his own arm to make sure that he was not dreaming as he followed his uncle into the church where Father Benedict was to be found.

"Now kneel down, and make your act of contrition and say the *Confiteor,*" said Father Parmeter, in his matter-of-fact voice, "and think once more what you have to say. While you are preparing I'll go and find Father Benedict."

Julian and Geoffrey knelt down on the two prie-dieus and began to do as he had bidden them. It was not very easy for Julian, for now that the time had actually come, a kind of sick nervousness took possession of him. He trembled as he knelt there; once he longed to get up and run away. It was no use to try to be brave when one wasn't brave. Cowards couldn't help being cowards. He glanced at Geoffrey, who was calmly occupied with his preparation, was even studying a little book which Father Parmeter had given to him, with a sang-froid that bewildered Julian. But they would soon be coming—and he was not ready. He stumbled through the *Confiteor,* and tried to remember the short act of contrition which he had lately learned. But did he really feel any kind of contrition? He felt nothing in the world but this miserable sense of blinding, trembling terror. He couldn't repeat all that dreadful story of his own disobedience. In his misery he began to cry, very softly, lest Geoffrey should overhear. The tears dropped, hot and thick, between his fingers.

He was struggling to control himself and so absorbed in this apparently hopeless task that he never heard the two priests come into the church. Suddenly he felt a sharp touch on the shoulder and his uncle's voice said: "Are you ready now? Father Benedict is waiting."

Julian rose to his feet; he felt himself sway a little. Father Parmeter, noticing the white face with its traces of tears, took him by the hand and led him towards the confessional.

"Go in and kneel down," he said in a firm, kind voice.

Then he himself went back to the prie-dieu where lately Julian had been kneeling and knelt down.

There was a deep silence in the church. Only a

few people were walking about, gazing idly at the pictures, the beautiful jewel-like marbles, the baroque decorations. Sometimes a faint, sibilant whisper sounded from the confessional. It seemed to Geoffrey a very long time before his brother reappeared with head erect. He looked at him with a curious scrutiny, as if he expected to find him subtly changed. Julian was very pale; he looked nervous, a little shaken, and yet immensely relieved. Geoffrey sprang up from his seat and took his place in the confessional. Julian knelt down by his uncle's side and made his thanksgiving.

But there was not one detail of that past adventure that he had not faithfully recounted. There had been nothing else very salient in his life to tell except that one offence. Something—a great weight—had been lifted from his heart. Had it really gone away forever? Would it never torment him again?

One thing was quite certain. God had forgiven him.

CHAPTER VIII

It was on the following morning that Mrs. Parmeter found an envelope on her writing-table, addressed to her in Julian's handwriting. It was marked *Private*. She smiled as she opened it, realizing that he was already, like his father, finding it easier to write a difficult thing than to speak it. But as she read the smile faded from her face.

* * *

"Father Benedict says I *ort* to tell you. [Julian's spelling was still phonetic.] Of course he can't make me. He says it would be more *purfick* if I did. I saw Baby Sister after she was dead. I wanted to see if she had got wings and whether she

was still in the spare room or had flown away to heaven. She hadn't got any wings and she was funny and cold and frightened me. I am sorry. I'd like father not to no. Forgive me please. I no God was angry for he made me very ill. Don't please stop loving me now you no. Ju."

* * *

So that was what had been on his mind for two years—for more than two years. Preying perhaps on his mind. She didn't like to think of all that he had suffered; it hurt her. Could a little child of six, tenderly cherished, really keep a cruel and tormenting secret for more than two years? And why had he been afraid to tell them? They had never been in the least severe with their children, and she had always been there to stand between them and the brief, swift, irascible anger of Norman. Yet it was certainly Norman whom Julian had feared. That "I'd like father not to know," explained a good deal of what was on the surface so puzzling, so mystifying.

"More perfect!" she said aloud. "You poor little darling baby."

She couldn't bear even now to think he had seen death alone, for the first time, without any one by his side to soften its terror for him. No doubt the scene had frightened him, that vision of little Baby Sister, lying white and frozen in her cradle. It accounted for the complete wrecking of his nervous system, which she had always attributed to his illness and from which he was only now slowly recovering. The illness was what he had alluded to when he told her that God had punished him. He had accepted that as a just retribution, and she remembered his extraordinary patience, his sweetness, his uncomplaining submission to all painful or disagreeable

remedies and treatment. She had told people proudly that he was like a little saint. And all the time he had been consciously expiating what he knew to be a bad little sin of disobedience. He would never forget his little sister; all that episode must have burned itself into his brain. To Geoffrey she was already a memory, wrapped in remote mystery.

"But when—when?" she thought to herself.

She turned her mind back to those sad days, and she could think of no opportunity he had had for this rash satisfaction of a morbid curiosity. But he would talk to her—he would tell her more—now that the ice was broken. He would fill in the gaps. And then she would forgive him, comfort him. She didn't want to tell Norman. It might give him the impression that Julian's odd, unchildlike reticence hid a deceitful nature. He was often rough and a little abrupt in manner to Julian, never perfectly comprehending him; and he would perhaps think that the boy ought still to be rebuked for that long-past act of disobedience. He would not realize what it had cost Julian to emerge from that crystallized reticence; what a breaking of delicate silences that were as ice about his heart. Yet the boy was so like him, in that fine exquisite sensibility of his; it was a pity Norman did not try to understand him better.

She sent Geoffrey up to bed first that night, as she sometimes did, when she wanted to have a longer talk with Julian alone. All that day she had only seen the children at meals, for Norman had been claiming her attention almost continuously. It had been something of an effort for her to comply, because her thoughts were so full of Julian and she was longing to talk to him. In the afternoon she had driven with her husband to the Via Appia and thence they had taken a long walk in the Campagna, only returning when the May dusk was beginning to fall.

There would be very little time to talk to Julian this evening but she couldn't let him go to bed without a word. Geoffrey was disappointed at being dismissed so quickly; he was a little inclined to rebel. Mrs. Parmeter, seeing the white, wretched look on Julian's face, said almost sharply: "Go quickly, Geoffrey."

When he had gone she pulled Julian close to her and kissed him, pushing back his thick brown hair with her hand. He began to sob, perhaps from relief to learn through these signs that she was not angry. When he was calmer she questioned him in her cold, restraining voice, that seemed to impose self-control. The story came out little by little. How he had gone in the middle of the night to look at Baby Sister, obeying an impulse of curiosity that was certainly morbid but not altogether unnatural. She could remember feeling that intense curiosity about death herself when she was much older than Julian. It would have been far wiser to have taken the boys to see their little sister, but Norman had repudiated the idea; he was afraid of infection.

"But Julian, dear, I wish you had told me. I don't like to think you've hidden anything from me for two years."

"It was the only time. And I tried to be good to make up," said Julian. His dark eyes brooded solemnly.

"But you had a dreadful, sly little secret poisoning all your thoughts."

"Yes," he agreed.

"Wouldn't it have been easier to tell it and face the punishment?"

He looked again white and suffering.

"I was afraid. You see it was a big double sin."

"But Ju, darling, you must never be afraid of me!"

"It wasn't you. It was father—it was his eyes!"

"His eyes?" She was puzzled.

"Yes. When they have sparks in them."

"But you mustn't be afraid of father, either, Julian. You have no reason to be."

"It was *him* I disobeyed," said Julian, thoughtfully.

"Ju, darling, I wish you'd told me long ago. Oh, I should have forgiven you. Think how ill you were. And you've been punished by your own conscience—more than punished for hiding it for so long. We won't talk about it any more."

She comforted him again, taking him on her knee, kissing him, smoothing back the ruffled brown hair. In the midst of the little scene Norman came abruptly into the room.

"Why, I thought you were alone, Ivy. Why isn't that brat in bed?"

He looked at Julian, at his white face with its signs of recent tears, and at his wife with her shining eyes holding the boy in her arms.

"What's he been doing now?" he asked.

"We've been having a little talk, Ju and I," she said putting the boy from her and standing up.

"Has he been naughty?" Norman's suspicions were oddly aroused; he often had the vague notion that she was hiding Julian's delinquencies from him.

"He—he is quite good, Norman," said Ivy tremulously, "and he's going to try to keep good. Aren't you, Julian? Say good night to father, dear, and run along to bed."

The child timidly approached Norman, holding up his face. Mr. Parmeter stooped and kissed him and then gave him a little not unkindly push. "Be off to bed. Sharp now!" he said in his dictatorial tone.

When Julian had gone out of the room Norman turned to his wife with that slight air of zealous distrustfulness that she disliked so much.

"You're bringing up that boy much too soft," he said, "you'll make him more like a girl than a boy. He must go to school. Why don't you tell me what he's been doing? What's all the mystery about?"

"I was only having a little talk with him—about something that happened a long time ago. Something he had said in confession. I wanted to have a talk with him to-night, so I sent Geoffrey to bed early on purpose."

"You and your Ju!" He smiled half bitterly.

All the evening he was a little restless, as if suspecting some reticence on her part regarding Julian.

These little things had a more far-reaching effect upon Norman Parmeter. Fond as he was of his Roman home, he had never come thither, as so many did, with the deliberate intention of expatriating himself altogether. He made the journey to London occasionally to see his publishers, but Ivy refused to accompany him unless he permitted her to bring the children, and this he had always declined to do. So that his visits home had been necessarily brief, for he could not bear to be long parted from Ivy. He still loved her in that adoring, jealous, possessive way which at last she had learned to understand; though sometimes in the early days of their marriage —especially just after the arrival of the twins, when he felt his position threatened—had sometimes made her sufficiently unhappy. He had the restless, nervous, poet's temperament, and he led the often idle life of the man whose work waits upon inspiration. As he was very well off, there was no real necessity for him to work at all. There were so few thorns in her path; she was, on the face of it, so enormously happy that she was rather inclined to disregard the little twist in his character that sometimes made things not quite smooth. When he was angry with either of the boys, especially with Julian, she

always tried to keep him from manifesting it, because she knew it was the result of his own jealousy rather than of any naughtiness on the part of the children. She was devoted to her husband, understood and forgave him. These little difficulties arose from his too absorbing devotion to herself, and therefore she was the more readily able to forgive and overlook them. It was only her great tenderness for Julian that ever aroused her impatience with Norman's attitude—an impatience that she always concealed from him.

That very night, however, he spoke to her on the subject of leaving Rome and going back to Brighton. The tenants who occupied their house in Brunswick Terrace were leaving it during the summer; their lease was up and they had notified that they did not wish to renew it. Norman came to the sudden conclusion that it was quite time the boys were sent to school. A day-school at first for a term or two, and afterward to a big preparatory school. Julian was atrociously, shamefully backward. Geoffrey would make far more rapid progress if he were to work with cleverer, more brilliant boys than himself. There was no doubt that Julian kept his brother back. At school they would find their own level. Mrs. Parmeter listened silently. She knew the truth of these arguments; she knew, too, by Norman's manner that he had been considering the matter carefully and that his mind was made up. Perhaps she had precipitated things a little by her injudicious petting of Julian. He had come upon herself and the boy just at the close of an emotional little scene; it was a pity, but there was no help for it.

"You must admit, Ivy, that Julian's health has derived all the benefit he's likely to get from a southern climate," continued Norman, who always liked to anticipate any arguments Ivy might adduce

against a proposed plan. "He's getting a bit slack and the Brighton air will brace him up. And I'm beginning to want to get back to all my books. After all, we're only strangers and pilgrims here."

Ivy had loved every hour of her sojourn in Rome. She believed, too, that it had taught the boys many things which they would never have derived from the ordinary routine of school-work. But there was reason on Norman's side. Geoffrey especially was in need of school discipline. She said quietly:

"I think you are right, Norman. I should rather like to have waited till next winter, when the boys will be nine."

"Nonsense—they're getting awfully out of hand as it is," said Norman, with a touch of irritability. "It's time they went to school. I think we'll give up this place as soon as we can, and go home. We should have to leave Rome for the summer in any case, so we might just as well make one move of it."

"Very well, Norman," said Ivy.

He glanced at her as she sat there working, the light from a rose-shaded electric lamp falling on her dark brown hair. She generally had some soft white work in her hands, and he liked to see the skilful and sure way in which the needle performed its task under that delicate guidance. She looked very young and very pretty and hardly altered from the day he had married her.

He put out his hand and touched hers.

"You don't hate the idea, do you, darling?" he said half wistfully.

She smiled.

"Of course I don't hate it, Norman. For some reasons I shall be glad to go home, and to live among our own things again. And Julian is getting quite strong. I don't suppose he'll ever be quite as strong as Geoffrey."

"My dear," said Norman, "I think Julian would be all the better if you didn't fuss over him quite so much. He must learn to be active and hardy. You're spoiling the boy, you know."

"When do you think of going, Norman?" she asked, paying no attention to his last speech.

"Well, I thought I could get off at the end of the month and see about putting the house to rights in Brighton, and then you could follow in June. Then the boys can go to school in September."

"Very well, Norman," said Ivy.

"It's absurd to live so long abroad," continued Norman, "a man gets so out of touch with things at home. My sales are falling off, and I'm convinced it's because I'm not there to look after things. I always intended to be in England when 'A Vision of Saints' goes to press."

"Yes," said Ivy, this time a little absently. She was thinking of Julian and of all the difference it would make to him.

CHAPTER IX

THE return to Brighton was effected as Norman had proposed early in the summer, and by July they were so completely settled again in the old house in Brunswick Terrace that it almost seemed as if they had never left it. Certain changes, however, had been made. The boys, being bigger, required a place to themselves—a school-room that could also be used as a play-room—and the old nursery with its three big windows looking out on to the sea was selected for this purpose. Two little rooms on the same landing were given to them as bed-rooms; while nurse, whose occupation would

assuredly soon be gone, slept in a third room close at hand. Norman had his old study at the top of the house, a spacious attic also overlooking the sea. He spent many days when they first arrived unpacking his books and arranging his papers and having new shelves and book-cases introduced, in very perfect contentment. Mrs. Parmeter began to think she was really the only one of the family who regretted Rome at all. And she regretted it almost passionately, and longed for the brilliant summer days which they had left behind in their full glory. During those first weeks of aching nostalgia she would have given almost everything she possessed for one glimpse of the beautiful Alban hills painted in such soft, delicate and harmonious tones against the sky, with the wide, pale Campagna lying out at their feet like the sea.

They slipped back into old habits. On Sundays after Mass they walked on the bright, emerald-colored Hove lawns, the twins going on ahead sedately. They saw many people they knew and sometimes stopped to talk to them. Norman often met also men whom he knew in London, and who were acquainted with his work. He had a great many friends in the world of artists and writers. That was the kind of life he had missed a little in Rome; a writer was at this disadvantage with an artist in a foreign country, that he found fewer people to read and understand and appreciate his work, whereas an artist could always command the sympathy and criticism of his fellow-painters, whether he knew their language or not. Ivy was always glad for Norman's sake when one of these London authors or journalists would come up and begin to talk to him easily and naturally about his work, and ask him when the next book was coming out.

One Sunday when they were thus walking Julian said suddenly:

"Oh, Mummy—there's Eunice! May I go and speak to her?"

Sitting on two chairs and watching the passing throng with attentive eyes were Mrs. Dampier and her little girl. Mrs. Dampier was looking quite charming. Already the English air had brought some of the color back to her face; her fair hair looked brilliant in the strong sharp sunshine, and she wore a pretty frock of very delicate grey. Some of the restless discontent had gone out of her face. She smiled and looked pleased as the Parmeters approached. Geoffrey was the only one who hung back a little, for Eunice was still associated in his mind with tempestuous, disagreeable scenes.

There were questions to be asked, and Mr. Parmeter, who had somehow never seen either Mrs. Dampier or her little girl in Rome, was rather taken with the slight, pretty woman with the large, unquiet grey eyes. But Eunice was frankly overjoyed to see Julian again. She sprang up and ran toward him with outstretched hand. Where did he live? At that big white house over there? Could he really see the sea from his windows? They couldn't see the sea at all from where they lived—the house was quite up at the back. In a few minutes the two children were talking as if they had never been parted. Geoffrey, standing near his parents, watched them with an expression of disgust on his small, chubby face. Why was Ju making such a fuss about that horrid little girl?

They were invited to tea on the following day at the big house in Brunswick Terrace. They all walked as far as the Parmeters' abode together on their homeward way.

"I hope you think Eunice has improved," said

Mrs. Dampier, as they stood there on the pavement before saying good-by. "She isn't nearly such a little savage as she used to be. I've found a very good governess for her, who keeps her in tremendous order. The ayah's gone back, I'm thankful to say."

She still had the habit of criticizing Eunice in front of the child, which Mrs. Parmeter thought must be so bad for her. But Eunice was accustomed to it, and though her small face grew a trifle harder in expression she made no comment.

"Do you really think of settling in Brighton?" asked Mrs. Parmeter.

"It depends on Herbert. I never know, of course, how soon he may take it into his head to send for us. He hates me to be happy away from him."

"He said he missed me very much in his last letter," said Eunice. "I know he wants me to go back, and I shall be glad to go to India. It is ten times nicer than Brighton."

"Well, you won't be asked, in any case," said Mrs. Dampier.

"She's a pretty woman and I should say a very discontented one, Ivy," said Norman, after they had gone into the house. "She's not at all your sort. How did you come to know her?"

"Oh, I met her one day at the Millwards', and then the children played together in the Borghese Gardens. I didn't see much of her, but Eunice and Julian made friends."

Norman said no more and soon forgot about Mrs. Dampier, although he appeared in the drawing-room when she came to tea on the following day. She talked a great deal and was amusing in a sharp, half-malicious way.

The sight of the large, airy, luxurious house filled

her with the same bitter envy as the Roman apartment had done. It was more evident to her than ever that the Parmeters were rich people, who could have everything they might desire for themselves and their children. She learned with some surprise that they were Catholics and she supposed that this accounted in some measure for the rather quiet life they seemed to prefer.

"How perfect it must be for you, always having a settled home where you can all be together," she said, with a pathetic lifting of her eyes to Mr. Parmeter. She found it much easier to deceive men than women on certain points.

"Well, we've been exiles so long that I think we appreciate it more than ever," he said.

"And you find you can work as well here as you did in Rome? I always think environment must make such a difference to a—a poet."

"Oh, I've done the greater part of my work in Brighton," he answered.

He disliked speaking about his work to people unless he knew them very well.

"How *wonderful* it must be! Aren't you awfully proud of him, Mrs. Parmeter?"

Mrs. Parmeter looked up and laughed.

"I've never thought much about it," she said in her careless way.

"My wife sees poems in the making," he explained.

"Do you think either of your boys will take after you?" was her next question.

"Indeed, I hope not!" said Norman Parmeter. "I should severely discourage anything of the kind. We want them to adopt active professions—the army and the navy if possible!"

"Oh, don't let them go into the army. It's such an uncomfortable life. I didn't realize what it

meant when I married Herbert. He's been used to it all his life, and so he can never understand my feelings, and he gets quite angry when I complain of being uncomfortable. But then moving always falls heaviest on the woman, she has to see to the packing up, and making the place look nice." She sighed.

Upstairs in the school-room Julian was very happy. After tea he sat by the window talking to Eunice. She liked to watch the crowds of people moving along the green lawns and on the grey sea-front beyond. She felt that she could never tire of this amusement. Geoffrey, a little sulky at his brother's preoccupation with their guest, sat at the big table playing with his soldiers. He always preferred to play rather than to talk, and of course it would be useless to ask a silly girl like Eunice to come and play soldiers with him. He wondered that Julian should care to sit and listen to the stupid things she said. Geoffrey was beginning to despise girls, and he disliked the feeling of being a little left out.

When they were sent for to go down to the drawing-room they found Mrs. Dampier on the point of departure. She was affectionate in manner to Eunice this afternoon, as if she wanted to counteract any impression of harshness that Mrs. Parmeter might still retain after the unfortunate episode in Rome. And poets, she reflected, were almost always sentimental about children. In her hand she was carrying two little books bound in pale grey boards which Mr. Parmeter had somewhat reluctantly lent to her; she had been very persistent in assuring him of her anxiety to know his work better.

On the whole she was well pleased with her visit. Although no one else had been there, she felt that in some way the Parmeters were important people, even though they went out so little in Brighton. One

or two of her friends had expressed surprise at her knowing them, and she had enjoyed being able to answer: "Oh, I met them in Rome last spring."

Now when she said good-by to Mrs. Parmeter she said in her softest voice: "It's so good of you to let my little Eunice play with your boys. She's such a wild little thing—and I'm sure they will have a good influence over her."

"Well, I don't know about that!" said Norman with a laugh. "But if she likes to come I'm sure we're all delighted to have her."

"It must be lovely having a settled—religion," said Mrs. Dampier, "something you can really feel quite sure about—as I'm told you Catholics do feel about your religion. I wish Herbert cared more about such things—he's quite discouraging." Again she sighed. She felt that life must really be so very easy for Mrs. Parmeter, a simple following of a beaten track, but in an extremely comfortable, opulent manner that obviated any possible fatigue or mortification.

Mrs. Parmeter said quietly:

"Our boys have still got a lot to learn about their religion. They're really only just beginning. We mean to send them to a Catholic school in the autumn." She lightly touched Geoffrey's yellow head.

"Eunice hardly knows how to say her prayers. I must tell her governess to teach her some," said Mrs. Dampier. "I've given up taking her to church with me—she fidgets so."

Eunice colored deeply. She felt ashamed that her ignorance should be thus exposed. When they were out in the street she turned to her mother quite passionately.

"Why did you tell them I didn't know my prayers?

Why don't you teach me some if you want me to know them?"

Mrs. Dampier was for the moment taken aback by this sudden outburst.

"I advise you not to speak to me like that, Eunice," she said, in a cold, threatening voice.

Eunice relapsed into silence. Still, it was very hard that she should be blamed for not knowing things which she had never been taught. She was afraid that when Julian really learned how ignorant she was that he would despise her. This thought had the effect of making her so assiduous at her lessons during the days that followed that Miss Jones, her governess, was able to report at last that her progress was perfectly satisfactory.

* * *

Mrs. Dampier soon began to lead a very animated existence in Brighton. She went out a great deal, to lunch, to tea, to dinner. She had quite a large circle of friends, and was in constant request at bridge-parties. Those were the days before auction-bridge had superseded the old game, which so few remember now. Mrs. Dampier was a good player, but as a rule she held bad cards, and she certainly "dropped" more than she quite liked, for she was already spending a great deal of money. She was always very well dressed now in soft, delicate colors —here she followed quite consciously the very sure taste of Mrs. Parmeter—and they certainly set off the pallor of her skin and hair. People were already beginning to talk about that pretty Mrs. Dampier, whose husband was in India. Others were a trifle shocked at what they called her goings on, for she had already attached one or two young men to her train and was often to be seen walking and driving with them. Eunice was much happier, for she

saw but little of her mother, and now seldom came into collision with her. Miss Jones, who was young and companionable, took a fancy to the child and they became friends. Eunice was really docile with her, and her naughty fits grew rarer; and when Miss Jones discovered the consequences that ensued when they were reported to Mrs. Dampier she took pity on the child and held her peace about them. Eunice was a little astonished when she found that Miss Jones never told her mother of her delinquencies, but it increased her devotion to her. Often on their walks they met Geoffrey and Julian and joined them, sometimes going down to the beach or on to the pier with them. They liked to go to the very end of the pier and look down at the green water moving below the iron steps. It was a disappointment to them that they were not allowed to go down the steps, but this was considered too dangerous. They might fall in, and then who was going to jump in and pull them out?—nurse would inquire in that tone of crushing superiority and omniscience which made Julian and Geoffrey feel very small people indeed. It is true that Eunice, eluding the vigilance of Miss Jones, did succeed in running down to the very bottom of them one day, and was only brought back after a prolonged and heated struggle.

"Why did you go, Eunice? She's sure to tell your mother." Julian could never understand Eunice's wilful rebellions; they seemed so purposeless.

"Oh, no, she won't," said Eunice, "she's not a sneak, I'll say that for her." She glanced carelessly at Miss Jones, who was out of earshot.

Julian had always loved the sea. Even when he was quite a little boy he would creep under the shadow of the breakwaters while the other children were playing, seeming to watch them but in reality

absorbed in contemplating the sea. That was before the journey to Rome, but even now he slipped back quite naturally into the old ways. "It says things to me—it makes me think," he told his mother one day when she questioned him. "It makes my head feel alive." And once he added: "It sings. Not always, but sometimes. It sings not only sounds but *words*." He would frown then, and look puzzled, as if the very uttering of his thoughts made them elusive and unreal.

But Mrs. Parmeter understood. It was the stirring of imagination—perhaps a poet's imagination—the first inception of the creative gift. She wished he could have told her more, but she did not press him. Perhaps he could not well express in concrete terms those strange words that the sea sang to him.

Now, when he sat there, unwilling to play on those hot summer evenings, Eunice often came and joined him. He was enchanted with the beauty of the scene and said very little; his mind was quietly occupied gathering impressions. The sea was colored like milk, and when the sun set behind Worthing both sea and sand, as well as the flaming sky, became touched to brilliant tones of rose-pink and gold. The trawlers beyond the pier, with their heavy, somnolent-looking red sails that scarcely stirred in the breeze, were reflected in deep purple tones in the pale water. Sometimes the little steamer that left the pier at intervals throughout the day to take passengers for an hour's trip, went by; sometimes a collier, like a black smudge low in the water, passed on its way to Shoreham. The stony beach dipped down, not to blue sea, but to a long and wide stretch of sand, ribbed and golden, with wonderful little pools shining here and there like fairy lakes. Everything then was full of light, brilliant, colored light, that flooded the sky and the sands and the sea.

They were all like cups filled to overflowing with it, yet thirstily drinking up more and more of its shining splendor. The sea sang no songs to him then; its only sound was where it touched the sand with a faint lisping whisper. It wanted, Julian felt, to share the silence of the sky, dumb with its own beauty. When Geoffrey called to him to come and help him build a fortress in the sand he would go reluctantly as if only half awake.

Yet all the time he had been aware of Geoffrey, of that sturdy, bare-legged figure with the sunburned face and chest and powerful little arms. Always in after life he could visualize that lithe, leaping figure with its yellow hair and eyes as blue as the sea.

Thus the summer passed very pleasantly to the three children, and even Geoffrey grew accustomed to having Eunice so constantly with them that she almost seemed like a little sister. Still, she was always Julian's friend, not his. These things are clearly defined in the nursery. And it was Julian who used to try sometimes to picture what it would be like when Eunice vanished with her mother and returned to the father she adored in India. But here imagination failed him and the effort was such a painful one that he wisely renounced it.

Eunice spoke so lightly of going away, quite as if she would have no regret at all at leaving them. She wanted, she said, to go back to her father. She liked India much better than Brighton. She had a pony to ride, and she liked riding with her father in the early morning. She was a roving, restless little mortal, and her lot was cast in places that Julian could form no mental picture of at all. Eunice's own memories of India were exceedingly sketchy, and she could really give him no very definite idea of it. When he pressed her she said she couldn't remember.

"I'm sure you can if you try," said Julian.

But Eunice shook back her rebellious gipsy curls.

"You silly boy," she said. "If I say I can't, I can't!"

CHAPTER X

JULIAN, on looking back upon the complete picture of his childhood, which often in later years would seem to him rather like an overlong, overelaborated motion-picture play, could always tell the date of the inception of those profound changes which seemed to impose themselves so suddenly on their steady uneventful life.

It was the day when he was not very well, was suffering from a cold that made his mother deem it wiser to keep him indoors, although not in bed. The day was cold, for it was then October, and Geoffrey had to go for the afternoon walk without him.

Mrs. Parmeter brought Julian down to the back drawing-room, and he lay on the sofa covered up with rugs beside a generous fire of coal and logs of wood. A table with some books and picture-papers was placed near him, but his cold had made him drowsy and a little feverish, and he did not feel inclined to read. Sometimes Mrs. Parmeter came in to look at him, to make up the fire, or to bring him something cool to drink.

As he lay there he was suddenly aroused by a sound of footsteps on the stairs, then the door was opened and he heard a rustle of silken skirts and a voice exclaimed:

"Dear Mrs. Parmeter—I've come to ask your advice. I've had a most disturbing letter from Herbert!"

It was Mrs. Dampier's voice, and Julian quickly recognized it, although he could not see her, for the heavy curtains were drawn between the two rooms to-day to keep the draught from him.

He had heard so much of Major Dampier from Eunice, who worshipped the father whose memory was now growing a little dim, that he had formed a wonderful mental picture of him. Sometimes when she spoke to him he would visualize a marvelous prince-like figure clad in armor, confusing him with all his favorite heroes, Alfred the Great, Richard Cœur de Lion, and the Black Prince. Sometimes it would be a man in a resplendent uniform with medals on his breast, riding the grey charger of which Eunice had spoken. But when Mrs. Dampier spoke of "Herbert" in a light, contemptuous tone he felt almost indignant, because it seemed as if she had dimmed some of those shining qualities with which his imagination had invested this man, whom he had never seen, so that his idol became for the moment less glorious.

He heard his mother make a conventional reply, and then say:

"But do tell me what has happened?"

"He knows I am always ill in India," said Mrs. Dampier, in quite a shrill, angry voice. "And I can't take Eunice back—she's too old to be left to ayahs and native servants, and English nurses are such an expense!"

"Do you mean that Major Dampier wants you to go back to India?" said Mrs. Parmeter, very quietly.

As he listened to the two women talking, without being able to see their faces, Julian could picture exactly how his mother looked. Very quiet, and calm, and as if she must be older and wiser, although

she was several years younger than Mrs. Dampier and looked almost like a girl beside her.

"He has left me no choice at all!" cried Mrs. Dampier in still shriller and more indignant tones. "He says I am to go not later than next month. He is so stingy—that is what is the matter with him—and he won't afford the expense of keeping up two houses. Of course, if I were only independent I should laugh in his face."

Julian felt somehow that his mother would not approve of this kind of talk; she would look quietly disapproving, but patient, as she did when Geoffrey was obstinately naughty.

He could almost see her sitting there on the sofa, very motionless, with her hands in her lap.

"Indeed I should laugh now—if it were not for Eunice. I have simply heaps of friends with whom I could stay, but one can't drag a child about." There was something like a challenge now in that high-pitched, clear voice. "Children tie you so, don't they, Mrs. Parmeter? I'm sure I never wanted one! It's so different for you, with plenty of money and a lovely home and a husband who doesn't ask you to do impossible things. But I soon found out how utterly selfish Herbert was. It was a very bitter disillusion, I can tell you."

"Oh, but can't you really take Eunice back with you? Lots of children—especially little girls—stay in India now until they are eight. Why don't you take Miss Jones? She seems such a nice girl. . . "

There was a note of protest in Mrs. Parmeter's gentle, reasonable voice. It would be terrible, she felt, to choose thus between husband and child. To choose, for instance, between Norman—and Julian.

"My dear Mrs. Parmeter, you've no idea what a bore it would be. She would probably get engaged on the voyage out and leave me in the lurch at

Bombay. It happens in nine cases out of ten. No, I shall certainly leave Eunice behind, if it's only to punish Herbert. And if I take her I should have no excuse for coming home next year in the hot weather. Herbert is perfectly brutal and more selfish than you can imagine. He knows I am happy here and have heaps of friends, and he hates to think I am enjoying myself away from him. He says I spend too much and he has sent me a miserable cheque for my outfit and passage. I shall arrive in India with two frocks and one pair of shoes and the hats I've been wearing all the summer."

"But where shall you leave Eunice?" said Mrs. Parmeter. "She's too young to go to school. Have you any relations who can take her?"

She suddenly remembered that she had never heard Mrs. Dampier allude to any relations of her own. She always said, however, that she didn't hit it off with her husband's people.

"I've one sister, but I couldn't possibly ask her to have her," said Mrs. Dampier, "she's married to a parson in a northern manufacturing town, and they've got swarms of children of their own and hardly any money."

Mrs. Parmeter felt as if her own little trials seemed by contrast trivial and unimportant. Norman's queer transitory jealousy of his gifted little son, Julian's odd way of brooding secretly, Geoffrey's occasional fits of stormy rebellion—nothing really of any gravity.

"Have you made any plans for leaving here?" she asked.

"No, Herbert has made them all. He's settled on the steamer—it goes next month and it's horribly small and poky. He might at least have let me travel by P & O. He's done that on purpose—he

is always jealous and suspicious, and afraid that I shall enjoy myself."

"You haven't much time, then, to make arrangements for Eunice," said Mrs. Parmeter.

Her heart ached with compassion for the unwanted little girl, who seemed also to be a bone of contention between her parents.

"No, and I simply can't think what on earth to do with her. Unless—" There was a pause during which Julian, lying in the next room, held his breath to listen—"unless you can help me."

There was a long silence, during which Julian had time to grasp the fact that he was overhearing a real grown-up conversation, probably not intended for his ears at all. Mrs. Dampier sounded "naughty" in nursery parlance; the passionate anger of her voice, the harsh things she said of another person, would certainly have been accounted naughty when judged by rigorous nursery standards. The heat of the fire, the delicious warmth and comfort which surrounded him, were beginning to make Julian feel a little drowsy, but the absorbing interest of the conversation kept him awake. He understood enough to assure himself that Eunice's very future was at stake. She might go away from Brighton altogether; it might even be that she would return to India.

At last he heard Mrs. Dampier say, in a changed rather strained voice, almost as if she found some difficulty in uttering the words:

"Do you think you could possibly persuade Mr. Parmeter to let you have her here? You see, I know you, and she's so fond of your little boys—and I feel that she would be happy here."

It sounded almost like the voice in which you prayed. . . Perhaps Mrs. Dampier had been praying. His childish mind leaped to the conclusion that

such a prayer could not be refused. Eunice would come here to live with them. They would see her every day—at walks, at meals. Nurse would put her to bed. Mummy would go in and tuck her up and kiss her good night. It was a wonderful prospect, and yet it made him feel timid and afraid. He would want always to be good if Eunice were there. He would hate her to see him quarreling with Geoffrey. And it wasn't always easy to avoid quarreling with Geoffrey in some of his moods. It was difficult to keep good all day—even for one day.

"Of course, I know she's a very troublesome child," continued Mrs. Dampier, more fretfully. "It is because Herbert has spoiled her so, and he could never bear me to punish her. But she's ever so much better since I've had her to myself and been able to whip her when it was necessary."

"I never whip my children," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"You must be more patient than I am, then," said Mrs. Dampier, with a harsh little laugh. "Still, I should have thought boys were harder to manage than girls. Your Julian, for instance—he doesn't look as if he would be an easy child to manage!"

Mrs. Parmeter rose and quietly closed the door as if suddenly remembering that Julian was lying just beyond the heavy curtains that divided the two rooms and could probably hear a good deal that was being said. He was bitterly disappointed to think he would not now hear what was decided about Eunice. And the conversation was becoming every moment more thrillingly interesting; he longed to know what reply his mother would make to that last observation about himself.

Then his mind traveled away from this more personal issue, and he contemplated again the wonderful possibility of having Eunice to live with them. Quite alone, without her mother, perhaps even without

Miss Jones. Would she be happy with them quite alone, without anybody who belonged to her? Would she miss Mrs. Dampier? But she would have Mummy instead. And Mummy would surely make up for many Mrs. Dampiers!

When Mrs. Parmeter had quietly closed the door she rang the bell for tea, and then went back to her seat on the sofa. This little action had provided her with breathing space, and now she was able coldly to consider this suggestion of Mrs. Dampier's. To her it was so extraordinary as to be almost incredible that Mrs. Dampier should wish to leave Eunice in their care, regardless of the difference in religion. It would have been an impossibility for Mrs. Parmeter to have left her own children in the care of Protestants should a hard fate have decreed that she must separate herself from them.

Mrs. Dampier's voice broke the silence on a shrill, harsh note.

"I suppose you don't care for the idea? Or do you feel that Mr. Parmeter would object? This is such a large house"—looking round the spacious, luxurious room half resentfully—"I'm sure Eunice would take up very little room. He would really hardly know there was another child in the house."

Mrs. Parmeter was one of those women who passionately love their own homes. She liked the hidden side of her life, the hours spent with husband and children, the beautiful seclusion of it. She had often hoped that it might go on in this way without change. Change, she felt, could easily bring suffering. She had never even wished for more fame for Norman, because she felt that it might force them to come out more prominently into the world, thus losing something of the perfection of their life together. And now she shrank from the thought of so unnecessary a change as this bringing of a little

girl—almost a stranger to them—into their home. She felt that Eunice would almost inevitably take away something of its peace. Although she was only seven years old, she was a tempestuous, passionate creature, undisciplined and wild. She might have a bad influence upon the twins, imbuing them with strange notions. She was a child who never hesitated to deceive her mother in order to avoid punishment. Even the boys had heard her lie and lie deliberately. If Mrs. Parmeter had been left to herself she would quite certainly have refused to take Eunice under her charge in this way. She tried to answer without betraying any signs of this disinclination.

"I should have, of course, to think it over and consult Norman. He always settles everything," she said.

She gave her guest a cup of tea. Then she filled another cup, put some bread-and-butter and cake on a plate, and went toward the door.

"Julian isn't very well to-day. He's lying down in the next room," she explained.

She took Julian his tea in that quietly maternal way of hers, solicitous without being in the least fussy or over-indulgent. Then she came back, closing the door quietly after her, to the boy's great disappointment. He had so hoped that she might forget and leave it open.

The sight of him, however, had made her suddenly aware that Julian would be very happy if Eunice were to come to live with them. He was very fond of his little playmate. The question, however, was not so much whether it would contribute to his happiness as whether it would be quite good for him in other respects. She had an idea that he might let himself be influenced by Eunice in curious, unexpected ways.

"If you could persuade him, I can't tell you how eternally grateful I should be," said Mrs. Dampier. "If I were not so scared of him I should like to discuss it with him myself. But he is far too clever for me."

Mrs. Parmeter never discussed her husband with other people, and she disliked even this casual criticism of him. Her loyalty had a delicate, fastidious quality. She never spoke of him easily, or said: "Norman says. Norman does." . . She kept him, as it were, in a niche, never discussing him or his work unless she could not help it.

Presently she said:

"You have not forgotten, have you, that this is a Catholic house?"

"Why what difference could that possibly make?" inquired Mrs. Dampier, in surprise.

"Well, you see, it would mean that Eunice would be brought up in a Catholic atmosphere just at a very susceptible age. It would be impossible for us to keep her apart from Catholic influence. And then if anything happened—later on, when she grew older—and she wished to become a Catholic herself, you might blame us."

"Oh, I should never do that!" cried Mrs. Dampier eagerly, "I'm very broad-minded myself, and I always think one religion's quite as good as another. I dare say if I had been brought up a Catholic myself I should have been quite a good one. But you needn't be afraid of Eunice—she isn't at all a pious child—and I had to insist upon Miss Jones' teaching her to say some prayers. I believe she had quite a struggle with her at first. Besides, lots of people in India send their children home to convents to be educated. They find the nuns are so careful and conscientious and kind to them. I knew two girls who were brought up at a convent for years. One

changed her religion and the other didn't, but the parents didn't mind at all. People learn to look at things differently in India. Quite a number of English people become Buddhists and Theosophists out there, and hardly any one thinks any the worse of them! Why should they, if it makes them happy? I don't think religion's worth making any fuss about myself, though I can't let Eunice grow up quite a little heathen, can I?"

Mrs. Dampier looked very pretty as she said this, and so young, almost like a child with a child's petulance and irresponsibility, that one could almost forget that she was a woman of the world with a full and rather tragic experience of life.

"But Major Dampier? Would he care for her to run the risk?" said Mrs. Parmeter. "Surely you mean to consult him?"

"He is to blame for separating me from Eunice. He says if I don't take her back with me that I'm to make what he calls suitable arrangements for her. That means fresh air, plenty of milk and good food, warm baths, proper clothing. Do you suppose he even thinks about the soul of a child of seven?"

Those last words struck a responsive chord in the heart of Ivy Parmeter. It vibrated now with a certain emotion. She saw, as if with sudden, new vision, the neglected little soul of Eunice Dampier appealing to her for help. Up till that moment she had not thought of the matter in this intimate, spiritual light.

She could do more than feed and clothe and educate Eunice. She could teach her at least the elements of other things. She could guard her, and she could bring a measure of happiness into her life which could not so far have been a very happy one.

"If you really mean it—if you are really serious

—I will ask Norman," she said, with the air of one who has made a great decision.

Mrs. Dampier put down her cup, sprang to her feet, and, going impulsively across to where Mrs. Parmeter was sitting, embraced her.

"Dear Mrs. Parmeter, how can I thank you? For, of course, if *you* are in favor of it, Mr. Parmeter will consent."

Eunice, she reflected, would be in clover if the plan materialized. Any expenses that would be incurred would be merely nominal. And she had dreaded having to send the child to the kind of cheap school that was all they could afford, or to one of those dreary homes where elderly impecunious spinsters "take" the forlorn children of Anglo-Indian parents. The religious question troubled her not at all. She was extraordinarily ignorant of the Catholic religion beyond the fact that its votaries "fasted" on Fridays. She only wanted to leave Eunice in opulent and comfortable surroundings.

Mrs. Parmeter, touched a little by the outburst of affection and emotion that had prompted this unexpected embrace, now clearly visualized her own duty toward Eunice.

It was almost as if the child were standing in front of her, making an intimate appeal to something that was passionately maternal within her.

"I hope he will consent," she said quietly.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN her guest had gone, Mrs. Parmeter suddenly remembered the presence of Julian. She opened the door softly and entered the room, fearing that he might have fallen asleep and that her

movement might wake him. But he was sitting up on the sofa, his face a little flushed and his eyes shining.

"Oh, Mummy, will she come here? Did you say you would have her?"

"Oh, I didn't think you could hear. You shouldn't have listened, Julian," she answered reproachfully.

"I couldn't help hearing till you shut the door. And it was so inter*rust*ing."

"You mustn't talk about it yet to any one. Don't say anything to Geoff or nurse. You see I must ask father."

Julian's face fell a little. "He won't want her," he said.

"Why, what makes you think that?"

"Something inside me says so."

"And do you want her so very much, Ju?"

"Oh, Mum, it would be lovely, having her. To see her every day instead of just going for walks or to tea sometimes." His face kindled.

She bent down and kissed him. "I must talk it over with father. And you won't say a word—even to Eunice herself?"

"Not one little word. And Geoff would never guess, would he?"

Presently she took Julian up to the schoolroom and handed him over to the charge of the nurse, who had returned some time before with Geoffrey. The schoolroom tea was just over. Mrs. Parmeter said to the nurse:

"I think you'd better put Julian to bed now, nurse. I'll come in presently. He's still a little feverish."

She went upstairs to the big attic room at the top of the house, which Norman had made his study long ago when the twins were small and he had wanted to be out of sound of their shrill crying and pattering feet. The dark-paneled walls were lined with books

almost up to the sloping ceiling. There were two big windows overlooking the sea from what seemed to be a great height. Outside one of the windows there was a small balcony, where Norman liked to sit in fine sunny weather. He had a fixed belief that he wrote all his best poetry when the sound of the sea was in his ears.

Mrs. Parmeter found him now sitting at his immense flat table on which stood an electric lamp with a green shade. He was correcting some proofs. His finely-chiseled face—so like Julian's—looked unusually handsome in the faint, colored light that partially illuminated it.

"Well, Ivy, darling?" he said putting down his pen.

"I've had a visitor," she said. "It was Mrs. Dampier. She stayed a long time . . . She's going back to India very soon. Major Dampier insists upon it."

"About time, too. Dampier should have put his foot down long ago." He had heard sinister rumors of her debts in Brighton, her losses at bridge, and he had learnt to pity her absent, much-abused husband, and to think there was perhaps something to be said for him.

"Well, he's put it down now to some purpose. He's even fixed on the steamer she is to go out in. And she wants us—to have Eunice here.

As she said this she looked across the table at Norman.

He gazed at her in astonishment—an astonishment that seemed to hold something of anger.

"My dear—I hope you refused! The impertinence of asking you to burden yourself with that brat!"

"Indeed, I didn't refuse, Norman. I said I would consult you."

"So as to shift the disagreeable task of refusing upon me? Well, my back is broad enough, I suppose." His face wore that slightly ironic smile she knew so well, and which betokened annoyance, though not of a very irreparable kind.

Mrs. Parmeter stirred in the big leather armchair.

"But, Norman, I don't want any one to refuse. I should like to have the child here."

"Nonsense, Ivy. Haven't you enough with those two great boys? The Dampier's been working on your feelings. She'd far better send that little minx to a good school."

"But I don't like to think of a child—a little girl—being left to strangers."

"Oh, you've got ridiculous sentimental notions from reading 'Baa, baa, Black Sheep'!"

"It isn't only that, but I think it would be for Eunice's good. She would have a simple, natural, ordered life with us—such as she's never had, poor child. Whipped one day and stuffed with sweets the next. And the boys would like a little playmate—at least, I know Julian would."

"You've already sounded Ju?" he inquired, drawing his fine black brows together.

"He was in the back drawing-room. He's got a cold, you know. And he heard part—not all."

"So I'm to do what Julian wishes?"

"Oh, you know I don't mean that, Norman. But I promise never to let her get in your way. You'll really hardly know there's another child in the house." She repeated unconsciously Mrs. Dampier's own words.

Norman turned over the little heap of proofs. "They *are* good, you know, Ivy," he said. There was no conceit in his voice, only the artist's consciousness of work well done.

"I'm sure they are," she said, "I want 'The Vision of Saints' to make you famous."

"No," he said, "if I'd been going to win fame I should have accomplished it before now. The laurels are for the young poets—not the old ones."

"You're not old," she reminded him.

"Too old for that, anyhow. Don't let Julian be a poet, Ivy—it's a very discouraging life."

"You've had nice moments, though, Norman," she said.

"Thanks chiefly to you."

"No—I mean from the people whose opinion was really worth having. That doesn't always happen to the best sellers, you know."

It was difficult to return to the subject of Eunice, and yet something must be settled and settled quickly. Major Dampier's peremptory instructions left little scope for procrastination.

"You haven't told me yet if I may have Eunice?"

"I don't want you to be burdened with such a responsibility. It wouldn't be fair. She might be ill—she might die. Lots of things might happen. And she isn't a very attractive child, is she, Ivy?"

"I do like her and I'm sorry for her. She hasn't had a chance of happiness. Do let me try, Norman."

"Well, I suppose you must have her if you want her," he said at last, with some reluctance.

"But not if you would hate it," she put in quickly.

"Oh, I shan't hate it. In any case, we might give it a trial and if it doesn't work we can dissolve the arrangement."

"Oh, thank you, Norman. I'm sure it'll be a great relief to Mrs. Dampier."

"No doubt of that," he said sarcastically; "she'll always be one to shift her responsibilities. Why doesn't she take her back to India with her?"

"She doesn't seem to want to. She's afraid that Major Dampier won't let her come home in the hot weather if Eunice is with her. You see, she can make the child an excuse. . . "

"Dampier will see through that, I should hope. They don't seem to be a very united couple."

"No—I'm afraid they're not."

She went softly away for now his attention was obviously straying to the work in hand. When she was back in the drawing-room she drew aside the curtain and looked out seaward. She could hear the sea very plainly, its crisp, sharp movement backward over the stony beach; then the heavy plunge forward of breaking waves. The double melody of it soothed her; she could have stood there for hours listening.

She wondered if she had not been a little selfish in imposing her will upon Norman's in this matter of Eunice's coming. But if he had been really averse to the plan he would certainly have said so. He would not have given in despite all her pleading. Besides, it could make no very great difference to him. He was not over-fond of children, though she knew that he had wished for a little daughter, and he never saw a great deal of the two boys. Sometimes, indeed, she had wished that he would occupy himself a little more with them, instead of leaving them so completely to her. They were getting big and needed perhaps a man's influence, a man's view of things.

It would give Julian a great deal of pleasure and happiness to have Eunice there—of that she felt quite sure. But she was not really thinking so much of Julian as of Eunice herself. The child was so forlorn and spiritually so uncared-for. She was leading the kind of life that is utterly detrimental to

the formation of a frank and honorable character. Already she showed quite a talent for intrigue, and she had become wary and vigilant, watching her mother's moods, eluding her observation when the moment seemed inauspicious, and lying unblushingly about her own small misdemeanors. And her very training was fostering this tendency in Eunice. The child was afraid of her mother and endeavored deliberately to circumvent her. It was like a little duel between two clever, well-matched opponents. But Mrs. Dampier was not easily fooled, and it was impossible for a child of seven to be continually on her guard.

Julian had informed his mother of a good deal that passed; he was in Eunice's confidence, and he was able to see with a child's quick penetration that she was not wholly to blame.

Mrs. Parmeter had a little secret fear of the deeper intimacy that must arise between the children. Eunice would become in time almost like their own sister. She was the kind of child that other children follow. In games she constantly took the lead. And she might influence the boys in other ways, diminish perhaps their sense of truthfulness, their frankness, their readiness to acknowledge their own faults. But Mrs. Parmeter put those thoughts from her. Eunice was only seven, and it was not too late to counteract the evils of her early education. She sat down that very evening and wrote a little note to Mrs. Dampier, telling her that she and her husband had talked the matter over and would be delighted to receive Eunice, at any rate for the winter. If the plan seemed to be successful there was no reason why it should not continue beyond that time, but she thought it would be well for both sides to make a preliminary trial of it.

CHAPTER XII

VERY clearly did Julian's memory retain those impressions infused by the departure of Mrs. Dampier for India—a name that always held a mysterious fascination for him as of a country strangely peopled with persons resembling Eunice's ayah, and where camels and elephants were at least as common as horses were in Brighton.

Eunice went away with her mother before the event; once she sent Julian an ill-written little letter from London. When she returned to Brighton to take up her abode in Brunswick Terrace her mother was no longer with her and she was accompanied on her journey by Miss Jones.

He could remember her coming into the house while the cab still stood in the road, and her small trunks were being brought into the hall. Miss Jones, who was in command of the situation, directed the man, and subsequently paid him his fare. Mrs. Parmeter with the twins had come downstairs to greet their little visitor, and Julian became instantly aware of a disappointingly changed Eunice. She looked such a small, solitary little figure in her brown traveling-coat with its big collar of dark fur. She was cold and looked pinched and miserable and as if she wanted very badly to cry. She went up to the schoolroom with them almost at once, and then Mrs. Parmeter showed her the little room next to that of nurse where she would sleep. It looked very pretty with its fresh chintzes and curtains and its little white crib, and a new blue carpet on the floor. Its one window looked seaward, which would surely please her, Julian felt, but after one careless preoccupied glance Eunice made no comment at all. She seemed to be depressed rather than exhilarated by her new surroundings.

This sense of change in her made Julian feel as if their old intimacy had gone past recovery; it made him nervous and silent in her presence. Geoffrey was more at his ease, simply because he didn't care particularly whether Eunice were happy or not; he had resented her coming, aware of a half-jealous anger that she should be there continually usurping so much of Julian's attention. But Julian had looked forward to her coming with an eagerness that dominated him, and he felt at first a disappointment that actually hurt him, because she was so silent and changed and to all appearances so sad. To be glad oneself with a sharp profound joy and then to find that gladness unshared by the person whose presence has promoted it must always be a bitter experience, whether it comes in childhood, with its inability to analyze, or in later years, when happiness has necessarily lost its first perfect splendor. Julian waited, watching for the return of the gay, vivid, daring Eunice whom he had known and loved, and puzzled his little head over because she seemed to him a being of quite another sphere.

"She's a stick," announced Geoffrey, when the boys were preparing to go to bed that evening and he had stepped across into Julian's room as he nearly always did. "She can't say 'Bo' to a goose. And we used to call her naughty."

"It's because she isn't happy," said Julian, defending her.

"She ought to be happy, then. She ought to be glad to come here. I'm sure nobody wanted her to come!"

"She misses her mother," said Julian simply.

"Rot! She never hardly saw her."

"That isn't the same as never seeing her—perhaps for a whole year," said Julian, who had given the position his deep, unbiased consideration.

"No,—worse luck!" said Geoffrey. "I wonder why they sent her here."

"Because she knows us. We're her friends," said Julian.

"Speak for yourself," said Geoffrey, "I'm not friends with her."

There was a short silence. Julian was made unhappy by this curious hostility on the part of his brother. Didn't any one want her, then? Did she realize it? And was this the cause of her present inexplicable sadness?

Julian said at last:

"I think she's unhappy because she didn't go back to India. She wanted to see her father again. And then she's been there before—it was her home. She liked it."

"As if I didn't know that! She swanks enough about it!"

But to Julian the very fact that Eunice had been in India, had traversed those several seas depicted on the map, and had a father in that strange far land, seemed to surround her with a halo of romance. It gave color and movement to her life. He could have envied her that rich, varied experience, so unlike his own.

One morning soon after her arrival he found her studying the map in the schoolroom. She had crept in there alone, had pulled out a big heavy atlas and was poring over the Eastern Hemisphere. When he came in she looked up almost guiltily, as if she were ashamed at his discovering her thus occupied.

He came slowly up to the table, his eyes fixed upon her.

"Eunice, why didn't you ask me? I would have got it out for you."

"I thought you'd laugh," she said uneasily.

He sat down by her side.

"Is it to see where Mrs. Dampier's going?"

"Yes," she said. Her eyes swam with sudden tears. Julian looked away, as if he ought not to have seen them.

"Mayn't I help?" he said timidly.

Two brown heads were now bent over the big outspread book. Julian's straight dark hair touched Eunice's gipsy curls.

"She went as far as this by train," said Eunice, pointing to the port of Marseilles. "I'm to have a letter or postcard from there. Then the ship will stop there." Her small finger pointed now to Malta. "I can just remember going there. And here's the beginning of the Suez Canal. You see the desert then, and camels and flamingoes and lots of wild white birds." Her voice was quietly reflective. "Then the Red Sea, where Pharao's hosts were drowned. There was a man on board ship coming home who told me that. Here's Aden—papa lived at Aden once, before I was born. You don't stop after that till you come to Bombay."

"How well you know it, Eunice," he said in admiration.

"Miss Jones showed me—I asked her to. But I wanted to go over it again so as not to forget." Her hand traced a line across the Indian Ocean. "I wish I had a map of my own—to hang up in my room. Then I could look at it every day."

"Would it make you happy again, Eunice?" he asked. Greatly daring he added: "I do so want you to be happy."

She shook her head.

"Not yet—I couldn't be happy yet."

"You don't want to be?"

She said slowly: "Would you be happy if your mother went away and left you?" At the back of all her present misery there was an injured feeling.

He considered the point. "No, but I shouldn't let her know. I think I'd like her to believe that I was happy."

"She wouldn't believe it," said Eunice, with quiet finality.

"But it's not because you hate being here with us?" he asked.

"What a silly question to ask! You are all very kind." There was a touch of the old Eunice, a trifle arrogant and contemptuous.

"*We* are happy to have you," he said. He wanted her to be quite sure of this. It must hurt to feel—as she certainly did—that her mother didn't want her, had left her behind, had denied her that beautiful journey she had just traced upon the map.

"Geoffrey isn't," said Eunice.

"How—how—" he stammered, "can you say such a thing as that?"

All the same, he had been dreadfully afraid that she would, sooner or later, make the discovery.

"Girls always know," she answered.

"But he does like you to be here—I know he does." He still believed that Geoffrey's dislike was a mere pretence, arising from a desire to dissociate himself from the prevalent and more conventional views.

"You ask him!" she flung back her little head. There was a note of anger as well as of injured pride in her voice. "And I don't care—I don't care a bit! Some day I mean to tell him so!"

It would serve Geoffrey right, Julian thought, if she did. . . He didn't envy him just then, though an instinct of loyalty was urging him to defend his brother. Before he could find adequate words she went on speaking in a sharp, decisive way.

"You're ever so much nicer. I always liked you best, even the first day!"

"Oh, but I'm not nicer than Geoffrey. He's ever so much cleverer than I am," he said.

Eunice shrugged her shoulders. She was looking very pretty then in a vivid, fiery way. The discussion had broken down her self-restraint, her silence. But her superior manner, which had reasserted itself, made Julian feel stupid and humble; as a slow, quiet child will sometimes feel in the presence of a brilliant companion. Eunice was years older than the Parmeter boys in her experience of life. Her outlook was quite different from theirs. She had never led a quiet nor a settled existence; always there had been movement, adventures of a kind. And, although Julian did not put it into so many words, he had a vague feeling that she had received in exchange for this perpetual movement, this constant excitement of not knowing quite what was to happen next, the dulness of their own quiet, uneventful life. He and Geoffrey could tell pretty well on getting up in the morning exactly what would happen during the day. Their lives were arranged for them in an ordered, agreeable routine of lessons, play, meals, sleep, with fixed times for prayers and for being with their parents. Even when they had lived in Rome the routine had always been strictly adhered to. He could contrast their portion with Eunice's and feel that it was in some ways an inadequate substitute, and that even the very order and regularity of it all might be pressing upon her with a certain arbitrary sense of restraint. She perhaps even missed those glorious opportunities of wrong-doing and the subsequent delicious occasions of deception and intrigue in order to conceal it, that had made her life with her mother a perpetual adventure. Mrs. Dampier stood for many things in Eunice's life—gay, bright, exciting changes, such as paying visits to strange houses, glimpses of London and of the country,

fresh people, fresh faces, with but few opportunities for settling down to regular lessons. If her hasty temper imposed upon Eunice less pleasant interludes, these had, at least, the merit of being well paid for. It was wonderful, too, how quickly she forgot those pains and penalties.

But as the days wore on and she began lessons again with Miss Jones while Julian and Geoffrey went daily to school, there was a great improvement in the child's spirits. Letting his mother into the secret, Julian spent his pocket-money in buying a map of the world to hang up in Eunice's room. Whether it was good for her to dwell so persistently upon the journey, almost as if she were making it herself in imagination, Mrs. Parmeter was not quite sure; but, like Julian, she felt anxious to do everything she could to restore the little girl's happiness and tranquillity, and to make that sore heart less sore.

Mrs. Parmeter was very kind to Eunice, often going up to the schoolroom to talk to her, and see how she was getting on. Sometimes in the afternoon she would take her driving with her. But they made at first little progress in friendship, and Eunice seemed to hold herself aloof, perhaps from some obscure sense of loyalty toward that vanished mother. It is true that the letters and postcards did not come very regularly, for Mrs. Dampier was enjoying the voyage as a last burst of freedom before "going back to prison," as she sometimes frankly called it. She had scant leisure to think of her little girl except to congratulate herself upon the easy and admirable manner in which she had shifted the care of her to others. There was a kind of genius in accomplishing a thing like that, almost as it were with one wave of the wand. The only detail that ever troubled her was the fact that the Parmeters

were Roman Catholics, although at the time she had expressed an entire indifference to it. But she knew Major Dampier would almost certainly object, and during the voyage she debated whether it would be diplomatic to tell him or not. By the time she had reached Bombay the question was decided in the negative; he was to be kept in ignorance. . . Much of her time on board ship was taken up in making those startling changes of toilette which amazed as well as amused her fellow-passengers. During the voyage she had three men at her feet—an Indian civilian, grey and austere; a young and pink subaltern, whose knowledge of life, acquired in a country parsonage, was practically *nil;* and Sir Chandos Mirton, who had lately lost his wife and had left three sons at school in England. He found Mrs. Dampier's attentive sympathy very consoling. Thus her hands were full and the voyage proved a thrilling and exciting one, much more so than the route and ship, so carefully selected by Major Dampier on account of its economy, had seemed to promise. People on board who did not know Major Dampier were inclined to pity him, and to prophesy that sooner or later the marriage would end disastrously.

CHAPTER XIII

EUNICE had a cold and was being kept indoors. She was a restless little creature, and, since she was so unaccustomed to restraint of any kind, Mrs. Parmeter did not attempt to keep her entirely in the schoolroom, but allowed her to roam about the house as long as she kept out of draughts.

Geoffrey grumbled at this unnatural liberty, which he greatly desired to share, especially during those

hours which should naturally have been devoted to preparation for the next day's work. But Julian accepted it as part of the inevitable difference that must always characterize their respective lives; he had little wish to follow Eunice into those paths of larger freedom.

"You see, she isn't like us. This isn't her real home," he told his brother by way of explanation.

"I don't see why she should be treated differently and always have her own way when we're not allowed to," said Geoffrey, who disliked to contemplate the bestowal of such unusual privileges, accepted too in a careless, taken-for-granted kind of way. "We have to stay in this beastly hole of a schoolroom, so why shouldn't she?"

"Because she's a girl, for one thing."

"Girls ought to be kept much more strictly than boys."

Eunice sat for a long time by the window in her own room, where a bright fire had been lit, perhaps with the hope that she might remain there quietly. The sea looked very grey and angry to-day under a heavy, lowering sky that promised rain. A wind was blowing and the crowds of people walking on the Front presented slanting silhouettes that suggested an ineffectual struggle against the elements; it gave them, Eunice thought, a certain undignified appearance. The Lawns, which were now closed to the public, looked dark and sodden, and had lost their fresh emerald tints.

But Eunice soon grew tired of sitting still, especially when Julian was not there to talk to her. It came into her mind that she had not yet explored the whole of the house, nor had she yet penetrated to the top floor of all, where was situated that mysterious, almost inaccessible, domain called "father's study." She had never been farther than the foot

of that last long flight of stairs which toward the end curved abruptly out of sight into a region of seemingly perpetual twilight. She would make the expedition now, for, although she was slightly in awe of Mr. Parmeter, he had never spoken to her except in the kindest of voices.

Light as a fairy, she mounted the stairs. There was always something dainty and graceful about Eunice. She never performed rough or clumsy actions, but seemed always to have perfect control over her slight, lissom body. Even when she was shy and nervous she was never awkward, as Julian sometimes was in his absent-minded forgetfulness. She climbed the last flight and found herself confronted with a number of doors all securely shut, and offering no solution as to the land she wished to discover. But on reflection she decided that the door to the left would certainly lead to a front room and at least from there she would obtain a better view of the sea and the long grey windy Front. She opened the door cautiously and then stood for a moment astonished and a little embarrassed upon the threshold.

"Come in," said Mr. Parmeter.

He sat facing the door at a large table covered with papers. The final proofs of "The Vision of Saints" had reached him that afternoon, and he was going through them very carefully for that last important revision. But in spite of the interruption his face softened a little as the child approached.

"Sit down and don't talk for a few minutes," he said.

Eunice sat down and looked about her. She had never lived among books, for Mrs. Dampier had seldom found time for reading, beyond a perfunctory glance through the new novels that were being talked about. Hers was not a mentality that sought to

derive sustenance from literature; she preferred to gain her knowledge of life at first-hand. Since she had left school at the age of sixteen she had never read a solid book of any kind, and she had been bored with the two little volumes of poetry she had persuaded Norman Parmeter to lend her. "I can't make out what it's all about," she had thought, flinging them aside, "nothing ever seems to happen in them." But Eunice, unlike her mother, was born with a passionate thirst for knowledge, and Miss Jones was beginning to teach her how admirably this thirst could be assuaged through the mere process of reading. Books, in short, told you things—about the sun and moon, the stars and the sea, and flowers and birds—about kings and queens with strange, tempestuous lives—about battles, famines, and plagues. And there were books in unaccountable numbers, clothing and garmenting the very walls. . . Mr. Parmeter soon forgot all about Eunice. He was absorbed and concentrated. The breathless silence was only broken by the steady ticking of the clock and by an occasional stir of paper or pen. Eunice crept from her chair and took a book from one of the shelves. It attracted her by its white vellum binding with tooling of delicate gold.

She was accustomed to keep very still—so still that it had often happened her very presence was forgotten or at least overlooked. Like that one heard many curious, interesting conversations. It is true that she had not always perfectly comprehended their purport, but on the other hand they had given her a certain undesirable knowledge of her mother's attitude toward her father. And almost insensibly this attitude had begun to color her own idea of her father, since her personal impressions were growing a little dim and confused after nearly

a year's separation from him. He had always been very devoted to his only child, and she had brought away from India the remembrance of a tall man who would walk and ride beside her and who took her for long drives in a high dog-cart. Latterly, however, she had only heard him spoken of with contempt and resentment and a bitterness that suggested dislike; she had heard people pity her mother, and she could hardly reconcile this person with the man who had been so gay and gentle and tender. Besides, he had consented to her being left alone in England, so perhaps he had not loved her so very much after all. She had regarded her going back to him as an absolute certainty, and the fact that she had after all been left behind had been the first concrete disillusionment of her life. The fundamental change of being abruptly separated in this way from both her parents had been to her little short of a disaster, and she had attributed it to some decision of her father's, made without reference to her own happiness. These thoughts, never even submitted to Julian for consideration, had largely prevented her from settling down happily in her new home. She held herself aloof like a stranger; life was teaching her that she was unwanted.

Her choice of a book had not been unfortunate. She had taken at random a copy of the "Arabian Nights," containing only a few of the better-known stories, and illustrated delightfully by an artist friend of Mr. Parmeter's. The turbaned figures with their white or colored robes recalled vaguely to her mind the fading impressions of India, and they caught at her heart with something of the ineradicable nostalgia for the East. The sunless December afternoon; the restless, wind-tormented sea; the wheeling gulls; the dark, swiftly-travelling clouds; the struggling figures on the Front; were all swept

out of her sight. She was conscious of an impression of glittering sunshine, of white-clad, bare-legged forms with dark brown faces under white turbans. Sitting in a low chair by the window she became quickly absorbed in the marvelous adventures of Aladdin, with its eternal appeal to the child's love of the magical. She was transported beyond her nostalgia and that forlorn sense of having been abandoned by those to whom she belonged. She forgot her father and mother, forgot Julian with his ceaseless efforts to make her happy, forgot the man who sat there unconscious of her presence.

It was growing dusk and she had nearly come to the end of the story when the door opened a little abruptly and Mrs. Parmeter came breathlessly into the room.

"Norman! Have you seen Eunice? We can't find her anywhere!"

Before he had had time to answer, Eunice emerged from her seat behind the heavy red curtain, holding the precious book in her hand.

"I'm here, Mrs. Parmeter."

Norman Parmeter rose from his seat. He had finished his work. As he stood there he lifted his arms behind his head and smothered a yawn.

"So you've been there all the time, you little mouse? What's that you're reading? Give it to me."

She surrendered the book with only a momentary hesitation. She hoped that some day he would let her come back and read some more.

"Never read Aladdin before?" he questioned.

Eunice shook her head. "Never."

"Like it?"

"Yes, very much." Her eyes were shining as if she had actually participated in those thrilling adventures. "I hadn't quite finished."

"You shall finish it another day. Come up here when you want to. I don't like my books taken away."

"Thank you—I'd rather read up here. It's quiet—there's no one to talk."

Norman Parmeter laughed.

"I'd forgotten you were there. If you're always as quiet as that you can come up whenever you like."

"Thank you," said Eunice. She glanced round the room with its glowing fire and the light flickering on the shining bindings of the books, revealing here and there a touch of dull gold, a gleam of brilliant color.

"It's tea time, dear," said Mrs. Parmeter; "you'll find the boys in the schoolroom."

Eunice went away and then Mrs. Parmeter said:

"I hope she didn't disturb you, Norman?"

"No—she was as quiet as a mouse. Queer little piece of goods. But if it'll make her happy——" He paused.

"Ah—you saw she wasn't happy?" She had wondered sometimes if he had ever observed Eunice at all.

"Well, I can't help seeing she's got a forlorn look. I daresay she misses her mother. Let her come up here, Ivy, when she feels inclined. I rather like having her. The boys are kind to her, I hope?"

"Julian's devoted to her. Geoffrey doesn't take much notice of her, I think. But then he's got such heaps to occupy him, with his work and games and school-life."

It was the beginning of a friendship that oddly sprang up between the two without conscious effort on either side toward a greater intimacy. When her lessons for the day were done and the afternoon walk was over and Miss Jones—who did not live in

the house—had gone home, Eunice would find her way up to the study at the top of the house. This new departure excited some astonishment in the minds of the twins, who regarded her as extraordinarily privileged. Julian especially would have given worlds to be able to accompany her on Sunday afternoons—the only day they spent at home—and sit with her beside that high window overlooking the sea. But he never suggested doing it, and indeed he was nervously apprehensive of betraying this desire.

Norman Parmeter got into the habit of looking out books for this child of eight, discovering soon that she was precocious beyond her years in some ways and in others as ignorant as a baby. The desire for serious knowledge didn't exist, as he was quick to perceive, in that little head under its mop of dark, shining curls. But she had the wish to enter and lose herself in that magical, impersonal land of romance to which books could so quickly and without effort transport her. Her baby troubles were quickly forgotten. Parmeter encouraged her to talk; the child had aroused his rare interest, and she soon ceased to be shy with him and he learned a good deal about her, more perhaps even than Julian knew. But when books had fulfilled their primary purpose of healing her through her imagination, he determined to lead her on to higher motives and to teach her the true value of reading. It was perhaps early days as yet to produce anything too definitely instructive. Aladdin and Sindbad the Sailor and the Alices sufficed for her immediate needs. He liked to see her dainty, fastidious care of books and that she always arrived with hands that had been freshly washed. Mrs. Dampier had early inculcated a meticulous care of her person into her small daughter's head.

"Won't you stay down here and play?" said Julian, wistfully, one Sunday evening when he saw her preparing for departure.

"No—I'm reading a lovely book. It's ever so much nicer than your games. And then you've got Geoffrey."

She danced away from him up the stairs; he saw her vanish round the curve of the landing above. He went back to the school-room. . .

Far from being a passing whim, she seldom let a day go by without finding her way up to Mr. Parmeter's study. He bought books for her now, and in the innumerable catalogues of second-hand books or new "reminders" that reached him, he got into the habit of marking any of them that from their description seemed to be suitable for her. It was really he who educated her, not Miss Jones who taught her so competently to read and write and do sums. Little by little, Parmeter imposed his will upon her. Half an hour's solid reading he insisted upon before she was allowed to open a book merely for amusement. She rebelled at first, and went away angry and mutinous; he had a glimpse then of the old, undisciplined Eunice. But she came back a day or two later in a meeker mood and recognizing his obstinacy she gave in. The look of slightly contemptuous astonishment he bestowed upon her weeping castigated her pride.

"You're too old to play at reading," he said.

She was not more than eight years old when the scene took place, but he invariably treated her like a grown-up person.

"But this is my play-time. And I do lots of lessons with Miss Jones."

"If you want to play, stop in the school-room."

He went back to his work. "The Vision of Saints" had then been before the public for some

months and to his surprise it had prospered and had already gone through more than one edition. Mysticism was fashionable, and people read it and spoke of the Catholic poet, Norman Parmeter. He was secretly delighted at his success.

CHAPTER XIV

For about six months after her departure Mrs. Dampier wrote regularly to Eunice, though her letters were never of great length. Her father also wrote to her, but at rarer intervals; he was a busy man. He was satisfied that his little girl was being cared for, and Mrs. Dampier had painted everything with regard to the Parmeters, their house, their children, their social importance, in vivid rose-color. But books of all kinds have a way of travelling to India and it chanced that a copy of "The Vision of Saints" fell into the hands of Major Dampier. He read it and came to the very obvious conclusion that the writer was a Catholic. The name "Parmeter" was not a very common one, and he then realized for the first time that for nearly a year past his little girl had been in charge of people who professed this religion. It was not that he had any extraordinary prejudice against the old Faith and its adherents, but he was vexed to find that his wife had not been frank with him on the point, and he hoped that she had quite clearly stated that she did not wish the child to be influenced in any way. He did not want his only child to be brought up in a different religion from his own.

"What on earth does it matter what they are, when they can give Eunice such a good home? They are rich people and she is happy with them.

I should have thought you would be the last to make a fuss about a little thing like that," she said, in reply to his questioning.

"I do not call it a little thing," said Major Dampier. "I cannot have her going to church with them —I must make that quite clear. If they don't choose to have her there any more, we must make some other arrangement."

"You can't possibly write and tell them they are not to take her to church with them," said Mrs. Dampier angrily.

"I am certainly going to take steps in the matter," he said; "and I think you ought to have told me about it."

"If I had tried all over England I could never have found a better home for Eunice, but nothing satisfies you," said Mrs. Dampier irritably.

He wished he could have gone home, but he knew it would be impossible to get leave. There was trouble brewing on the frontier, of the kind that is dismissed in the English papers with a few lines, perhaps containing the deaths of two or three officers. In these circumstances Major Dampier would have put in no request for leave.

He wanted to arrange things as tactfully as possible, for he could not but be aware that Eunice was thoroughly happy and admirably cared for in her present surroundings. He liked the letters that Mrs. Parmeter wrote nearly every week; he formed an impression of her as a cultivated, very maternal, very high-principled woman who really loved his little girl. And he shrank from hurting her feelings by brusquely telling her that Eunice was not to learn to be a Catholic while she was in her charge. But he felt that it was his duty to take some steps in the matter, because the child was at a susceptible age, when she might easily assimilate influences of the

kind. He determined to write a letter to a friend of his, a certain Lady Eliot, who was staying in Brighton and who had a daughter rather older than Eunice, asking her to go and see her and find out a little about her.

"I have not asked you to do this before," he wrote, "because I had every reason to believe that Eunice was perfectly happy and well cared for at the Parmeters'. But it is only lately that it has come to my knowledge that they are a Roman Catholic family, and I feel a little anxious lest they should take advantage of their position in regard to her to bring her up in a knowledge of their own faith."

Lady Eliot had not been in England very long when she received Major Dampier's letter, and she had taken a furnished house in Brighton for a few months with the object of seeing her eldest daughter Mildred, who was at school there. She had forgotten—if, indeed, she had ever known it—that the little Dampier girl was living with people in Brighton. In the old days she had not cared for Eunice; she was a naughty, troublesome child who led even Mildred into mischief when she came to tea with her and could always be relied upon to make an unpleasant scene. She did not greatly desire to renew her acquaintance with her nor to ask her to tea again with Mildred on half-holidays. But she liked Major Dampier, of whom her husband, Sir Alaric Eliot, had a very high opinion; and she felt that there was nothing to be done but to write to Mrs. Parmeter and say that she would like very much to see Eunice, having heard from her father that the child was living with them. Lady Eliot was a woman with strongly High-Church views, and she felt capable of wresting Eunice from any insidious Roman Catholic influence.

Mrs. Parmeter had received no instructions from Mrs. Dampier concerning Eunice's religious education. When she first came to live with them she always went to church with Miss Jones on Sundays and joined the Parmeter family on the Front afterward. But for a few months Eunice had been going daily to a school in Brighton not very far from Brunswick Terrace, and Miss Jones did not come to teach her any more. When these changes had taken place it was simpler to take Eunice to the Catholic church, and indeed she had begged hard to be allowed to accompany them. It was during the Christmas holidays when she had been there rather more than a year that she first began to question Julian on the subject of religion. The boys by that time were going to a big Catholic school in the south of England. Eunice was beginning to love in an ignorant, uncomprehending way the ceremonies of High Mass, which were now fairly familiar to her; she liked the sense of deep mystery, the melodious Latin prayers; she even listened attentively to the sermon. But she was irritated by her own inability to understand it all more perfectly, and she made up her mind to ask Julian when next he came home.

She missed Julian when he was away, as she would have missed a brother for whom she had not hitherto realized her affection, but by this time she had grown very devoted both to Mr. and Mrs. Parmeter, and was even jealous of the boys when they returned from school, dispossessing her from her position as the only child of the house. She would doubtless have grown selfish but for these home-comings and for the rough-and-tumble that they entailed, the sparring with Geoffrey, and the piqued impatience evoked within her by Julian's dumb devotion, which had such queer, subtle limits.

His school reports were all in Geoffrey's favor.

He was a brilliant boy of whom great things were prophesied; he was a favorite with everyone; he worked hard, was good at games. Julian plodded behind. After their first term they were never again in the same class. He witnessed without resentment or envy Geoffrey's triumphal progress from form to form. It was all done so apparently without effort that Julian could only think he had a special gift for the kind of work that was asked of him. And he himself felt that he had not the slightest aptitude for any of it. The only thing he cared about was literature and that which commonly accompanies a taste for it—a love of languages. But even here he never excelled; work with him was a perpetual struggle.

He was an oddly devout boy, and scarcely ever missed accompanying his mother to Mass in the early morning. They walked side by side, scarcely saying a word, yet their intimacy was deeper than ever before. There was no need for speech. But one morning on the way home he said suddenly:

"Eunice wants to learn something about the Catholic religion. Do you think I could teach her?"

"Yes, you could tell her a little about it if she really wants to learn," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"I must have a book," he said, "I couldn't teach her out of my head."

In the winter holidays Geoffrey often played hockey, and there were many afternoons when Julian and Eunice were sent out for walks together. Although he was only ten years old, he was absolutely to be trusted to take care of Eunice and she was perfectly good with him. Sometimes on these walks he would take her into a Catholic church; he would purposely walk past one and then say: "Would you like to come in for a few minutes, Eunice?" She never refused, but always entered and knelt by his

side, saying the prayers he had taught her very devoutly. When Julian spoke of religion his eyes shone and he was different and looked more alive. It was a strange thing, but Eunice in after years never forgot those first lessons nor the curiously simple explanations he gave her. It was only much later that she learnt to be astonished that he knew so much.

She longed to get up early and go to Mass with him and his mother, but something held her back from proposing it. She had been quick to see how dear they were to each other and felt that they did not want any one else to accompany them, yet she knew they would have welcomed Geoffrey who, however, preferred to sleep late in the morning.

The Christmas holidays were over, and Eunice had begun also to go to school daily when a letter came from Lady Eliot to Mrs. Parmeter. She was quite unsuspecting and imagined that the Dampiers were only actuated by a very natural desire to hear something of their child from one of their own friends. And she felt that she would have a real pride in showing Eunice to Lady Eliot. She was looking charmingly pretty, with her brilliant dark eyes, her engaging smile. She was wonderfully tractable, too, and scarcely ever showed any signs of her old ungovernable temper, her aptitude for deceit and intrigue. Although she still wrote to her parents every mail—a point upon which Mrs. Parmeter had to be quite insistent—she very rarely talked about them, and it was evident that they were fading a little from her mind. Her mother's letters —which were now rather rare—did not particularly interest her, and her father's, though tender and affectionate, failed to recall him in any way to her. Whenever Julian saw those letters and postcards with the Indian stamp upon them he had an icy feel-

ing of fear that they would contain the news he so dreaded—that the Dampiers intended to come home and take Eunice away from them. For, of course, that must happen one of these days. It was only wonderful that it had not happened long ago. . . Yet it was one of those things that he felt did not bear thinking of. It was impossible to picture life without Eunice, and even Geoffrey had become so used to having her there that he treated her in the easy, patronizing way he would have treated Baby Sister had she lived.

She admired Geoffrey, with his handsome face, his touch of swagger. But she loved Julian tenderly; he was still her friend, who could be relied upon to take her part even when he knew she was in the wrong.

Lady Eliot was invited to tea. She was a handsome woman, slightly older than Mrs. Parmeter, and she had married when very young a man much older than herself. The marriage had turned out happily, and their only regret was that among their four children, there was no son. Of these children Mildred was the eldest, and as she was eight years older than her next sister people often erroneously supposed that they were of different families. But the truth was that there had been no other child but Mildred for all that time, and then the three babies, as they were called, had followed each other as speedily as possible. From an early dislike of maternity Lady Eliot had suddenly developed quite a cult for it, and she was delighted when a new nursery became necessary to hold first one and then two and then three tumultuous inmates. She had never adored her staid, phlegmatic eldest daughter as she did these troublesome, beautiful babies that now absorbed nearly all her time and thoughts. As soon as she saw Mrs. Parmeter she took a strong

liking for her. She thought to herself: "She must come and see my babies." She was intensely proud of them.

Lady Eliot was a tall, elegant-looking woman with raven dark hair and enormous black eyes. The day was cold and she was enveloped in dark furs that well suited her beauty.

"It is so kind of you to ask me to come to see Eunice, Mrs. Parmeter," she said, realizing that the very definite purpose for which she had come would require the exercise of much diplomatic talent. Quite obviously Mrs. Parmeter was not a woman who could be treated dictatorially; it was only surprising that any one with her wealth and in her position especially—should have undertaken the charge of another person's child, especially—as was most probable—for payment. She could certainly have no need to eke out her income by taking Anglo-Indian children, and she could not be a family friend, as Major Dampier was evidently unacquainted with her.

They talked for a little while about Eunice, and Mrs. Parmeter told her visitor how she had first met Mrs. Dampier and her little girl in Rome. The children had made friends and they had subsequently come across her after their return to Brighton. Lady Eliot was shown the last new photographs of the twins. She expressed much admiration for Geoffrey, though adding that she expected Julian was the cleverer of the two.

"But he isn't," said Mrs. Parmeter, "at least, he has not shown any signs of it yet. He's miles behind Geoffrey."

"I have always longed for a son," said Lady Eliot, "I could hardly forgive my last two babies for being girls. But they are such darlings I was not able to be angry with them for more than about five

minutes! You must come to see them one day, Mrs. Parmeter. I am so proud of them. What sort of child is Eunice now? She was a dreadfully, naughty, sly little thing when we knew her in India."

"Oh, she's hardly ever naughty now," said Mrs. Parmeter. "When the boys are away and she is the only child at home you would hardly know there was one in the house. We are all devoted to her—even my husband, who is not very fond of children as a rule."

"It was very courageous of you to undertake the charge of her," said Lady Eliot, who wondered how Mrs. Parmeter had been prevailed upon to accept the responsibility.

"Well, I could hardly do otherwise. Major Dampier sent for his wife in rather a hurry, and she had so little time for making arrangements. It was all settled very quickly, but we stipulated that it was to come to an end in six months if it did not prove to be a success."

"And you are quite satisfied?" said Lady Eliot.

"Perfectly," said Mrs. Parmeter, "it has been an additional happiness to us all to have her here." She spoke so simply and sincerely that Lady Eliot could not but perceive that Eunice had fallen among people who actually appreciated her.

"Her father is a very charming man, but he made the mistake of his life when he married that common little woman. It has hindered him very much in his career, and I am afraid he has lived to repent it. I never liked Eunice as a little child—she used to upset the whole house when she came to tea, but even I used to pity her from the bottom of my heart for the way in which her mother treated her."

"Perhaps you will think we have gone to the other extreme," said Mrs. Parmeter smiling, "for I think we are inclined to spoil her."

She rang the bell and sent for Eunice to come down to the drawing room. Eunice came reluctantly, for she was sitting upstairs in Mr. Parmeter's study; the half hour dedicated to solid reading was at an end, and she was deeply engrossed in a new and delightful story-book, when the summons reached her. Mrs. Parmeter had told her that very likely she would be wanted to come down and see a friend of her father's.

Eunice had small curiosity to see this unknown lady, and she was aggrieved at the interruption; still, she came into the room looking pleasant enough. She wore a white dress of some soft woolen stuff and she looked extremely dainty and well cared for.

"Well, Eunice," said Lady Eliot, in her bright way, "you don't remember me, I suppose."

"I'm not sure. Aren't you Mildred's mother?" Her memory was a little confused, but Mildred was one of the few children she had seen much of in those far-off days.

"Yes, I am Mildred's mother," said Lady Eliot, a little pleased to think she had not been quite forgotten. "I am very glad you remember us. I hope you will come to tea with Mildred one day."

"Has she still got a monkey and a parrot?" asked Eunice.

Lady Eliot laughed. "No, the parrot died and we left the monkey behind. How well you remember."

"Julian's always trying to make me remember things that happened long ago," said Eunice, "it isn't easy at first."

"Do you go to school?" asked Lady Eliot.

"Yes, every day."

"What a pity you don't go to the same school as Mildred. We must try to persuade Mrs. Parmeter to let you go there."

"I like my school," said Eunice. "Where does Mildred go?"

"To Miss Woolton's. There are only about ten boarders, but in exceptional cases she will take a day girl."

"I think Eunice is making good progress with her lessons. Her father told her in one of his letters that he thought she was writing very nicely." Mrs. Parmeter felt a little vague irritation at the touch of interference; she felt as if something must lie behind it.

"I was thinking how charming it would be for the girls to study together, though of course Mildred is a few years older," said Lady Eliot. "She is rather backward for her age." She turned to Eunice, "When you knew Mildred she was the only child, wasn't she? Now she has three little sisters."

"Has she?" said Eunice in a slightly awed tone. "Do you think I shall ever have any sisters?"

"I should think it was highly improbable," said Lady Eliot laughing a little.

Presently Eunice was sent upstairs again and Lady Eliot found courage to come to the point.

"Major Dampier had no idea until recently that you were all Roman Catholics," she said. "He appreciates very much all you have done for his little girl—he is assured from the tone of her letters that she is very happy with you. But the long and short of it is—he asks me to speak to you for him on the subject of Eunice's religion."

Mrs. Parmeter colored slightly; she had never expected any little attack of the kind. It gave her a shock, too, to know that Major Dampier had been kept in complete ignorance on the point. She had imagined that in this respect she was at liberty to

bring up Eunice as she chose, and the little girl had shown that eagerness to learn about the Catholic faith which sometimes characterizes brilliant, advanced children. There had been no special rules given to her upon the subject and Mrs. Dampier had shown her quite definitely that she herself was absolutely indifferent as to whether Eunice was brought up a Catholic or not. To learn, therefore, in this sudden, unexpected fashion that Major Dampier did object, and was anxious on the point, was rather a shock to her. She had trained Eunice exactly as if she had been a child of her own, with the exception that it was impossible to prepare her for the sacraments of the Church, as would have been the case had she been baptized a Catholic.

"Mrs. Dampier gave me no instructions on the point," she said, a little haughtily, "she left me under the impression it was a matter of total indifference to her."

"So I am sure it was. But Major Dampier is a man with strong views—he is not at all like his wife. I do not think you can go against him in the matter."

"I should never dream of going against him," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"That is why I suggested Eunice should go to the same school as my little girl. Great attention is paid to the subject of religion, in fact the children are brought up to full Catholic practices, and if the parents wish there is auricular confession, and a chaplain attends for this purpose. But on such a point as that it would be as well to discover Major Dampier's wishes first."

"I shall write to him," said Mrs. Parmeter, "I shall tell him how sorry I am that he did not know

we were Catholics. Perhaps he will think it advisable to place Eunice elsewhere."

"Oh, I am sure he would not do that!" cried Lady Eliot, "homes like the one you are able to give her are not to be had for the asking! Eunice could never have had such comfort and luxury while she was with her parents—they are not at all well off—and then Mrs. Dampier is always running into debt. Oh, it is not a secret—every one out there knows about it. She has brought him more than once to the verge of ruin."

She rose to go. "I am sure you won't be offended at anything I have said," she remarked sweetly. "But I could not refuse poor Major Dampier's request that I should come and see you about it. Naturally, he did not quite like to write—especially after all your kindness."

"Oh, I am not in the least offended," said Mrs. Parmeter. "It is true that Eunice has always gone to Mass with us on Sundays, that is, ever since her governess left. And I know she had talked to my little boy on the subject—he is a very devout child. But I told Mrs. Dampier from the first that naturally Eunice would be under Catholic influences while she was with us. Even if she did not go to church with us there would always be the Catholic atmosphere of our home."

"I quite understand," said Lady Eliot, politely. She felt that Mrs. Parmeter was very sincere, very much in earnest. She looked like a woman who was guided by lofty spiritual ideals. And certainly to all outward appearance Eunice Dampier was completely changed. She had a tranquil, happy look that she had never had in the old days. If Major Dampier could see her now he would surely be abundantly satisfied.

CHAPTER XV

WHEN Julian returned home for the summer holidays that year he soon became aware of disquieting changes. Eunice's holidays had begun, too, and now she went to another school so as to be with the girl of whom she spoke so constantly, Mildred Eliot. For Lady Eliot had prevailed upon Major Dampier to take her advice in the matter, and place Eunice as a day-girl in the same school as her own daughter for the sake of the mutual companionship. It is true that he wrote to Mrs. Parmeter, asking that if possible this might be done, and saying that it was his wish that Eunice should go to church in future with the Eliots. "In the autumn," he added, "my wife and I are hoping to come home for a few months, and then we can talk things over, and if necessary make other plans for the future. But I feel I can not thank you enough for all you have done for our little girl."

So when Julian returned home he found that he saw less of Eunice than formerly; she was much more with the Eliots, often spending the long summer afternoons in company with her friend. There was indeed no reason why she should not, but it was her very eagerness to go that smote Julian with a sense of pain. Eunice was younger than Mildred, though she was far more clever and left her behind at school, rather to Lady Eliot's disgust; still, she imitated her sedulously and frequently quoted her.

On the first Sunday after the boys had returned, Julian came into the hall when it was time to start for church and found Eunice standing there in her new summer clothes, carrying a white prayer-book very different from the one he had given her.

"Are you ready, Eunice? Shall we push off?"

"You can walk with me to the Eliots' if you like," said Eunice, "I am going to church with Mildred."

"With Mildred?" he repeated. His face fell a little, for the disappointment was sharp and two-edged. "Why aren't you coming with us?"

"Lady Eliot explained to me that I ought to go to the church I belong to. She doesn't approve of Anglicans going to Roman Catholic churches."

"And are you an Anglican, Eunice?" he said, with a touch of bitterness.

"I suppose so. The Eliots are, and mamma always went to the same church as they did when she went at all."

"But I thought you *liked* coming with us," he said.

"Oh, I didn't mind. It was all right then. But now I'm friends with Mildred, and I like to go with her."

Julian said no more. He opened the front door and they went out into the street. The August day was dull, there was a grey, stormy sky; some seagulls were flying low and restlessly over the tumbling, dark green waves with their yellow crests of foam. The air smelt strongly of seaweed.

"Last holidays," he reminded her as they walked along side by side, "you said you'd like to be a Catholic when you grew older."

"Lady Eliot doesn't approve of people changing their religion. She gave me quite a scolding when I first went there. She doesn't let Mildred go inside a Catholic church, and she begged me not to again. I wouldn't promise, though, because I'd been so often; I didn't think there would be any harm in my going in with you."

It seemed to be quite final, and if his mother had not interfered he felt certain that she must have an adequate reason for letting Lady Eliot have her own way in the matter.

"Do you care so much for these people—for what they say and think?" he asked in a hurt tone.

"Yes," admitted Eunice.

"More than for us?" he timidly suggested.

"What a silly question! I live with all of you. It's a different thing."

He left her at the door of the house in King's Gardens where the Eliots lived,and walked on to the Catholic church, which was not very far away.

On their way home that morning, as they were walking on the Lawns, he said suddenly to his mother:

"Why do you let Eunice go to church with the Eliots?"

"Her father wished it. He thinks it is better for her, now she's getting older," she answered.

"But she's been going with us for ages," he said.

"Yes, I know, dear."

"But I thought you arranged everything?"

"Not this," she admitted, "I have to do what Major Dampier wishes. Lady Eliot is a friend of his."

He was distressed at the sudden change. "She won't want to learn any more about our religion now," he said disconsolately.

"No, I'm afraid not," said Mrs. Parmeter. "And Julian, you must be prepared for greater changes. Major Dampier is coming home in the autumn, and he may want to take Eunice away from us altogether."

"Take her—do you mean—back to India?" he stammered out.

"I should hardly think so. But he may prefer she should live with people who are not Catholics."

"It'll be jolly hard on us if he does," said Julian.

But he felt as if already there was a plot on hand

to take Eunice away from them. She was different, somehow; her thoughts were so completely occupied with these new friends of hers.

Julian was always afraid of changes; he would have liked things—pleasant, agreeable things—to go on unaltered forever. In this he differed completely from Geoffrey, who adored novelty even if it were not altogether to his liking.

* * *

Mrs. Parmeter was thankful that Julian had gone back to school when she received a letter from Major Dampier saying that he and his wife were on their way home and might be expected in Brighton about the middle of October. Not a word was said about any other arrangements being made for Eunice in the future; evidently they were waiting to decide such plans until they had seen her again. It would be a relief to get the interview over, and possibly Eunice would go away with her parents for a few weeks. It would break into the term, but that could hardly be helped under the circumstances. Eunice was wild with delight when she heard the news. To Mildred she confided the hope that now she would return to live with them altogether. She was fully aware that her lot differed from that of most of the children she knew, because she did not live with her own parents. She was at a conventional age, when she liked to be as other people. Mildred shook her head. She was less sure that it would be a change for the better.

Mildred was a heavily-built girl of twelve with a large fair face and pale sandy hair. She was not at all pretty, and she was decidedly stupid at her lessons, but she had a fund of common sense which often served to modify Eunice's wild imaginings.

"They are not very well off, you know," she said,

quoting from some imprudent words let drop by Lady Eliot, "and you won't have nearly such a nice home with them as you have here. It's odd that the Parmeters should ever have taken you in this way. They can't be in want of money."

"Well, I've been here nearly two years and I want a change," said Eunice. "It's dull always living in the same place with the same people, although I'm very fond of them, of course——" She stopped, thinking of Julian.

Mildred waited a moment and then said:

"Do you remember your mother, Eunice?"

"Of course I do—quite well. And my father too," said Eunice.

Mildred privately believed that there would be a considerable disillusionment in store for Eunice when she returned to her parents. She had heard her mother speak with some dislike of Mrs. Dampier.

"Was she always kind to you?" asked Mildred, wondering if Eunice really remembered as clearly as she supposed.

"Kind? What do you mean? I suppose she was kind."

"Kind as Mrs. Parmeter?" pursued Mildred, a little relentlessly.

"Oh, in a different way," said Eunice, coloring slightly. There was a certain episode which had taken place in Rome that remained rather sharply in her memory. But of course that kind of thing could never happen to her now—she was too old. And she didn't behave like that any more. She felt almost grown-up in contrast to that little Eunice of nearly two years ago.

Still, Mildred's words had made her feel uncomfortable—almost as if she had some secret knowledge of her mother.

One morning when she came down to breakfast Mrs. Parmeter said to her:

"You're not to go to school this morning, Eunice. I've had a telegram from your father—they'll be here soon after twelve, and I want you to be in when they come."

Eunice sprang up and flung her arms round Mrs. Parmeter's neck.

"Oh, darling Mrs. Parmeter—how lovely it will be! Do you think I shall go away with them this very day?"

"Why, no dear, I don't think so," said Mrs. Parmeter, "but I'm sure they'll want you to go to them very soon."

She had been too fond of Eunice not to feel a little hurt at the child's eagerness to go to these people who were now almost strangers to her.

Eunice flattened her nose—as the saying is—against the panes of the dining-room window most of the morning in her intense anxiety to catch the first glimpse of the cab holding her father and mother. All the time she was trying to "remember far back," as Julian called it, but her father's face always eluded her. Just an impression of a tall, kind man who was always gentle, and then for the rest his features had become confused with those of Norman Parmeter. She could make a more definite mental picture of her mother. But it was Major Dampier whom she most wished to see. It would be lovely to have a real live father again. She hoped he would take her to London with him. She had hardly ever been to London, and Mildred, who had lived there, was inclined to patronize her on the point. In the midst of her excitement she could still weave agreeable dreams for the future.

At last a cab stopped and in the clear golden light

of the October day a man descended. No second figure followed him, and Eunice felt a sharp stab of disappointment, realizing that if this tall, white-haired man was indeed her father, her mother had not accompanied him. It gave her a little shock to see his snowy head; it made him look so venerable, so unspeakably old, in contrast to, say, Mr. Parmeter. Seeing her at the window he waved his hand and ran lightly up the steps to the front door. In another moment Eunice felt herself gathered in a tremendous embrace, powerful, possessive, and almost alarming. His strong arms held her imprisoned; his hard, rather rough, cheek was pressed against hers. When at last he released her she heard his voice for the first time. "My Eunice! My darling child!"

It was a relief to be released; she was out of breath, and the tension of the situation made her feel embarrassed. Mr. Parmeter's gentle kiss on her forehead when he bade her good-night had not prepared her for her father's more demonstrative action. And this was her father, this giant of a man with the white hair and dark eyes, who seemed to her almost terrible in his strangeness! It came into her mind that if she had to go away with him alone she would feel actually afraid. It was a very subdued little Eunice that guided him up to Mrs. Parmeter's presence in the drawing-room.

"Hasn't Mrs. Dampier come?" she asked when the first greetings had been exchanged. Eunice stood there demurely; her father had taken hold of her hand again and was clasping it tightly, almost as if he were afraid she might run away.

"No, she was unable to. She sent you her excuses. She didn't feel well—had a bad headache. She didn't feel up to leaving London so soon." He seemed to say the words in an unconvinced tone, as

if aware how wretched were the excuses proffered. For had she not been parted from her only child for nearly two years? An adoring mother would not have let a slight headache, a little fatigue, come between her and that long delayed meeting.

"Oh, I am sorry. She must be so longing to see Eunice again. Shall you want to take her back with you to-day?"

Major Dampier hesitated. "I'm afraid not," he said, "her mother doesn't expect me to do that. She thought she had better stay here for a day or two, until she can come down to see her and talk over things with you. One has always so much to do when one first arrives."

Even now there was something halting in this statement. But Eunice's relief was intense. The picture she had formed of her father had been so erroneous that she was afraid the one she treasured of her mother might prove equally so. Mildred's sinister suggestion as to the preferability of the Parmeters' house recurred to her mind with unpleasant persistency. What if after all she had been right?

She wished she had been able to feel that she belonged to this strange man and not to her beloved Mrs. Parmeter who stood there watching her with such kind eyes. Perhaps something of the child's bitter disappointment had penetrated to her sympathetic mind; she knew that Eunice had been longing to see her mother. She must mercifully have forgotten the kind of treatment she used to receive at her hands.

"Of course, I should hardly have known her again. It's three years nearly since she came home. And she's much taller for her age than she used to be. She looks more than nine years old." He surveyed her with appreciative eyes. She was prettier than she used to be; her expression was sweeter, she had

the face of a child at once happy and good. When in the old days had Eunice ever been both happy and good?

"Yes, she is nearly as tall as Geoffrey, who will soon be eleven," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Is she? You have twin sons, haven't you? They have figured a good deal in Eunice's letters." He smiled as he spoke.

As he sat there in the big armchair he drew the child to him and made her sit close to him, holding her hand in his. She was beginning to lose her first fear of him. Perhaps it was the presence of Mrs. Parmeter that gave her such a comforting sense of security. And, anyhow, she wasn't going away with him to-day. That ordeal would be for a future occasion. She supposed she would get more used to him in time. It was difficult all at once to love a strange person just because he was your father.

"I think we may settle for the winter in London," he said, "and then of course Eunice must come to us. We shall be house-hunting next week, I suppose. And my wife feels the cold—she is buying herself some winter things." He stopped short, hoping Mrs. Parmeter would not discern the real reason for Mrs. Dampier's absence to-day.

"Eunice will be ready to go whenever you send for her," said Mrs. Parmeter pleasantly.

She was beginning to feel an obscure conviction that the Dampier ménage was not thriving satisfactorily. The man, for all the hardcut sternness of his face, looked restless and unhappy. The wistful glances he bestowed from time to time upon the child by his side assured her that it was not through any fault of his that Eunice was debarred from returning with him that very day.

Luncheon was announced and Mr. Parmeter appeared, very vague and absent-minded, his head

full of a new poem, but anxious too to make helpful suggestions as to the way in which the afternoon could best be spent. But Major Dampier had evidently evolved his own program and said it was absolutely necessary that he should go and call upon Lady Eliot. Mrs. P. meter suspected a desire on his part to unburden himself before this old friend, who knew more of his domestic affairs than she did. And, of course, he would take Eunice—he looked at her, and Eunice for the first time flashed one of her radiant smiles upon him. It won an answering smile from him that lit up his stern worn face and lent sudden fire to his dark, smouldering eyes.

After lunch, when Eunice had gone upstairs to put on her coat and hat, he found himself alone for a few minutes with Mrs. Parmeter. All the details of the slightly complicated meal which had just been served, as well as the general aspect of the house, with its cosy and luxurious comfort, had assured him that these were indeed rich people who all these years had had charge of his child. He said abruptly: "You must forgive my saying so, Mrs. Parmeter, but I feel you have been giving Eunice more than I shall ever be able to offer her. I only hope that she's too young to feel the difference too much."

"I have brought her up very simply. She has learned to do everything for herself. Of course, I let the maid brush her hair," said Mrs. Parmeter. She thought perhaps his eyes were still unaccustomed to the usual comfort of a well-kept English house. "I'm sure Eunice will be perfectly happy. She has been so looking forward to your coming."

"I hope she won't be disappointed with us!" he said half bitterly, and all the lines in his face deepened.

"Oh, I'm quite certain she won't!" she told him lightly. "And I'm sure you will find she is a very good child. She hardly ever loses her temper now, unless Geoffrey teases her, which I'm sorry to say he does sometimes. And I dare say you remember what a passionate small child she used to be!"

"Indeed I do," he said with a half-smile at the remembrance, "and the scrapes it used to get her into. She's a beautiful little thing, isn't she? I was quite surprised—she never promised to be as pretty as all that. And she's got such pretty ways—" He broke off and stifled a sigh that was almost a groan.

"We all think her very pretty," said Mrs. Parmeter. She wanted desperately to say something to comfort him; she was certain that he was unhappy and that Mrs. Dampier had made him so.

It was a relief when Eunice returned.

"Are you ready? Shall we start?" he said, looking at the trim little figure.

"Yes, papa," said Eunice.

She had been repeating the words to herself so as to say them easily. For of course she must call him papa, just as she used to: she felt that perhaps by so doing she might lessen the gulf of strangeness that lay so gloomily between them.

She put her hand in his and the voluntary little action seemed to please him, for he stooped suddenly and kissed her.

Mrs. Parmeter, standing at the window, saw them walk across the road together and go down toward the Front. The man still held the child's hand in his, and her face was tilted a little toward him. She was sure that very soon they would become friends again. It had been a difficult meeting for both of them, and he seemed to be perplexed about his child's

future. There were complications in his life to which as yet she had little clue. But inevitably they would also affect Eunice.

CHAPTER XVI

MILDRED was at school when the Dampiers arrived at the house in King's Gardens, but Lady Eliot soon found a pretext to banish Eunice to the nursery to play with her "darling babies," as she expressed it. She knew that Major Dampier would wish to talk to her alone.

"I'm delighted with my little girl," he told her, when Eunice had left the room, and as he spoke his stern face relaxed into a smile.

"She's a charming child," said Lady Eliot. "What does her mother think of her?"

"She hasn't seen her yet," he answered with some reluctance, "you see she wasn't able to come down to-day."

"Not able to come? I hope she isn't ill?"

He shook his head. "Shops," he said laconically.

Lady Eliot was, he felt, too old a hand to be put off with the feminine excuse of a headache.

"I'm delighted too with all I've seen of the Parmeters," he resumed after a little pause.

"Oh yes, they are nice people," she admitted.

"They seem really fond of her. And she looks happy. What about the religion, Lady Eliot? I saw signs of it all over the place. More than the usual amount of Italian Madonnas and statues and holy-water stoups. One wasn't allowed to forget it—even in the drawing-room! They didn't mind, did they?"

"I think it was a disappointment, though Mrs. Parmeter said very little," replied Lady Eliot.

"And I've given Eunice one or two serious talkings to on the subject. Showed her how wrong it was to go to a Roman Catholic church when one wasn't a Roman Catholic. She quite understood. I found the elder boy Julian had been teaching her a good deal. They begin to proselytize at an early age, don't they? He's a regular little *dévot*—goes to Mass every morning in his holidays. I don't deny it was beginning to influence Eunice. Still, in every other respect the arrangement was perfect."

"Yes—almost too perfect. I felt obliged to tell Mrs. Parmeter that what she'd given her was beyond anything we should have been able to do."

"Now tell me about yourself," said Lady Eliot encouragingly.

"There's not a great deal to tell, except that things are going from bad to worse. People want to know why I haven't set foot in England for eight years. And how can I tell them I couldn't afford the trip? They know what my pay is and that other chaps manage all right on much less. Fact is, I'm over head and ears in debt—her debts. And now we are back I can't get her to settle down anywhere and have Eunice with her. She wouldn't come to-day—she's buying a winter kit. She insists on my going down to a shoot at Mirton's place next Saturday. He's a rich man who has spent a week or two with us sometimes. Alaric knows him, I think. I'd ten times rather come down here and stay for a few weeks and have Eunice with us. But she's bent on paying these visits, and heaven only knows what it's going to run us into!"

Lady Eliot looked very compassionate. Everything was worse than she had expected, and she had never been sanguine. She also had mistrusted that prolonged absence, for she knew that Major Dampier was devoted to his child.

"I'm so sorry," she murmured.

"I may tell you this in confidence," he proceeded, "I haven't been able to pay the Parmeters a single sou this year. You know they would never accept more than just an allowance for her clothes and school fees. It's been a providential arrangement, though I've hated to think my daughter was almost living on charity."

"Why don't you put your foot down? Why do you go to this shoot? Who is this Mirton?"

"Sir Chandos Mirton? Oh, I thought you must have heard of him or met him. He was often about in Simla."

"It must have been since my time. What sort of a man is he?"

"I know nothing against him," said Major Dampier guardedly, "except that I hate him. If I could only induce Dulcie to take a cottage somewhere and spend our few months of leave quietly and economically we could get nearly straight again. But she won't hear of it—says she's come home to amuse herself."

There were few people to whom he could speak so frankly about his affairs as he could to Lady Eliot. But he had known her husband since the days when he first went to India as a subaltern, and the intimacy was an old and deep one, although it had never prevailed upon Lady Eliot to make a friend of Mrs. Dampier.

"I suppose, then, you will leave Eunice here for the present?" she said.

"If they'll keep her. I can hardly bring myself to ask them to, under the circumstances. I saw that they were quite prepared for me to say I'd come to fetch her home. She hasn't got a home, poor child, and isn't likely to have one, and I don't like to tell them so!"

"Oh, I think you might speak quite plainly to Mrs. Parmeter," said Lady Eliot.

"I can't explain the position to them—I simply can't," he said, all his pride in rebellion. "And there's another thing. I don't want to expose Eunice to her mother's violence. The child is so happy and peaceful now in that charming, tranquil home. Yet how can I leave her there without explaining? I've already accepted far too much from them. One ought not to shift one's burdens. And I *want* my child, Lady Eliot. I want to know her better—to win her love. She seemed almost afraid of me at first."

He was becoming tragic in the recital of his woes, it made her say lightly:

"Well, you know you are rather a terrifying-looking person!"

It won a vague smile from him.

"Am I? I should have thought this white head would give me a venerable, benevolent look!"

"No—you're too young for that." She contemplated him with an amused, ironical scrutiny. He was changed, and there were lines of worry in his bronzed face, but he was still very handsome and she thought that the white hair rather improved his appearance than otherwise. He had certainly been one of the handsomest young men she had ever seen, in the old days when his locks were jet-black and his keen eyes full of fire. But somehow she liked him better now.

"I wish you had seen the Parmeter twins," she said, changing the subject. "Julian is the weirdest little chap—like a little old man. But Geoffrey is a very nice boy, good at everything, and really beautiful, with his yellow hair and blue eyes. Eunice, I gather, prefers Julian. He never teases her, as

Geoffrey sometimes does. You see, I hear all this gossip through my little girl."

"Yes, I should like to have seen the boys, but perhaps I shall in the Christmas holidays. Something must be arranged by then." His tone, however, was the reverse of hopeful and it made Lady Eliot attempt to turn his mind to other topics by saying:

"You'd like to see my darling babies, wouldn't you?"

No one had ever as yet had the hardihood to decline this honor, and Lady Eliot, without waiting for a reply, rose and rang the bell. Very soon afterward the babies were brought down from the nursery in the custody of two prim nurses in starched white garments, and followed by Eunice.

The two elder ones could toddle, the third had still to be carried. They were all three extraordinarily alike and all resembled their mother, having her dark, brilliant coloring. For the rest they were extremely fat and apple-cheeked, as it is incumbent upon English babyhood to be.

"Jane and Sara and Susan," said Lady Eliot, tapping each one in turn lightly on the cheek as she thus designated them. "I had got over my passion for more romantic names by the time they came into the world, and I now like the old ones much better. Jane, take your thumb out of your mouth, my own precious! Sara, say how do you do nicely to Eunice's papa. My beautiful little Susan!" She clasped the baby, a black-eyed, red-cheeked cherub, in her arms, cooing all manner of baby-talk into her uncomprehending ears. They all deserve slapping for not being boys! Susan, why weren't you a little boy?" She held her up above her own head with her slight, powerful arms. As she spoke she gave the child a little shake, which elicited a crow of joy

from her. A prolonged embrace rewarded this proof of precocious intelligence, during which Major Dampier felt that the baby ran some risk of being smothered. "Aren't they lovely? Did you ever see three such pictures? Mummy's own beautiful babies!"

Major Dampier, who perfectly remembered her indifference to Mildred as a little child, was secretly astonished at this drastic change of attitude. Still, it was very pretty to witness, and he could not help admitting to himself that they were far more attractive children than Mildred had ever been.

"Mildred is quite like a little mother to them," said Lady Eliot, who assiduously cultivated this attitude in her eldest daughter. "One can hardly realize she's their own sister. Well, Eunice, which of my babies do you like the best?"

"I like Jane best," said the child promptly; "but Sara is the prettiest. She *is* naughty, though."

"Naughty? What do you mean? She never did anything wrong in her life! Sara, tell Eunice not to tell such stories about you!"

"She hit Jane and Jane cried," said Eunice simply. She had often seen both Jane and Sara when they were very naughty indeed, and was astonished at such blindness on the part of their parent.

"Did you hit Jane, my precious?" said Lady Eliot.

"Yes—hard," said Sara with a broad smile of complete satisfaction.

"Then you must never do it again. Come and kiss Mummy and say you are sorry."

"I'se solly," said the impenitent penitent, giving the required embrace.

"Kiss Jane too. . . "

The children kissed each other as if it had been part of a game. They hugged each other with such force that they were finally upset, and rolled shriek-

ing with laughter on the floor. Eunice stepped forward to help to pick them up. Lady Eliot turned to Major Dampier: "Did you ever see such darlings? I'm longing for Alaric to come home. He hasn't seen Susan since she was six weeks old!"

Major Dampier felt that the discussion of his own affairs was now indefinitely postponed. He therefore rose to go.

"Eunice, are you ready?"

"Yes, papa."

Lady Eliot came as far as the door, still carrying Susan in her arms.

"You'll come on Sunday, won't you, Eunice?"

Eunice looked up quickly.

"—I don't think I shall be here on Sunday," she said. "Shall I, papa?"

"Yes, dear," he answered. "You will stay in Brighton for the present."

"Then mind you come. Ask Mrs. Parmeter to let you lunch here," said Lady Eliot.

"Thank you, Lady Eliot," said Eunice. She went away with her father, feeling at once disappointed and relieved. She had talked so much to Mildred about her parents' arrival and how she expected to go away at once to join them, and now all these dreams had been abruptly destroyed. When she saw her to-morrow she would have to make some lame explanation, and Mildred would look superior, as if she were in possession of some secret knowledge denied to Eunice.

"I'm sorry, Eunice," said her father on their way back to Brunswick Terrace, "that we can't arrange to have you with us at once. But we are going away to pay a visit in the country on Saturday, and it's hardly worth while for you to come for a couple of days and then be left alone in our present lodgings.

You would not find them very comfortable. But you shall come later on."

He hoped she was still too young to notice anything strange about this proposed visit that prevented them from having their only child with them at once. But he had expostulated and pleaded and remonstrated in vain with his wife. She had made up her mind to go to Daunton and go she would. Let Eunice stay where she was until they were more settled. The scene was beginning to be violent when he broke off the discussion by saying that he would go this time, but that afterward he should insist upon having Eunice with them.

He stayed as late as he could, and was shown Eunice's room and the schoolroom before he went. He learned of the hours she was allowed to spend in Mr. Parmeter's study, and half envied this man, who had so zealously tried to cultivate her mind. But Eunice, feeling that perhaps Mr. Parmeter would not like to be disturbed, forbore to take her father up to the study. By the time he had to leave, the two were already friends and she had recovered from her first little fear of him. Still, it was almost a relief—in spite of her disappointment—to feel that she had not to go away with him this evening. He was still a stranger to her and perhaps her mother would also prove a stranger to her. At any rate, here were safety and unchanging kindness. Perhaps it was her first glimpse of that tall, white-haired man with the dark eyes and stern face that had imbued Eunice with her new dread of the unknown. At any rate, she was thankful to go up to her room that night, knowing that she would awake within its four familiar walls on the morrow. The day of departure was postponed. This thought comforted rather than saddened her as she turned on her pillow and went to sleep.

Mrs. Parmeter stood a little longer than usual by her bedside that night, watching Eunice as she slept. She, too, was relieved and thankful that the child was still with them. But it was useless to dread a blow that must inevitably fall sooner or later. She must learn to face the fact that her departure could not be indefinitely postponed now that the child's parents were in England. Mixed with her pain there was her quiet pity for Julian, who would suffer most of all.

CHAPTER XVII

THE visit to Sir Chandos Mirton's place in Gloucestershire on the borders of Oxfordshire had not been altogether a success. Some of the "county" ladies had indeed looked askance at the little Anglo-Indian flirt with the dubious hair and the complexion that left no possible room for doubt at all. The men were unanimous in liking and pitying Major Dampier.

Sir Chandos, however, seemed perfectly oblivious of any defects in his guest, and he showed her throughout the visit a very particular attention. This was all that Mrs. Dampier required; she almost always disliked other women, and called them "cats," and she never cared whether they approved of her or not.

She had made the most of her few days in London, and the size of her trunks was the first that aroused her husband's sense of alarm. When he saw the varied and beautiful toilettes in which she was successively arrayed during the few and unhappy days that followed, he could only groan inwardly, know-

ing that the day of reckoning must be fast overtaking him.

Of course, he had been weak. During the first year or two of their marriage Mrs. Dampier had been always charming to him, and he still believed that she had loved him. But after Eunice's birth and their return to India she had completely changed. Her bad temper had ruined the peace of their home, and he had even been alarmed at the violence she sometimes displayed toward Eunice. In that matter he had imposed his will upon hers, and while he was in the house those outbursts were at any rate avoided. But he had seen with anguish that the child was being ruined by her mother. Even at that early age her apt talent for deception was manifesting itself, and she seemed to be perfectly aware that her parents held conflicting opinions upon many points, and especially upon those which concerned her own education and upbringing. She was a sharp little creature, and he had been aware that few things escaped her notice.

Now he was to bring Eunice back to the old lamentable environment, intensified and accentuated by the lapse of years. He began to dread the day of her return, and his wife certainly showed no eagerness to precipitate it. She had been in England nearly a fortnight before she said: "I suppose you had really better send for Eunice, since you're so anxious to have her?"

"I'll run down and fetch her to-day," he said. "Won't you come, too, Dulcie?"

"No—I'm lunching out. But you'd better go."

She lunched and dined out nearly every day, and frequently went to the theater. She seldom consulted him about her engagements, never telling him with whom she was lunching or dining. He only knew that he found himself more and more alone as

the days went on. He was glad to think that Eunice would soon be there to relieve his solitude.

They had dreary little rooms in a grey, untidy-looking street near Victoria Station. Mrs. Dampier had done nothing to make the place more comfortable or habitable; on the contrary, she left her possessions about in an untidy profusion. She never received any of her friends there, but invited them to tea at her club in the neighborhood of Bond Street. She didn't ask her husband to come on these occasions, and he had never set foot inside the place.

During that journey to London with her father, who seemed more at ease with her than he had been on the first day, Eunice felt happy and excited. They did not talk much in the train, but Major Dampier bought several picture-papers for her to look at. He was thinking of Mrs. Parmeter's kind last words as they came away:

"If you should be going away at any time and find you can't take her, mind you send her down to us for a few days. We shall always be delighted to see her."

It was dark when they reached London, and the streets were all brilliantly lit. It was a fine November night with a hint of frost in the keen air. They drove to the house and Eunice was lifted down from the hansom and stood waiting on the pavement while her father paid the cabman and watched her little trunk being carried into the house. The open door disclosed a narrow passage with a shabby linoleum upon the floor; it was illuminated by a small globe of electric light high up in the ceiling. A slovenly-looking servant stood there. She shut the door and the trunk was left in the passage, while Major Dampier and Eunice mounted the narrow flight of stairs. On the first floor a door stood open and they went together into the room. It was small and shabbily

furnished and the table was piled with a quantity of feminine paraphernalia together with some paper parcels that seemed to indicate additional purchases of a similar nature. A woman was standing there, her face scarcely visible beneath the immense hat she was wearing, but Eunice caught a gleam of golden hair that struck some remote chord of memory.

"Oh, there you are, Eunice," said Mrs. Dampier stooping down to kiss the child in an abrupt, perfunctory manner. "You've grown a lot. But what a hideous hat—I must get you a decent one tomorrow."

Eunice felt chilled and snubbed. "It's my new winter hat," she said. "Mrs. Parmeter chose it for me."

"Well, I don't think much of her taste, then," said Mrs. Dampier. "You had better go up to your room—it's the back one on the next floor—you can't mistake it. We shall be having dinner soon."

Eunice turned and went out of the room, aware that she had been dismissed. She went slowly upstairs and entered the little back bedroom that was to be hers. Its bleak aspect struck her with a fresh sensation of chill that seemed to affect not only her body but her very heart.

There was no fire in the room, and everything in it, including the bed with its dusky white counterpane, looked bleak and chilly. Eunice took off the offending hat and smoothed her hair with her hand. Then she washed her hands in cold water and sat down by the empty fireplace. She had not been five minutes in her mother's presence when she had been abruptly told to go upstairs. This, and the unsympathetic surroundings, increased the slowly-growing nostalgia which had gradually been taking possession of her; she had a sudden fierce longing for home. And home was the house in Brunswick

Terrace—with its peace; its loving, kindly presences; its physical warmth and comfort. Mildred had been right, perhaps. She was so often right with the unimaginative but practical perception of a quite stupid but normal person who saw things exactly as they were. And Mildred had suggested she was better off where she was.

Eunice choked back her tears. There was within her a childish but brave determination to make the best of things, and above all not to let her father guess that she was unhappy or disappointed. Perhaps he had not noticed the coldness of her mother's greeting; perhaps he was accustomed to her ways. As she sat there, there was a loud knock at the door, and after many bumps and thumps her trunk was deposited upon the floor of her room. She took out the key and fumbled at the lock with frozen, unaccustomed fingers. Then she unpacked her few possessions and laid them away neatly folded in the painted chest of drawers. There was no wardrobe in the room, but in one corner she saw a row of pegs fastened to the wall; she hung her skirts upon them not without misgiving. She wondered when she ought to return to the sitting-room.

Presently she heard her father's voice calling her from the passage without. "Eunice, can I come in?"

She slipped off her seat and going to the door opened it. He was standing there, looking very tall in the sharp glare of the electric light. He came into her room and looked around.

"You've unpacked?" he said.

"Yes."

"You're not cold?"

"Not—very, thank you, papa," she said truthfully.

"You ought to have had a fire." He looked at the yawning emptiness of the grate. "It isn't even

laid. I suppose your mother forgot to tell them. You're used to a fire?"

"Yes," she said. "But it's all right—I don't really want one."

She must—she must—feel glad that she was here, with her own parents again. He must not guess—with his anxious solicitude for her comfort—how miserable and forlorn she was feeling.

"If you're ready you'd better come down. You mustn't sit up here in the cold."

He switched off the light, leaving the room in bleak black darkness that somehow shielded and hid its ugliness.

Dinner was served in the solitary sitting-room, and the miscellaneous collection of articles had been removed from the table in order to make way for the meal. They now reposed in a slightly increased disorder upon the sofa. Eunice found the untidiness of the room depressing. She longed to be allowed to take away the things and put them neatly in their places.

The warmth of the room and the food brought back the color to her cheeks.

The meal had proceeded for some little time in complete silence when Mrs. Dampier said suddenly:

"You'll have to take Eunice out to-morrow, Herbert, for I shall be away all day."

"All day?" he echoed in astonishment. "Why, I thought you said you would be free this week. I think you might have managed to spend to-morrow—her first day—at home."

"Why on earth should I? You insisted upon her coming and now you can look after her. I told you it would have been far better to let her wait till the Christmas holidays, instead of losing so much of the term. Take her to the Zoo. I don't suppose she's ever been there, have you, Eunice?"

"No, never," said the child.

After that there was silence. Eunice felt miserably uncomfortable; the sharp, angry voice in which her mother had answered her father echoed in her ears. She glanced quickly at Major Dampier, a look of appeal that he did not notice. His face was set in stern lines. It came into her mind then with the force of a sudden revelation that he was not happy; he was a fellow-sufferer.

"Where are you going to-morrow?" he asked presently.

"For a long motor drive with some friends," she answered. "We're to lunch with some people in Sussex."

She did not say who her friends were, but he was accustomed to that omission. The terrible thing to him was that he was ceasing utterly to care. Her debts, her *dégringolade* could make him miserable, but he had long ago ceased to be jealous. Indeed, it had become a relief to find himself sitting down to a solitary peaceful meal.

When dinner was over, Mrs. Dampier said:

"You'd better go to bed now, Eunice. I hope they didn't let you keep late hours at Brighton? You must be tired after your journey. You don't want any help, do you?"

"No, thank you," said Eunice submissively. She went to her mother's side and lifted up her face to be kissed. Mrs. Dampier kissed her and then, giving her a little push, said not unkindly:

"There, run along. They've taught you obedience, I'm glad to see."

Eunice slipped across the room to her father's chair.

"Gcod-night, papa," she said.

He drew her face down to his and kissed her.

Eunice went upstairs to her room. It came into

her mind to wonder what Julian was doing. Perhaps preparing his work for the next day. It was improbable that he could be thinking of her, and perhaps he did not even know she had left Brighton. It had all been settled so hurriedly. The sudden thought of Julian increased her homesickness.

In the darkness that night she lay and sobbed.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE next few days were inevitably momentous ones for Eunice, spent by her in a child's unconscious adjustment to novel circumstances. It seemed to her that they passed in such a manner that they would always remain impressed upon her mind, and that she would be able to recall them—whether she would or not—without any effort of memory. The experience would surely be stamped upon her brain or her heart or wherever such photographs of mere emotion are normally destined to be stored, by some indelible process accomplished not only with energy but with considerable pain. Indeed, it was at first all pain, of a confused and indeterminate kind—this agony of finding oneself thrust suddenly into a hostile, uncongenial atmosphere beset with unusual perils, and of knowing oneself to be wholly unwanted, at least by one of the two persons who had that authoritative charge over her which is the child's unquestioned lot. That the other person *did* want her with a certain violence of frustrated paternal affection scarcely compensated for the remarkable defection of Mrs. Dampier in this respect; and it did not take Eunice long to discover that her very presence constituted an additional element of quite definite dissension in the already uncomfortable little house.

It was indeed one of those detached passages of her life that stood out in the history of her childhood, not from any brilliancy of effect, but from the dark, meaningless obscurity of its shadows. There was no visible egress from this world of petty pain, stinging humiliations, ironic recriminations. She never, indeed, quite knew when her old, forgotten fear of her mother first took forcible hold of her again, constraining her to tread delicately, to keep out of sight whenever possible, to avoid all that could remotely be construed as "naughtiness." But she soon learned that her cold, darkish room offered a refuge from only partially apprehended dangers that she could not afford to despise; she was thankful to be able to escape thither when the tension became unbearable. But even this retreat before the enemy could not always be safely effected. She would hear a sharp: "Eunice, where are you going to? Sit down at once and keep still!" Thus admonished, she would creep back to her chair by the window where now she passed so many hours in idleness, aware that the mere fact of her presence was capable of evoking a sudden hostility.

As for Brunswick Terrace and all that it held of comfort and security and tenderness, that didn't bear thinking of from this new angle of vision. The unsuccess of these days—a failure which Eunice morbidly attributed to something unpleasing and perhaps repulsive in her own personality—spoiled for her even the very possibility of returning to those beloved surroundings. Especially did she dread the meeting with Mildred Eliot. Mildred was not a person who let you alone. She teased you with questions, forcing you to answer them adequately. To pay for the privilege of her friendship she insisted upon a measure of intimacy which—when one had anything to hide—could become a veritable

torture. She would want a detailed history of that London sojourn. Eunice could picture the curl of Mildred's lip. "So you weren't happy? What did I tell you?" And that unendurable hint of secret superior knowledge. Did all the world know, then, that her mother didn't care for her—that she was, in some way inexplicable to herself, an obstacle? Had Mildred known that she wouldn't be happy? It wasn't, perhaps, only idle guesswork.

There was nothing to tell her that this experience was a mere temporary thing; had she been aware of that fact it would have given her courage to go through with it. But she had the feeling that these gloomy, dark winter days were to go on for ever and ever. There was very little to do, especially on wet days, when her father judged it more prudent for her to remain indoors. She had no lessons now; there was no piano on which she could strum when left alone, and she had scarcely any books to read. It was the enforced idleness, the absence of any wholesome occupation or interest, that increased so substantially the weariness of the days. Whenever it was fine, Major Dampier took her out with him as far as it was possible to do so, but there were occasions when a man couldn't appear with a little girl in tow. He had people to see at the War Office, men to meet at his club, business to be done in the City. Once in her hearing she heard him suggest to her mother that she should take her with her that day, as he was unable to do so. Her answer was simply: "I really can't be bothered with Eunice this morning. She must amuse herself."

Major Dampier had few friends in London; he had been away from England too long, and had got out of touch even with his own relations, of whom none could be called very near. He had been an

only child, as solitary in his childhood as Eunice was now.

Mrs. Dampier's friends were always people who amused and entertained her at the moment; she seldom formed lasting friendships or cared to look up old friends.

"Eunice, darling, can I bring you anything?"

She was alone in the sitting-room one hopelessly wet morning when a strong northeasterly wind was making the atmospheric conditions as disagreeable as possible. Mrs. Dampier had gone out much earlier, and Major Dampier was on his way to keep an appointment at his club.

"Oh, papa, I should like some books very much," she said.

"Books? What kind of books, my dear child?"

"Story-books, please," she said. "Not fairy-tales, though. I'm too old for them. Stories about real children—about things that really could have happened."

He laughed at the quaintness of the description.

"Well, I'll see what I can do. I must be off now. Good-by, Eunice."

She came toward him, her face lifted. He bent down and kissed her.

"I suppose you're a bit lonely, aren't you?" he said.

"A little. I haven't much to do."

"Oh, well, the books ought to make that all right," he said trying to speak cheerily.

When he came in a little before luncheon he tossed a big parcel into her lap.

"There, Eunice! I hope you'll find something you can read among these."

She sprang up, all flushed and smiling with excitement. "Oh, thank you, papa."

There was a delicious sense of luxury about even

the untying of the thick string, and the unfolding of the solid, opulent-looking brown paper that had sheltered her precious new possessions so securely from the rain. She lifted out, one after the other, some gaily bound books. Major Dampier, finding the task too difficult a one to be performed without assistance, had taken the bookseller's man into his confidence and asked him to select something suitable for a clever little girl of nearly ten. "Not too babyish and nothing that could be harmful," he had said.

Eunice glanced at the titles; they were all new to her. There were no less than six of them, all smelling deliciously of newness and of the shop.

Major Dampier was astonished at her little shrieks and exclamations of pleasure; she had been so silent and quiet ever since she had come to them.

"You ought to have told me before that you were hard up for something to read." There was a touch of loving reproach in his voice.

"I didn't like to," she said.

Books cost money; sometimes a great deal of money. And she understood perfectly the drift of her mother's perpetual and acrimonious complaining; it was because she wanted money—more, seemingly than she wanted anything else in the world—and she couldn't have it. That under the circumstances there could be anything over to buy books for herself had not entered Eunice's little head. Nor had she even wondered that after so many years of absence they had not hitherto bestowed a single present upon their only child.

She was still enjoying the mere fact of possession, turning over the pages, glancing at the contents, looking at the pictures—for Major Dampier had insisted that there should be pictures—when Mrs.

Dampier came in, wet and cross from a weary struggle with omnibuses in the rain.

"What's all this litter, Eunice?" The brown paper had slipped to the floor and she touched it impatiently with the tip of her shoe. "What have you got there? Who has been sending you a present?"

"Papa gave me these books," said Eunice.

"All those? He must have spent a fortune!" said Mrs. Dampier with anger.

She disappeared into her bedroom and returned at the same moment as her husband.

"I'm glad to see you've still got some money to squander on Eunice," she said. Her eyes were dangerously bright and there were pink patches in her cheeks.

The words struck Eunice like a blow; it seemed to her that they had smudged and stained her beautiful bright books. She formulated the thought for the first time: "Papa and I would be happy without her." But she did not dare look at her father, who answered slowly:

"We haven't given her anything since we came home."

"She must learn that we simply can't afford to give her presents. What other child of her age has had such advantages as she has had all these years at Brighton?"

Eunice gathered up books, paper, and string, and moved cautiously toward the door.

"Where are you going, Eunice? Sit down—lunch is ready."

Eunice deposited the books on a chair and came toward the table. She felt afraid of her mother in this mood.

"Don't look so sulky! What is the matter with you?" said Mrs. Dampier.

"Oh, leave the child alone, Dulcie! She's not doing anything," said Major Dampier.

"If you begin to spoil her," rejoined his wife, "you will soon see what will happen. I refuse to let her be ruined by indulgence!"

Something in her tone—a vague menace—chilled Eunice. She sat there very quietly, scarcely daring to move, praying that she might not be noticed, that her silence might not be called sulkiness. Somewhere in her mind there floated a nebulous wish that he had not so ardently and openly taken her part. It seemed only to add fuel to the flames.

"You shall not interfere with her," said Major Dampier with a contraction of his black brows that made him look quite fierce; "I forbid it."

It occurred to Eunice that he too had been alarmed by the little threat in her mother's words. She thought impulsively: "She wants to punish me because he gave me those books." Yes, but how? She felt a little shiver of fear run through her; the remembered scene in the bedroom at the hotel in Rome came back to her mind with a sharp, appalling accuracy.

Mrs. Dampier smiled, a slow, malicious smile. So she could still bring him to book, as she called it, by a threatened attack upon Eunice; he was more soft than ever about the child, indulgent even to the point of lavishing gifts upon her. If he could spare money for that purpose let him pay some of her bills! She had quite a little heap already, and almost every day fresh ones were added to them. Some of the shops were beginning to display a nasty propensity to exert pressure by sending in their "account rendered" almost daily.

"Eunice ought to go out this afternoon," said Major Dampier presently, "it's quite cleared and she wants fresh air."

"I can't possibly take her—I have some people coming to tea with me at my club. If you would only let me have a maid I could have sent Eunice out with her."

"Our expenses are too high as it is," he said coldly. "But I'll take her out for a bit myself."

"I shall not be in to dinner to-night, I am going to play bridge," said Mrs. Dampier. "Please see that Eunice does not sit up too late."

She rose from the table, went into her bedroom and shut the door. Major Dampier turned to his daughter.

"You'd better take those books up to your own room, my dear," he said. "And be ready to come out with me, at three, if it isn't raining. You must wrap up well—there's a cold wind."

He sighed deeply and Eunice took her books and went up to the chilly little back bedroom, where so much of her time was solitarily spent.

CHAPTER XIX

It was about a week before Christmas, and Eunice was sitting by the window one morning when she saw a cab drive up and stop before the door. The morning was fine; there was a blue sky very pale and clear overhead, with a few white clouds traveling delicately across it. Both her parents were out, and it had been a disappointment to her that Major Dampier had been prevented from taking her with him. He had business of rather a pressing nature in the City, but the poor man had been driven by his wife's extravagance to borrow a sum of money. It was the first time, and he told himself bitterly that it should be the last. Other men had been obliged to

make public their repudiation of any debts contracted by their wives, so why should he not adopt the same course? That would be the next step. He was being dunned for payment of a big bill by a well-known firm of drapers in the West End, and for the sake of peace he intended to borrow the money to pay it.

Eunice, thinking that her father might have returned sooner than she had expected, opened the window and looked out. The cab was already moving away, and she caught a glimpse of two figures standing on the pavement—a lady and a boy. Could it really be Mrs. Parmeter and Julian? She could not see their faces, yet she was almost sure that she could recognize them. She shut the window abruptly and ran eagerly down the stairs, almost falling into Mrs. Parmeter's arms.

"Oh, darling Mrs. Parmeter! Julian—Julian—you've really come?"

Even Julian was astonished at the pathetic warmth of the welcome she bestowed upon them. It was as if one had placed tempting food suddenly before the starved.

"Come upstairs, won't you," she said more shyly. "Papa and mamma are both out. I'm quite alone."

"Oh, I am sorry to hear they are out," said Mrs. Parmeter, "you see, I wanted to ask them to lend you to us for the whole day. We're going to lunch early, then go to the theater."

Eunice had never been to a play; she had often wished to go, because Mildred had talked so much about her frequent visits to the theater when staying with her aunts in London. But apart from this enchanting prospect the offer was an extremely tempting one. To spend a whole day with Mrs. Parmeter and Julian seemed a thing too delightful to belong to the world of stern reality.

As they entered the sitting-room Eunice felt glad that she had spent a little time that morning after her parents had gone out in making it look neat. She had done this once or twice lately, and her father had noticed it and approved. With a bright fire blazing on the hearth she felt that it looked a trifle more cheerful than usual.

"Don't you think I could come, even though they're not here?" she said at last.

Surely her father would like her to have this pleasure.

"Oh, yes, mother, do let her," said Julian.

"Where is Geoffrey?" asked Eunice, while Mrs. Parmeter appeared to be still debating the point.

"He's gone to the British Museum this morning with his father. We shall meet later on at the theater," said Mrs. Parmeter. "Julian and I thought it would be a good opportunity to come to see you."

She had been quick to see the change in Eunice—a rather pronounced change for those few short weeks of absence. She was pale and thin and looked nervous, as if the London life did not suit her too well. There was a look in her eyes as of apprehension; perhaps she was afraid of being questioned too intimately. But Mrs. Parmeter had no need to ask questions; she quickly learned all she wished to know from Eunice's tell-tale little face.

"I'm sure I may take it upon myself to decide this for you." she said brightly, "and I'll write a letter to Mrs. Dampier to say we came in to steal you during her absence. I can write it, you know, while you are putting on your things."

Eunice hesitated. The cautious prudence which ruled her present conduct was beginning to give way a little before the pleasant assurance of Mrs. Parmeter.

"You're sure it will be all right?" she stammered.

Mrs. Parmeter looked very slightly astonished. She had never before associated Eunice with many scruples. The child when with her had shown a free, ardent spirit that sometimes required the slightest touch of a curb, very tenderly applied.

"I'm sure that I can make it all right, dear. They must trust me to take care of you after all these years."

She realized for the first time how completely Eunice had become emancipated from her own careful custody.

Eunice was looking at her with an eager, loving expression. She felt she could hardly take her eyes from Mrs. Parmeter's beautiful, charming face. With her soft dark hair, her laughing brown eyes, her gay smile, she seemed to the child ideally beautiful. She wanted to put her arms around her neck and beg her to take her away with her altogether. The next moment she was reproaching herself sharply for the crass ingratitude of such a thought. Her father loved her—would miss her—she ought not even to wish to go away from him.

She went quickly out of the room. When she had gone, Julian turned to his mother. His face was grave and almost melancholy. He had been in such wild spirits all the morning at the prospect of seeing Eunice that she could not help exclaiming:

"Why, what's the matter, Julian?"

It had really been principally on his account that she had arranged the little expedition, to soften for him that first home-coming with Eunice absent from their midst.

"She's changed," he said slowly, "she seems almost afraid to come. She used never to be afraid of anything."

His words served to confirm her own misgiving.

She remembered perhaps better than he did the details of that Roman episode. But it was unlikely that Mrs. Dampier should still treat her little girl so harshly, for Eunice was now almost always good and obedient and truthful.

"I think she was only rather surprised to see us," said Mrs. Parmeter, trying to reassure him.

She found some writing-materials and scribbled a little note to Mrs. Dampier, explaining that their visit to town had been suddenly planned and as her little boys had so wished to have Eunice with them that day she had ventured to call for her and take her out with them. When the letter was finished she put it on the mantelpiece where it could not possibly escape observation. Just as she had done this Eunice reappeared. She had put on the hat which Mrs. Parmeter had chosen for her and which her mother would never let her wear. She did not like her new one nearly so well. That teasing little scruple still possessed her. Was it wrong? Would Mrs. Dampier have let her go for this long day of exciting pleasure? But it couldn't be wrong; how could it, when Mrs. Parmeter seemed to think it was all right? Mrs. Parmeter must surely know. She had always spoken quite frankly to Eunice when she disapproved of anything she had done, saying too when she kissed her: "Now I know you won't let that happen again." So surely she could rely upon her to decide. . . It was small wonder that this sudden prospect of escaping for a whole day from her melancholy uncongenial surroundings should present itself to Eunice in the light of a lovely but dangerous temptation.

"We'll walk a little way and then take a cab," said Mrs. Parmeter when they had left the house.

They walked all down Victoria Street. The fine day seemed to have tempted the whole of the

London population out of doors, and the scene had that happy, festive, busy look which so often characterizes it at Christmas time. People were hurrying out to perform their belated shopping. The gay shops were thronged with eager customers, with children just back for the holidays. The streets were so crowded with traffic that it was difficult to cross the road. The pale golden sunshine made one almost forget that it was winter. Eunice enjoyed the stir and movement and color of it all. She quickly recovered her spirits, put away all tiresome scruples, and chatted to Julian as if they had never been separated.

Then came lunch at a crowded restaurant, where Julian actually met one of his school-friends and exchanged a few words with him. An orchestra began to play, and the soft music continued almost all the time they were there. Mrs. Parmeter ordered exactly what she knew from experience the children would prefer—fried soles, roast chicken, and méringues, to be followed by dessert and coffee.

At the entrance to the theater they met Mr. Parmeter and Geoffrey, who had arrived there first.

"So glad you were able to come, Eunice," said Mr. Parmeter. "When are you coming down to pay us a visit? I miss you very much."

It was a great deal for him to say, but his study had never seemed quite the same place since Eunice had ceased to visit him there. Even Mildred had never persuaded her to forego that precious hour of quiet reading.

Geoffrey too gave her an unusually friendly greeting. He somehow felt that the Christmas holidays wouldn't be quite complete without Eunice, if only that he would have no one now to "rag." He had come to the conclusion that for a girl she wasn't

half bad, and compared favorably with "other fellows' sisters."

The play was thrilling and full of absurd exciting scenes that made them all laugh heartily. When it was over they came out again into the gaily lit streets while the soft violet winter darkness had covered London as with a beautiful mantle. Overhead, the sky was clear and a few stars were visible. There was a crisp hint of frost in the air, just enough to make them walk a little more quickly and energetically. The shop windows, now brilliantly illuminated, looked more fascinating even than they had done by daylight. They had tea, and then started to walk home with Eunice. Julian wished to walk the whole distance, but Mrs. Parmeter thought it was too late and that she ought not to keep Eunice out any longer; she therefore took a cab in Piccadilly. They got into it, leaving Mr. Parmeter and Geoffrey to return to the hotel alone.

At the door Mrs. Parmeter kissed Eunice and was astonished to find that the little face pressed against hers was wet.

"Oh, thank you, thank you," whispered Eunice.

She held out her hand to Julian. "Good-by, Ju."

"You must write to me," he said, "a long letter please."

"Yes, if I can," said Eunice.

"We won't come in—it's too late to disturb your mother," said Mrs. Parmeter, "You must remember us to her and say that we have loved having you."

"Tell them," said Julian, "to let you come back soon to Brunswick Terrace."

Eunice turned a small pale face to him, so set that it seemed to have lost its childishness.

"They wouldn't let me," she answered.

"Do you mean never?" said Julian.

"I—I don't think ever," said Eunice.

"Oh, but of course you must come to pay us a visit," said Mrs. Parmeter brightly. Julian's face hurt her. What had this child done to entwine herself thus into all their hearts?

"I must go," said Eunice. She rang the bell. They waited with her till the door was opened and saw her little figure disappear into the hall.

She stood for a moment uncertainly in the chilly passage. The door had closed not only upon the street; it had shut out all that was life and joy and brightness; it had hidden from her the kind, loving faces before whom no mask was necessary. All day she had silenced conscience and scruples, the thought of any possible payment for these bright hours of happiness. But now the atmosphere of the house had taken possession of her. The immense sweetness faded a little. She was confronted with the thought of immediate proximate retribution. She must face her mother, and learn whether or no she had offended.

As she mounted the stairs that precocious intelligence which fear will so often stimulate in a child impressed upon her that she must not look too happy. Often when she was consciously controlling her expression she had been rebuked for sullenness, for levity, as the case might be.

As she entered the sitting-room she saw Mrs. Dampier standing by the table upon which lay Mrs. Parmeter's letter. Evidently she had just come in, had found it, had read it. Eunice's heart sank a little when she saw that her mother was alone. By the hard look about her eyes and mouth and the flush on her face, she knew that she was angry. She felt suddenly weak, helpless, undefended. If only her father were there! . . .

Mrs. Dampier saw Eunice's fear; it was too plainly written on her face to escape such astute observation. When she spoke, her object was deliberately to terrorize her.

"How dared you go out with Mrs. Parmeter without my leave?" she demanded.

"She came to fetch me," said Eunice.

"And where did you go?"

"First to lunch—there was music—and then to the theater. Then we had tea, and Mrs. Parmeter and Julian brought me home."

She stood there, a forlorn, frightened figure, piteously aware of her own defenselessness. She was thinking to herself, with that dreadful precocity of hers: "She's been waiting for this—waiting till I did something she could call wrong." She had outwitted her mother all these weeks by that patient wary prudence of hers.

"She had no business to take you out without asking my permission. It was a piece of impertinence. She forgets you are not under her care any more. You have been living in the lap of luxury all these years while we have been struggling and saving to pay for your education in England." How far this was from the truth, Eunice had of course not the smallest conception. Had it cost them a great deal, that beautiful happy life of hers with the Parmeters? Was it the cause of their present poverty of which her mother complained so often and with such bitterness? She was immersed in these speculations when Mrs. Dampier's harsh, angry voice brought her back sharply to the present moment, so heavy with impending disaster.

"But you should have known better, you had no right whatever to go. You know perfectly well that

if I had been at home I shouldn't have allowed it. You have got to learn to forget the Parmeters. They have utterly spoiled you all these years. I wish I had never sent you there. Now go up to bed at once, Eunice. I shall come up in a few minutes."

Eunice turned very white.

"I didn't know you wouldn't like it, or that it was wrong to go. I'm sure papa would have let me. But I'm sorry."

"You will be much more sorry before I have done with you," said Mrs. Dampier in a cold threatening voice.

Eunice went up to her room, her limbs trembling and her teeth chattering with cold and fear. A degrading sense of terror seemed to possess her utterly, robbing her of all strength and courage. If only her father would come home in time to save her from the dreadful possibility of physical violence suggested by her mother's words. She undressed herself, put on her nightgown, and slipped in between the cold sheets, where she lay trembling and shivering. She waited a long time. . . . Perhaps her mother had only said that to frighten her, to convince her that she had been wicked and deserved punishment. The suspense made her sick with apprehension.

At last she heard her mother's step on the stairs. Mrs. Dampier opened the door, came into the room, shut it again and advanced toward the bed where Eunice lay, bright-eyed with fear. In her hand she held a riding-whip; she passed the lash up and down between her fingers as if testing it. . . .

Eunice never knew exactly how she affected her escape. The air was rent with a shrill cry—surely she had never uttered it—a cry of mingled terror and despair. She slipped from the bed, wrenching

herself free from Mrs. Dampier's violent clutch. As she fought her way to the door and opened it the whip fell twice upon her shoulders with a force that seemed to cut her in two. But she was outside her room—she was flying down the stairs in a frenzy of sheer terror, like one in a nightmare who feels herself pursued by invisible horrors. No unknown danger of the crowded London streets could compare with the imminent one from which she was fleeing. . . She had torn across the hall and flung open the front door when two powerful arms caught her up into an immense unimaginable security. She gave a sob of relief that nearly shook her to pieces, and clung wildly to her father, her thin little arms clasped about his neck. She was beyond speaking and almost insensible to pain.

He could well imagine what had reduced his child to these straits. From day to day Mrs. Dampier had been waiting for an opportunity to strike a blow at him through Eunice. How far she had succeeded he could not tell, but the child had somehow managed to escape; he had found her fleeing into the night. . .

"My dear, dear Eunice," he whispered comfortingly.

He carried her upstairs. On the threshold of her room he saw his wife. It struck him that she looked like an implacable Nemesis. There was something terrible in her white, determined, cruel face. His heart sank within him.

He pushed past her and carried the child into her room.

"Will you go away, please?" he said sternly. "I will look after Eunice."

The door closed upon Mrs. Dampier. She realized that she had been defeated.

CHAPTER XX

MAJOR DAMPIER was engaged in forming precise plans for the future. Although he had never been very sanguine about his visit to England after so many years of absence, knowing that he would inevitably feel something of the sensations of a Rip van Winkle astray in his own country, he had certainly never anticipated that it would end so abruptly in failure so irremediable.

Financial ruin stared him in the face. For years he had economized to keep his head above water while his wife spent and squandered. Now he had been forced to borrow money at a very high rate of interest, and he knew that a man placed in such circumstances has but little chance of extricating himself through his own exertions. His account at the bank was overdrawn; there was no help to be looked for from that quarter. And he had no near relation or intimate friend to whom he could apply for money in an hour of pressing difficulty. It is true that he had one rich cousin, whom he now never saw, though as a boy he had visited at his house in the north. But Charles Dampier had disapproved of his improvident marriage, as he called it, and had signified his disapproval by taking no further notice of him.

But the money worries, degrading as they were to a man of the most fastidious and scrupulous honor, sank almost into insignificance beside the fresh blow he had endured to-night, this sudden sinister expression of his wife's hostility toward himself, evinced by the cruelty of her contemplated attack upon Eunice. The child had done nothing wrong, as she sobbingly explained in that hour he spent in her room trying to comfort and soothe her. And in any case Mrs. Parmeter's note of apologetic explanation should have sufficed to exonerate her from any blame

in the matter. But it was an occasion, alas, when her conduct, which had been so amazingly, astonishingly perfect, could at last be criticized, and all these weeks such an occasion had been wanting. Eunice, as if aware of pitfalls had gone carefully. That she was not the same simple and happy child bubbling over with unconscious gaiety whom he had seen in Brighton, he had always been disturbingly aware. But he had admired even while he regretted her quick grasp of the situation, her apprehension of dangerous possibilities. And as the days went on he lulled himself into a kind of security about her, feeling that she was able—this child of ten—to take care of herself. Now his house of cards had fallen about his ears.

At dinner they scarcely exchanged a word. Mrs. Dampier was a little alarmed; she had had her moments of being afraid of Herbert. And she knew that he was not only furious with what she had done, but that he intended to take steps to prevent anything of the kind happening again. In some way or other he would exact retribution from her. They were so far apart now that nothing could really increase the distance that divided them unless it could be their respective attitudes toward Eunice. Her growing hostility toward himself, her utter disregard of his wishes, her dishonorable debts, had very slowly but perfectly killed his love for her. But he did not yet hate her, and to-night he shrank from the thought that perhaps one day she would also accomplish this crowning misfortune.

As the end of the dinner drew near she told him carelessly that she was going out that night.

"No, you are not going out, Dulcie," he said with sudden sternness. "I have several important things to say to you."

Mrs. Dampier looked at him with heightened color. She was looking pretty to-night; her fair

hair was massed on the top of her head and her large grey eyes were shining like jewels under the steady, level brows. She was very like the girl whom eleven years ago he had loved with a strange passion of worship. But even that fact was powerless to soften his heart toward her now. He could not rid himself of the remembrance of that tragic moment when he had caught the escaping Eunice in his arms. He had seen too the marks of two long red weals upon her shoulders and had realized with what violence those blows must have been delivered.

"I don't wish to hear anything you've got to say. I know you are going to abuse me, and I know it all off by heart. You had far better let me keep my engagement with the Kinghams."

But although her tone was sharp she did not really mean to go out this evening in defiance of his wishes. It would be safer to conciliate him.

"I have made up my mind to go back to India as soon as possible, perhaps in the course of next week," he continued slowly, his eyes fixed upon her face. "It is impossible for me to stay in England any more. I am already ruined and every day adds to our indebtedness. You have spent all I had and much more. I have had to borrow money to stop your dressmaker from dunning me. Well, there is nothing left, Dulcie, and you have had your fling; but it can't go on any more. And now you have deliberately gone against me about Eunice. I will say nothing of your cruelty. But you have made it so hard for me ever to forgive you."

"You are exaggerating, as usual," she said. "I considered that Eunice deserved to be punished. I only gave her two tiny cuts—that is nothing to make a fuss about!"

"I forbade you to touch her," he said, "I won't have her treated cruelly."

"Do you expect me to let her run quite wild and have her own way always?" demanded Mrs. Dampier angrily.

"She has been perfectly good ever since she came to us. I defy anyone to find fault with her conduct."

"She had no right whatever to go out with Mrs. Parmeter without my leave. I didn't wish her to see them. She is always hankering after them—comparing them, I am sure, to us; and that is what makes her so sulky and miserable here. She must learn that we are her parents, that she has got to obey us, and that we have our rights!" Her eyes narrowed cruelly. "She must learn, in short, to forget the Parmeters."

"I don't intend that she shall forget them," said Major Dampier, "I mean to send her back to them —if they will have her."

"That will be an insult to me. They will think you don't trust me to look after her!" she said angrily. "You can't take a child away from its mother—when there's no need!"

"And is there no need?" he said bitterly.

"I tell you, you are making a fuss about nothing. And I won't have her go back there! I'm Eunice's mother."

"I don't consider that you are the proper guardian for a nervous little child," he said icily. "Even if we were to stay in England I could never leave her with you with any sense of security. But as we are going back to India immediately, the question does not arise. Eunice shall go back to Brighton before you drive her mad with terror."

"You are talking nonsense. I tell you I hardly touched her."

"But you were going to, and I had forbidden it. What would have become of her if I hadn't found

her this evening?" He rose wearily. "That is enough, Dulcie. Don't let us go over the ground again. You must be ready to start next week, and in the meantime I can't give you another cent for cabs and outings."

"I won't come with you. I refuse to come!" she said passionately.

"You have made it absolutely necessary. We can not afford to stay at home any longer."

"If you can afford to leave Eunice in luxury in England you can afford to leave me here too. I am the person to look after her, not Mrs. Parmeter. I refuse to give her up!"

"You shall never have charge of Eunice again while I am alive to prevent it."

Mrs. Dampier began to cry.

"Why don't you get an appointment at home instead of going back to that hateful India? You have no ambition. You are content to go on in the same old groove, to drag me down."

"No," he said icily, "it is not I who am dragging you down, Dulcie. You are my wife and we must try to make the best of things. I own it is not very easy, and if it is my fault I am sorry. But I am quite determined to send Eunice back to the Parmeters—unless, of course, they refuse to have her."

"If I had any money of my own I should refuse to go back with you. I should leave you and never see you again. I wish with all my heart that I had never married you!"

She went into her bedroom and shut the door. He could hear sounds of stormy weeping. Her words had torn down the last frail barrier of reserve between them. Only hard necessity kept her by his side. But he saw more clearly than ever how essential it was that Eunice should be separated from her mother. He must keep them apart till the girl was

grown up, so that she should risk no contamination from the daily intimacy with such a mind. He seemed to see in Eunice the possibilities of a beautiful character, and he was resolved that she should be given a fair chance.

Mrs. Dampier saw that she had played her cards badly. She had precipitated the very thing that was most hateful to her, their return to India. It was a satisfaction to feel, however, that her husband must also be very unhappy. Whatever else she had done, she had forced him into a premature parting from Eunice; and Eunice was, as she saw very plainly, the light of his eyes. Although she had told him that the child was "always hankering after" the Parmeters and perhaps comparing her own parents unfavorably with them, she knew she had not been strictly truthful. Eunice would have been perfectly happy alone with her father. They had quickly become friends, in a short time they would have bridged over those years of separation and become as intimate a father and daughter as if they had never been separated at all.

There was no chance of his relenting. When he spoke like that, in a stern, passionless voice, she knew by experience that his mind was made up, and that neither tears nor entreaties would make him alter his purpose. He was going to take Eunice away from her; he had told her she was not a proper guardian for her own child. What explanation could he possibly offer to Mrs. Parmeter when he made his request that she should once more receive Eunice? Could he offer any, indeed, that would not be damaging to herself? And it was quite possible that Mrs. Parmeter, remembering certain events that had happened in Rome, would be able to guess what had driven him to this sudden decision.

She was to be sacrificed for Eunice. It was for

Eunice's sake that she was to be compelled to return to India. When she thought of the charm and luxury of Mrs. Parmeter's abode the reflection became doubly bitter. Eunice would have all those things that she was denied.

"I hope they will refuse to have her back," she thought to herself. "It would do her all the good in the world to rough it a little. She has been utterly spoiled."

CHAPTER XXI

MRS. PARMETER asked no questions, but she left no doubt in the half-broken heart of Major Dampier as to the nature of the reception that awaited Eunice on her return. She might indeed have been welcoming a daughter of her own who had been absent from home on some innocently prodigal course, and who was now miraculously restored to her. And because of her reticence—a fine, delicate quality of hers, born of her dreadful fear of wounding by any chance remark the unknowable and perhaps stricken soul of another—Major Dampier found himself pouring confidences into her ears. She ought not to be kept in the dark as to the chain of circumstances that were remorselessly prevailing upon him to part with his child and go back to his work.

"I can't have all that you've so wonderfully done for her, undone," he explained. "I can't have that bright spirit of hers crushed and broken. She belongs so much to you."

Even the Italian Madonnas fashioned of pale gleaming majolica, the holy-water stoups, the pictures, and all the other evidences of their faith which

had so intrigued him upon the occasion of his first visit to Brunswick Terrace, touched him to-day to a new perception and appreciation of that spiritual atmosphere which imbued the whole house. He knew that he wanted Eunice to have those very influences. He had no idea what part they had hitherto played in the shaping of her, but he was aware that he wished to have nothing altered.

He felt she was a child whom any woman could have loved and cherished; she seemed to him destitute of dull and disagreeable qualities. That made it all the more strange that she should awaken within her own mother no other feeling but an active and cruel hostility.

Even now, loyalty held him back from telling Mrs. Parmeter the whole truth. But his broken, ashamed utterances gave her a glimpse of that life to which Eunice had been exposed during the weeks she had spent with her parents.

"She was always afraid, and it made her abnormally apprehensive," he said, "she was never quite natural. She was slipping back to what she used to be in India as a small child. Clever at eluding notice, though God knows she did nothing wrong, never said a word any one could have caviled at in her anxious desire to please, or rather not to displease. She'd no small sins to hide, as in the old days. But the fear had never really died in her heart."

"But she didn't do anything?" Mrs. Parmeter betrayed her only curiosity. He hadn't told her what had precipitated the crisis which must have supervened before he could have brought himself to put an end to the situation in this abrupt final manner.

"Oh, if you want to know, it was your fault!" he said with a touch of bitterness, as if ashamed to

reveal that such immense results had emerged from an initial cause that was so slight. "The day you fetched her—it was the first time that her conduct could have been called in question at all."

"You mean she oughtn't to have come?" Mrs. Parmeter was horrified to think that she herself, however innocently, had been instrumental in bringing about the crisis. "You must forgive me—it was tactless. But we thought even if we had no longer any rights we might at least claim the privilege of borrowing her!"

"Oh, you could have done it in ninety-nine cases," he told her now, "but this happened to be the miserable hundredth. Perhaps I ought to be grateful to you for hastening the climax. There are other things that make it impossible for me to stay. And about the payments, Mrs. Parmeter"—A dark color flooded his face, for here his own honor was sharply concerned—"I'm ashamed it should be so in arrears. And at present there's no prospect of my getting square—we're simply head-over-ears in debt. I can only promise you—if you'll still trust me—that I shall pay off every farthing as soon as I can."

"Oh, don't talk about that!" Her voice was almost pleading. "If you knew what it means to us all to have her back, you'd never mention payment again. And you can see perhaps that we're not—thank God—in need of money. Eunice makes no difference except to increase our wonderful happiness. We'd almost rather, you know, that there shouldn't be any question of payment at all. You see—you are giving us so much."

She was thinking of Julian.

He tried to thank her. "What you can give her could never be paid for," he said earnestly. "One doesn't buy and sell happiness and tranquillity—and that loving care you've given her for two years."

"My boys will be delighted to have her back—especially Julian."

"Ah, she's very fond of Julian," he said, "I should like to see him. She'll want to hear about him when I get home."

"But of course. I'll send for him at once. Geoffrey is playing hockey to-day."

Julian came in, eager to see Eunice's father, yet shy too at the thought of meeting him. He wasn't the princely figure of his dreams, this immense, white-haired soldier with the dark, tragic, unhappy eyes and the thin bronzed face. Still, he was a personality; you felt that almost as soon as he spoke to you, in that direct way of a man whose dealings with other men are necessarily simple and straightforward, and for the most part impersonal and official. There was more perhaps of the Centurion than of the Black Prince about this man to whom Eunice belonged.

Major Dampier, on his part mentally categorized the boy as interesting-looking. A trifle delicate, he was so very white, but he had extraordinary intelligent eyes, deep-set, solemn. He remembered that this was the one whom Lady Eliot had characterized as a regular little *dévot*.

"So you are Julian," he said holding out his hand.

"Is Eunice quite well, please?" said Julian.

"Yes, she's pretty well, thanks. I've come down to ask your mother if she'll let her come back!"

The boy looked up and smiled, and his whole face was suddenly transformed. He had the feeling that he had been awakened from a prolonged and painful dream. He had told himself so often that she would never come back; he had ceased by any effort of imagination to picture her return.

"Do you mean for always?" he asked.

"Not always, perhaps, but for a good long time,"

said Major Dampier, kindly; " you see, I'm going back to India with my wife next week."

"She's to come next week?" said Julian, hardly daring to believe it.

"This very next week," said Major Dampier, forgetting his own sorrow in that look of pure joy that Julian's eyes seemed to radiate at that moment.

"I know you're glad, Julian," said his mother gently.

"Glad!" And he smiled again—that rare smile of his that drove away like a sudden glance of sunshine the deep, brooding solemnity that ordinarily made his face seem so little boyish. "It's too good of you—when you'll miss her so," he added, trying to put himself in the position of Major Dampier and to picture what this premature parting must mean to him to whom Eunice belonged. He had forced himself in his most savagely miserable moments to remember that these people had, after all, a prior claim, had every right to take her away, to keep her.

"Yes, I shall miss her terribly. But I've got to go back and daren't take her with me. At least, if she's here I shall know that she's happy."

Julian longed to ask him how long he would remain in India this time, but he felt that the question might be indiscreet, and convey indirectly that they, the Parmeters, could only hope his absence might be indefinitely extended. Besides, it didn't matter so very much. They could feel quite safe for at least a year, perhaps two years. And during that time Eunice would belong utterly to them. It had been terrible without her all these weeks. He had not complained; in his childish way he had tried to bear the trial supernaturally, always aware that this was the only possible way of bearing it at all.

Mrs. Parmeter had been right when she told Major Dampier that Eunice made no difference ex-

cept to increase their wonderful happiness. He found himself vaguely wishing that his home more closely resembled this one. Not in wealth and luxury, but in that calm, ordered contentment which dominated it so suavely. The perfect sympathy, too, that existed between mother and son gave him something like a sharp pang, and the thought of Eunice then produced a forlorn feeling that he had missed something that was essential to happiness. He couldn't keep his only child with him because her mother had conceived this fierce dislike to her. That was the plain fact stated plainly. It was too hideous to be capable of palliation, and it had almost broken his heart. . .

He was prepared to make any sacrifice where Eunice was concerned, to compensate her for this evil of which she was only half-conscious, but under the shadow of which she had been groping pitifully during her sojourn in London.

"You don't want to consult your husband first?" he said, suddenly aware that this crucial matter had been apparently settled without any regard at all to the head of the house. "He may object to having her back."

Mrs. Parmeter smiled. "I'm afraid I forgot all about asking Norman," she said, "but we will speak to him about it at lunch. I know, you see, it's what he's been wishing for—ever since she went away. He's perfectly devoted to Eunice."

His brow cleared again. "I can never thank you enough," he said, "and if I could only assure you that it isn't a weak shifting of responsibility on my part! I feel that her whole future is at stake. And knowing what you've done for her I couldn't face the thought of placing her elsewhere."

"But surely," cried Mrs. Parmeter, almost in dis-

may at such a suggestion, "you would have given us the first refusal of her, wouldn't you?"

"If you put it like that——" he said slowly.

"How could I put it in any other way?" she breathlessly parried. There *had* been a chance, then, of their losing the child. This man, aghast at the misfortune that had come upon him, must have believed too that they didn't want her at Brighton either. He had felt actual reluctance at asking this favor of them, when all the time they considered themselves as the recipients of enormous privileges.

It was a comfort to him to feel that Eunice had the capacity for making herself loved. There was no doubt at all of their joy at the news of her return. Nor was he to be spared Norman Parmeter's careful, unenthusiastic, but obviously sincere:

"It's most awfully good of you, Dampier, to trust her to us again. I only hope we shall none of us fail in our suretyship."

He had a dry, ironical way of speaking, but his face lit up with pleasure as he uttered the words.

"Tell her I've a wonderful assortment of new books. I'd intended to send them up to her later on if she didn't come down herself to fetch them."

Later on he had a word with Major Dampier alone.

"There's only one thing I want to ask you," he said, "and that is that you'll let Eunice come back as a visitor—a dear little guest, in fact. I don't feel as if we could have a business arrangement any more. If you could allow this, it would so enormously increase our pleasure in having her."

"I couldn't do that," said Major Dampier hastily, "I'm already too deeply indebted to you. It's not to be thought of."

"Won't you really see," said Norman, "how dreadfully we're indebted to you? I lost a little

girl once,"—he had not mentioned Baby Sister for many years—"it was a great grief to my wife, so I don't often talk about it. But I have always wished for a little daughter. That is why I'm so grateful to you for letting us have the care of yours."

It seemed to Major Dampier that there was nothing more to be said, and he was obliged to give in.

CHAPTER XXII

WHEN she first came back they all felt as if they could not do enough to show how welcome she was. They knew how nearly they had lost her, and this made her bright little presence of an incalculable worth. She had so nearly escaped from them—by as sure though not quite so final a means as in the long ago Baby Sister had effected her escape from a world that had shown her nothing but the tenderest love and solicitude.

The agonized parting with Major Dampier was over when she came, and Mrs. Parmeter went to Victoria Station to receive her from his hands.

Eunice understood the situation perfectly, as far as her father could allow her to understand it. He had to go back to India, and he had felt—to put it mildly—that she wasn't quite happy in London, hadn't quite everything, so to speak, that the Parmeters had so abundantly given her. Eunice knew that he wasn't only speaking of material things; they didn't in the long run count, and could never indeed have counted against the blessing of his own love for her. But then he was a busy man; he hadn't time always to look after her, to see that she was happy; he never, of course, added the words, "and safe."

Nor did he suggest she must have seen that some sort of supervision was necessary to avoid scenes of the kind that had been enacted completely in Rome, and imperfectly—for which she had her own coolness to thank—in London. He wasn't acting through mere caprice, as he could quite loyally explain to her, in giving up his long-looked-for leave, his holidays and returning to work before they were ended. She must never, never think that doing these things signified any lack of affection for her; she was always his first thought. And that was the reason why he was going to take the Parmeters at their word and send her back to Brunswick Terrace. She must be very good and patient, and work hard at her lessons, and try to be a dear little daughter to them. . . He had choked back a rising emotion at this point, feeling, indeed, as if he were with his own hands digging a grave for something inexpressibly dear to himself. For how could he remain away for years and years and then come home expecting to find her unchanged toward him? He must inevitably miss all those little daily intimacies which weave such strong bonds between the members of one family. He had to renounce the thought of watching her grow up, developing from childhood to girlhood, to the first sweetness of womanhood; he fancied in Eunice's case the gradual evolution would be as exquisite as the unfolding of a flower. She would grow up to great beauty, there was no doubt of that, and her intellect so assiduously cultivated in that wonderful home would be on a par with her beauty.

Even to Julian she gave scarcely any account of the two months she had spent with her parents; her mother's name was shrouded in an almost complete silence. Nor could Mildred wrest any details of that sojourn from her sealed lips. She could and did talk of her father when she had recovered a little

from the pang of parting with him. She went back to school, worked with considerable energy, leaving the slower-witted Mildred far behind, and seldom failed to visit Mr. Parmeter in his den when the day's work was over. She made efforts to show them that nothing was changed, herself least of all, by that enforced absence.

When Julian came home for the Easter holidays she surprised him by asking him to speak to her sometimes of his religion. "You know I like to hear about it because it's yours," she said.

"They don't mind?" he said hesitatingly.

"Papa never said anything about it," she answered.

It was a mere childish endeavor on her part to draw nearer to them in this as in all the other details of their life. There was something definite and permanent now about her sojourn with them, and she was contented as a child is when it has been taught by sharp experience to dread change. She was more gentle and considerate toward Julian, less provocative to Geoffrey, and to Mr. and Mrs. Parmeter she was almost everything that a dear little daughter of their own could have been. She had her place in the house, in their lives; in all their plans she played a part. Julian could see letters arrive from India without his old sick fear that they might bring news of her departure from their midst. It was all settled and comfortable and there was little dread of losing her.

Although she still went to church on Sundays with the Eliots, since Major Dampier had not mentioned that he wished any change in this arrangement, Julian taught her a good deal during the holidays. "I wish papa was a Catholic and then I could be one too," she said much later.

Julian answered thoughtfully:

"When you are grown up you can choose. Your

father can't mind so very much or he wouldn't have let you come back."

Those years in Brighton passed very quickly; those calm, uneventful, changeless years, only marked by the growing-up of the children; the little alterations that took place in their habits, amusements, and tastes, foreshadowing so clearly the kind of men and women they would be. Neither their own sons nor Eunice ever gave them any cause for real anxiety. They made progress in knowledge and in self-discipline, and Julian especially in the deeper things of the spirit.

Only one summer stood out for Julian as an unhappy time. . .

The Dampiers had been gone more than three years, and Eunice was in her fourteenth year. She promised to be tall like her father, and she was the same height as Geoffrey, who was more than a year older. Julian was still the thin, overgrown one of the group, a little awkward in some of his movements and gestures but with the poet's eyes and brow, which had an exaggerated resemblance to his father's. Geoffrey, passionately fond of cricket, was often away from home in the summer; he frequently went to play in cricket-matches at country houses where he was a great favorite and could always be depended on to acquit himself well. He had so much energy and initiative. In some ways he had a more interesting experience of life than his brother, and he pitied Julian, who really did not need his pity and would have eagerly rejected any offers of the kind for himself. He hated staying with people. He always alleged, he was much happier here with his books; he wouldn't miss a day of it. . .

"Or of Eunice," Geoffrey once ventured to say with a taunt in his voice. He had never quite got

rid of his old jealousy that Julian should be so preoccupied with Eunice.

They were walking one hot July day on the Hove Lawns. The vivid green and blue of the scene was always painted on Julian's memory. It was so hot that even the sea scarcely offered any coolness; no breeze stirred across that plain of sparkling sapphire-colored water. He was walking with his parents, and they had promised to meet Eunice on the Lawns, as she had gone to church with the Eliots, and take her home. They had walked some little way before they saw the Eliot party coming toward them. Lady Eliot had Sara and Jane one on each side of her—Susan was still considered too young to go without a nurse—and close behind them was Mildred walking with Eunice and a tall, broadly-made boy with light-brown eyes and hair. To Julian he seemed almost grown up. He had rather a charming face with a wide, laughing mouth, and dark brows that made a striking contrast to his paler hair and eyes, and gave a certain character to his physiognomy. Almost immediately Julian felt that he would never forget exactly how this boy looked as he strolled along so carelessly by Eunice's side, lifting his stick now and then to indicate something, and showing in all his movements an easy grace that was very attractive. He looked wonderfully alive.

"This is my husband's nephew, Gilfrid Eliot," said Lady Eliot, introducing him. "I'm sorry to hear that Geoffrey isn't at home—I'm sure they would have got on well and they could have played golf together."

Lady Eliot was very fond of this orphaned young nephew of Sir Alaric's. He was still at Eton, but in a year or two he was to go to Oxford, and at the age of twenty-one he would inherit a large fortune and a charming property.

"I want Eunice to come to lunch to-morrow and we mean to go up to the Dyke afterward," she said.

Eunice was looking flushed and excited and very pretty.

"Oh, do please let me, Mrs. Parmeter," she said.

"Of course you may go, Eunice dear," said Mrs. Parmeter, regretting perhaps that Julian had not been included in the invitation. He would spend a long lonely day and though he never seemed to mind she could not help feeling that it was bad for him. Besides, he would miss Eunice.

They all went on together for a little way, but Gilfrid and Mildred still kept a little behind with Eunice.

"Is that Julian Parmeter Mildred's been gassing about?" said Gilfrid, in his careless way. "Looks a bit of a freak. But then these chaps from Catholic schools so often do."

He passed on immediately to quite another topic, dismissing him with these few words of careless criticism that somehow made Eunice a trifle ashamed of Julian, of his strangeness so often felt but imperfectly apprehended and certainly never before expressed in these concrete terms. She wished that Gilfrid could have seen Geoffrey; there was nothing of the freak about him. He was exactly like other boys of his age, only more clever and brilliant and good-looking than most of them. Lady Eliot had often frankly confessed that she preferred Geoffrey of the two, he was more human and less spoiled.

Julian walked on silently, thinking of this big laughing boy with his handsome, careless face. Geoffrey, when he returned on the following day, would be admitted into the little group; he felt almost certain that there would be a sudden close friendship between the two. Geoffrey made friends

very quickly; he nearly always got on well with other boys.

"Where's Eunice?" Geoffrey asked at luncheon on the following day, seeing that there was no fifth place laid at table. He had just arrived at home from a successful week of cricket.

"She's lunching with the Eliots," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Eunice's swagger friends," said Geoffrey laughing.

"Their nephew Gilfrid Eliot is staying there. He's older than you—about seventeen, I should think," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Ju and I won't have a look in," said Geoffrey.

Somehow the careless words stabbed Julian. Never before in his life had he felt jealous, but now he was conscious of a rising, consuming jealousy of the big handsome boy he had seen on the Lawns the day before.

"We're not quite up to her form now," said Geoffrey.

He made up his mind to "rag" Eunice when she came back. Sometimes he made her cry, but Mr. Parmeter always interfered if he thought his son was going too far. When his eyes flashed and had sparks in them, as Julian used to say as a little boy, his sons still realized it was time to stop.

They were sitting in the schoolroom when Eunice at last returned in the dusk of the summer evening. She had enjoyed her day. They had had tea on the downs, and Gilfrid had told her in a moment of confidence that she was very pretty and had "ripping hair." She came back a little elated at this unaccustomed and very definite praise, her cheeks flushed still from the wind on the downs and her

eyes shining. There was indeed every excuse for Gilfrid's admiration.

Geoffrey and Julian sat there reading. Geoffrey was working; he always set apart an hour or two every day for this purpose. Julian was reading a book of poetry; but his thoughts were full of Eunice, and he was wondering when she would return when the door opened and she came suddenly into the room. He put down his book and smiled at her. She came across to the window and sat down near him.

Geoffrey waited a moment before inaugurating his attack.

"Well, Miss Dampier, I hope we shall be allowed to have the honor of dining with you to-night, if your friends can spare you."

Eunice looked up a little startled.

"Why—why shouldn't I dine with you?" she said.

"Because we're not smart people," said Geoffrey in an aggravating tone. "We can't compare with your new friends. Our manners have not that repose—at Eton, isn't he?" And he fixed large, innocent blue eyes upon Eunice.

Eunice flushed and the tears came into her eyes.

"Why are you so horrid just because I went out to lunch?" she said.

"Don't mind what he says," said Julian, anxious to make peace. "Don't let yourself be drawn."

"I like my friends," Eunice flashed out suddenly. "They're polite at least. They're not always ragging me—and each other!"

She was angry now. Geoffrey could still arouse her old quick temper.

"No—I was quite sure that we couldn't be compared with them," said Geoffrey smoothly.

Eunice picked up a book that was lying near and flung it at him with well-directed aim. It caught

him square just above the ear. He sprang up and coming across the room grasped her hands. His wrists were as thin and supple as steel springs.

"You little vixen!" he cried. "Apologize!"

"I shan't! Let me go—you are hurting me. . . Julian, tell him to let me go!"

She wriggled and struggled, but Geoffrey's grasp was like a vise.

"I'll let you go, my dear Miss Dampier, when you say you're sorry. Do you behave like a fiend at the Eliots'?"

He was smiling, but she knew by his blazing eyes that he was angry and meant to hold her thus imprisoned until she apologized. The blow had hurt him, and his face on that side had grown crimson through the healthy sunburn.

"Julian, do help me. Tell him to let me go."

"Say you're sorry, Eunice, and he'll let you go all right. Don't hurt her Geoff—it was your fault, you know. You were teasing her."

Eunice did not follow this excellent but difficult advice. She struggled and stamped and finally screamed with rage. Geoffrey continued to hold her with his powerful young hands. In the midst of this pandemonium, when Julian was still wondering whether he ought to interfere or not, Norman Parmeter came into the room. Geoffrey with his back turned to the door never noticed his father's entrance. The first he knew of it was a blow that sent him staggering across the room.

Eunice, finding herself suddenly freed, made her escape, sobbing and crying with rage and relief.

Parmeter faced his son with flashing eyes.

"What's the meaning of this, Geoffrey? I won't have you treat Eunice like that. You're not to be rough with her!"

"She threw a book at my head first," said Geof-

frey sullenly. "I told her I'd let her go as soon as she apologized. She's got the temper of a fiend."

"Well, let me catch you at it again!" said Norman with a threat in his voice. "Mind, Geoff, I mean what I say. You're older than she is and you ought to have learned self-control by this time. Do not please make it necessary for me to teach it to you." His voice subsided into its more usual tone of tempered irony. Then quietly he went out of the room.

Geoffrey sat down by the window. There was a lump in his throat and his hand shook a little.

"I hate Eunice," he said, "I wish she'd go away. She always got us into rows."

"She never got me into a row in her life," said Julian.

"That's because you suck up to her and let her do everything she likes. Father's never hit me like that before."

"You shouldn't have hurt her, then," said Julian.

The little scene had made him nervous. He had hated to see Geoffrey struck with such force; for the moment he had feared that he would actually fall to the ground. Yet he felt that if no one else had intervened he would soon have had to go to the rescue of Eunice himself. It was a very difficult position—this one of arbitrating between Eunice and his own brother. Both had been in the wrong, but Geoffrey had begun it, teasing her in that light sarcastic tone that always wounded her. She had come in looking so radiantly happy, almost triumphant, and now she had fled upstairs, sobbing and crying.

"She'll begin to think she's happier at the Eliots'," he thought to himself.

"Of course you take her part—you always did," said Geoffrey, aggrieved. "She'll be awfully cocky now at getting me scored off like that."

Presently Julian rose and went upstairs. He had

no intention of seeking Eunice immediately, but he longed to know what she was doing and if the tempest had subsided. On the next floor there was the little room that once had been the nurse's but which had now been transformed into a sitting-room for Eunice, where she had her piano and books. As he passed by, the door was ajar and he became aware of a distressing sound of sobs. He tapped lightly at the door, and receiving no answer entered cautiously.

The room was almost in darkness for already the violet summer twilight was deepening into dusk. In an armchair near the window he perceived a huddled figure from which the sobbing emanated. Stepping lightly, Julian went across the room and took Eunice's hand.

"Don't cry, Eunice dear," he said in a comforting tone.

The sobs subsided a little and she raised her head.

"Why was Geoff such a beast to me? And I was so happy—we had a lovely day. Now it's all spoiled and I never want to think about it again."

"You shouldn't take any notice of him when you see he wants to rag you. He'd stop soon enough then."

"He makes me mad. I want to—to hurt him!"

"Well, you did hurt him, you know," said Julian smiling.

She rose, stood in front of a little mirror and arranged her disordered hair.

"Don't be angry too, Julian," she said.

"I angry? I'm never angry with you. You ought to know that by now."

"But you take Geoffrey's part."

"I don't. I only try not to let him see that I take yours."

"You do take mine—always?"

Julian reflected a moment. "Yes—always."

"Really and truly? Even when I behave like a—a fiend?"

"You see I never think you're a fiend," he said with a comforting smile.

"I'm horrid to you, though, sometimes. I let Gilfrid Eliot call you a freak yesterday, and I never said a word."

Julian smiled, a pale, remote smile.

"Perhaps I am a freak—to him."

"But I ought to have shown him that I was angry. Here—" she tapped her breast lightly, "I felt very angry."

Whatever happened to Eunice she could never bear to feel that Julian thought ill of her. On her narrow little plane of life, with its infinite hopes and fears and dreams—such as commonly people the interior life of imaginative childhood—this was the one unendurable disaster. To beleive that in his secret heart he was thinking she had behaved badly on any occasion was to her like a succession of stripes, not bruising the body with marks that would soon fade, but bruising the soul with indelible scars.

She flung her arms round his neck now with one of her swift spasmodic outbursts of affection that always took him a little aback and which could, with advancing years, make him feel definitely awkward and embarrassed, and sobbing wildly, kissed him. It was her way of expressing relief and contrition.

"You're not—you're not a freak," she assured him. "I love you better than any one. I was a coward not to stick up for you, when you were spoken of like that! I want to be polite and agree and hide what I really think. Why can't I be brave—like you?"

"But I'm not brave," he said very quietly.

"Oh you are—you are! You wouldn't let any one call me names and never say a word."

"No, I don't quite see myself doing that. Only it wouldn't take any particular courage."

He pushed back her disheveled dark hair from her forehead. Her face was still wet with tears, and his hand, as he took it away, was wet too. He made her sit down in the big armchair, and then he sat on the arm of it and drew her head toward him until it rested upon his shoulder, just as he had done when they were both little children. She became very quiet almost at once. His odd tenderness soothed her and gradually took the sting out of her pain. She was ashamed of her outburst of temper.

They remained thus while the darkness flowed in upon them through the open windows, as if it were something cold and deep that came to them out of the heart of the restless sea beyond.

"*You* don't mind my being friends with the Eliots, so why should Geoffrey mind? Why should he be horrid about it? He's never been my great friend here. He's always teasing me. I like him less than any of you," she said at last.

"Oh, you mustn't mind him. He loves ragging people. At school he is always getting his head punched for it," said Julian.

"Still, you are—as you said just now—on my side?"

"Yes, but Geoff's my brother and I'm bound to think of him."

She recognized this delicate loyalty; it touched her. It seemed to her that Julian, young though he was, was always so right.

"If you'd behaved as I did this evening should you have to say it in confession?" she inquired presently.

Julian paused. "Yes," he said.

"What would you say?" There was always something mysterious to her about this rite so punctually observed—as she knew—by the Parmeter family. Especially she was curious with regard to Julian. On the surface he seemed to her so faultless; she had often wondered what he found to say.

"I should say that I lost my temper—gave way to anger—caused another person to commit a sin of anger," he said very slowly, his eyes fixed upon the darkness beyond. He could hardly see her face now, he could only, when he turned his head, distinguish a pale oval in the gloom.

"And then?"

"I should receive absolution—the priest would give me some prayers to say for a penance. But I should have to do much more, you know, than the mere telling of the sin—that's only a little part of it, though it's the part that hurts most, as a rule. You have to feel real sorrow and contrition for what you've done, Eunice, and make a firm resolution never to commit that sin again—and ask for grace to help you to keep it."

"I could never be good like you," she murmured.

"I'm not at all good. But it helps one to be better. And it's a lovely feeling—having absolution."

"Is it?" She was always interested in personal feelings and experiences. She liked him to lift the curtain sometimes and reveal glimpses of that quiet, withdrawn life of his. "What does it feel like, Julian?"

"As if you had been cleansed and healed," he said slowly. "Don't talk about these things to other people—people who don't understand them. Not, for instance, to Mildred."

"I don't ever talk to Mildred about you. I love to hear you talk. Go on, please. You seem to think it matters so frightfully whether we are good

or not. I only care because I'm so ashamed afterward that people should have seen me when I'm naughty. I hate them to know. I couldn't bear it if you began not to like me any more because of things like to-night. But you don't seem to care what other people say and think. It's not for that reason that you're always trying to be good."

"Oh, I'm not thinking of people," said Julian, "that would only be pride—human respect."

"Then why—why?" she said, longing to get in some way closer to him, his thoughts, his ideals. That spiritual atmosphere of his—a thing quite beyond her definition in concrete terms—was something that differed very widely from the excellent but worldly standards that prevailed at the Eliots'. It baffled her always, because his silences, so seldom broken, as they had so wonderfully been to-night, kept her always on the other side of the barrier.

"Because we are here to serve God," said Julian. "All sin—all imperfection—all lack of co-operation on our part with the divine will—must keep us further away from God. And if we love Him we wish because of our love to draw near to Him. There are people who never have that desire, and they even disbelieve that it exists in others. Christ has shown us the way—has left us His Church," he proceeded in a voice that now warmed a little, "and His sacraments as a means to draw closer every day, every hour." He seemed to be speaking less to her than to himself. Looking in front of him, almost unconscious of her nearness, of her rapt attention, he seemed to see before him painted mystically against the summer sky that ladder which Francis Thompson saw:

"Pitched between heaven and Charing Cross."

Eunice said no more. It was the first time that

he had ever offered her a definite and complete glimpse of his interior life. Child as she was, she felt that it held the clue to all that had puzzled and even baffled her in Julian. That Something in him which set him apart from other people and which influenced those around him. Perhaps some vague sense of this difference in him had prompted Gilfrid Eliot to call him a freak.

She slipped away at last, leaving him there scarcely aware that she had gone; his face cameo-pale in the gloom, his burning eyes fixed upon a point in the darkened horizon.

CHAPTER XXIII

EUNICE went down to dinner in a subdued mood. Julian's influence was very strong; it made her go up shyly to Geoffrey who was already in the drawing-room, and say:

"Please, I'm sorry, Geoff. Do forgive me."

"Oh, that's all right, Eunice," said Geoffrey, whose fits of anger were always short-lived. "Sorry I hurt you," he added, with a touch of awkwardness.

Mrs. Parmeter, who had heard something of what had passed from Norman, was relieved to find that the children were once more on good terms. Eunice had been crying; there were traces of tears on her face and her eyes were slightly red, but she talked quite cheerfully and directed nearly all her conversation to Geoffrey as if to make amends. The meal passed in perfect harmony; the slight troubling of the waters had subsided.

"I don't believe there'd ever be any disturbance at all if I wasn't here," thought Eunice, penitently.

It was a comfort to be able to feel that they were

all so ready, even eager, to forgive her any lapse of the kind.

Geoffrey, as Julian had anticipated, very soon made friends with Gilfrid Eliot. When this had been accomplished, neither Eunice nor Mildred saw much of Gilfrid. He was at an age when he still preferred the society of other boys, and he and Geoffrey had many athletic tastes in common. They played cricket and golf, and often on those warm, mellow days of mid-August they would go out deep-sea fishing, returning quite late and burned almost black by the sun. Julian never offered to accompany them. He was singularly destitute of all sporting and athletic instincts, and only played games when school discipline compelled him to do so. For the rest of the holidays he was thrown more upon the society of Eunice, except when she was invited to spend the day with Mildred. Gilfrid was sometimes present on those occasions and always when Eunice returned she seemed to Julian a little altered and excited as if she were conscious of having had a successful day. But she never talked much about Gilfrid. It was the obvious admiration of this boy so much older than herself that she found so thrilling; always when she came back she thought that Julian was a little dull and quiet. And then his very restfulness would make her happy and contented with him again.

When she reflected—as she did sometimes in the morning, just after the housemaid had put a tray with a cup of tea by her side and drawn up the blind with a clatter that was intended to banish sleep like an enemy—upon that conversation with Julian she came to the conclusion it was because he had these grave mature thoughts about God and his duty, that he seemed so unlike other boys. He had lost, so to speak, his very youth; he had made sacrifice of it,

she supposed. He never did anything wrong that she could discover, and Eunice was still at an age when forbidden fruit is commonly sweet. She found a delicious pleasure in secretly disobeying rules at school and even leading Mildred into unhallowed paths. There were only a few years in which, as she was wont to tell herself, you could do such things. They would be impossible and ridiculous in a grown-up person. It was a pity to miss anything that strictly belonged to one's youth. Julian had deliberately turned his back on a whole set of minor experiences simply because in his eyes they were wrong. He was never disobedient or cross, never got into any kind of mischief, although Geoffrey offered him abundant possibilities of so doing and was ever ready to lead the way. She could not believe that Julian was ever deliberately or consciously untruthful. He never grew angry nor abused other people nor attributed blame to them. And even now that he had explained to her something of his aims she failed to grasp the importance of the fundamental principle that guided him. How could he care so passionately about God? Why was he so impetuously eager to serve Him—to draw nearer to Him in some mysterious, invisible communion? He loved Him—but why? These were puzzling questions, yet only the answers to them could have thrown any light upon his character and life that set him arbitrarily apart from them all in a detachment that prevented herself as well as others from approaching too closely to him. And it was not only the result of teaching. Geoffrey had had precisely the same education, and he was not good in the sense that Julian was good. People, such as Lady Eliot, often preferred him to Julian on account of his brighter disposition, his gay and sunny humor; but he had all the faults that most healthy boys have. When he quarreled with her

they both almost always lost their tempers, and there was an angry wild scene such as Mr. Parmeter's sudden entrance had put a stop to. She was sorry that Geoffrey should be hurt, and so, she knew, was Julian, although he bore no malice toward her for her share in the affair. For a few days she even resolved to be more like Julian, and to have more serious thoughts of holy things, but soon she found herself straying back to the old, pleasant, easy paths where Mildred led her and Gilfrid flattered her, and there was often a contemptuous little sneer for Julian.

"I don't ask Julian," Lady Eliot used to say when she invited Geoffrey; "I know he doesn't care to come."

The August days flowed into September, and the holidays drew near to their close. There was an unusually fine summer in England that year, and always when Julian looked upon it he visualized it as a broad space of brilliant light interspersed with dark shadows. Those shadows, when everything became confused and blurred to his mind, were the days in which Eunice was swept out of his sight, swept away, as it seemed, by the malicious light touch of Lady Eliot. It wasn't so much that he missed her; he could tranquilly amuse himself in her absence, but it was the thought of that growing influence they had over her. They idly destroyed or tried to destroy all his own impartments to her, especially those that touched upon religion. She was far less ready to listen to him after a day or two spent in that jovial little company with its acknowledged leader, Gilfrid Eliot, who stigmatized it as "Rather rot, all that sort of thing, don't you think?" when the Parmeters' religion was being discussed among them. And, in his utter enjoyment of life, his unfailing gaiety, his boyish charm, there was no

doubt that Gilfrid was far more fascinating and convincing than Julian Parmeter. He did manage somehow to impose this apparently happier point of view upon Eunice, who found her own disposition far more in accordance with it. After all, the things for which Julian was striving so strenuously were slightly unnecessary and exaggerated when viewed through Gilfrid's more worldly eyes. "One can have an awfully good time and do one's duty without all that," he used to say. "Makes a man a bit of a smug, don't you think?" And, although his words hurt Eunice at the time, they unconsciously influenced her. Not so much as regarded Julian; she was accustomed to his unlikeness to other boys, but toward the religion he professed. It was something that engulfed you, took possession of you, made heavy demands upon your life and conduct. She had always instinctively shrunk from it as something that might possibly chain and imprison her, although it attracted her in so many ways. Gilfrid was right, she considered; he was older, more a man of the world than Julian. . . She was strongly on the Eliots' side that summer, and she was with them a great deal.

Major Dampier continued to write regularly to his little daughter, and he frequently sent a letter also to Mrs. Parmeter. He never said much about himself, nor was there ever a word relating to his own domestic affairs. All that Mrs. Parmeter could learn of them was through Lady Eliot in their somewhat rare interviews. Any intimacy between the two houses was through Eunice and Mildred, and, when Gilfrid was there, through him and Geoffrey. The two ladies had not a great deal in common. Lady Eliot would shrug her shoulders during these interviews and say: "I'm afraid from what my hus-

band tells me, Mrs. Parmeter, that things are going from bad to worse. There's a great deal of gossip, and of course, poor man, he hasn't an atom of control over her. I sometimes think it would be almost the best thing that could happen if she were definitely to leave him!"

She knew as she spoke that Mrs. Parmeter, although silent, disagreed with her, and would even condemn this view as utterly wrong and sinful. But surely there must be exceptions? The woman was fast ruining him financially, as she had long ago ruined his prospects of military advancement. And even he had seen the utter impossibility of leaving Eunice to her guardianship.

In the Christmas holidays, things went much better for Julian. The Eliots had let their house for a few months and were away in London. He was dreadfully afraid that Eunice might have an invitation to stay with them, but Lady Eliot told her that as Gilfrid would be with them there would be no room for her, and she mustn't mind being separated from Mildred until Easter. Eunice accompanied the Parmeters to Midnight Mass at Christmas, and remained a subdued, interested spectator, carefully following it all in a book Julian had given her. She was old enough now to feel a sharp sense of separation from him when he left the bench to go up to the altar-rail. She waited for his return, but there were a great many people, and when he came back, long after Mr. and Mrs. Parmeter and Geoffrey had rejoined her, there was a strange expression on his white face that told her he was utterly unaware of her presence. He remained by her side kneeling, his face buried in his hands, and so still that she could fancy him asleep. Even on the way home he scarcely spoke. The night was a beautiful one; the sky quite clear and pricked with golden companies of

stars, and as they passed along the quiet Front they could see the sea lying there like a shadow and hear the breaking of the waves on the shingly beach. The air was still and crisp with a touch of frost.

"I am glad you came," was his good-night greeting to her. But his eyes seemed to be looking past her. "Were you able to follow all right?"

"Yes, thank you, Julian," she said. She was a little afraid of him in this mood, almost as if she feared to say something that would jar upon him. The mingled joy and awe in his face seemed to her to possess a mysterious supernatural quality. There was nothing in that joy of ordinary pleasure.

It was perhaps the only incident of that winter that stood out very clearly in Eunice's remembrance. She used to say to herself afterwards: "I went to Midnight Mass my last winter at the Parmeters!" That more than anything fixed the date in her mind. . .

* * *

The storm broke in July toward the end of the summer term. All kinds of things had been promised for the coming holidays, and Eunice was looking forward to them with a keen enjoyment. The Eliots had taken a house by the sea in Devonshire where the bathing was good, and they had invited Eunice to spend a month with them. Gilfrid was to be there too; he had just left Eton and was to go to Oxford in the autumn. Mrs. Parmeter had not been very willing to let Eunice go, but she had faithfully written to consult Major Dampier and he had acquiesced without any apparent hesitation. He thought it would be good for Eunice to have the change of air and sea-bathing. And he knew that Lady Eliot, with all her experience of children, would take the greatest care of her. She must have

whatever frocks she needed. He enclosed one of his rare cheques to meet the extra expense, and Mrs. Parmeter put it by with all the others he had sent as a little nestegg for Eunice in the difficult years to come.

When Mrs. Parmeter looked back upon the first breaking of the storm, a period so violent, so dramatic, so completely out of harmony with all the fabric of her own life, she felt as if she had witnessed a sudden whirlwind that had, it is true, passed by her own person, leaving it unhurt, but which had wrecked its savage rage upon the life she had for so long tried to shelter from all harm. To this life it had been apparently the agent of irremediable damage, while to others its effect had been little less than catastrophic. Eunice, for example, was perhaps destined to be almost the principal sufferer, for what daughter does not suffer from her mother's shame? Major Dampier—another hapless victim—and Mrs. Dampier, who had ridden carelessly on the wings of that storm, what had it done to her in its access of savage violence? The first news came in a stiff little letter from Eunice's father:

"Dear Mrs. Parmeter:

"It is now my most painful duty to write to tell you that my wife has left me. I am starting for England almost at once to take divorce proceedings against her. She has already gone home, and I am advised that pending the case she may probably make some attempt to possess herself of Eunice. I therefore entreat you to use every means in your power to frustrate any effort of the kind, both for the child's sake and for mine. I do not wish Eunice to be told anything unless it becomes absolutely necessary. If she goes away with Lady Eliot, kindly ask her not to mention it to her. You have, I know,

been always exceedingly kind to her and I feel sure that you will continue this kindness until my return.

"Yours very truly,

"Herbert Dampier."

It came like a bombshell at breakfast one morning. Eunice was sitting in her usual place placidly eating. She was alone with Mrs. Parmeter, who was always present to see that the child ate a proper meal before going to school. Norman breakfasted in his study; he never faced the world while the day was young.

"Is that from mamma?" asked Eunice, glancing at the envelope with its Indian stamp. She had long ago ceased to be curious about her mother's doings and she did not often speak of her father. All that time in London was so very far away, wrapped in the mists of four long years, that the very misery of it had become confused and blurred. The little present world of every-day things and duties occupied the chief place in her mind, as it does indeed with most normal children, even the highly imaginative ones.

Mrs. Parmeter only said: "No, dear, it's from your father this time," and the meal proceeded in silence.

Presently Eunice said:

"Funny he hasn't written to me. That's the second mail that he's missed."

Mrs. Parmeter laid the letter down with a little sigh, stifled as soon as it was born. She glanced pityingly at Eunice, who sat there eating with such cheerful unconsciousness. She seemed to discern what it would mean to that young life, beautiful and so full of bright promise, to be tarnished and dimmed in its first radiance by the sin of another. She felt as if she were looking at Eunice with quite

new eyes, as if the child had become suddenly ambiguous and enigmatic, a new creature. The daughter of a woman who had wrecked her husband's honor and the sanctity of her home, and who was going to be divorced. The child of eternally divided parents. To Mrs. Parmeter, as a Catholic, the ease with which Protestants dissolved their marriages was almost as extraordinary as it was blameworthy. They made a new start. People would look askance at them for a while and soon forget a scandal of the sort in the rush and hurry of modern life.

Eunice was looking unusually pretty to-day. She was tall and slim now, and her small features and large, dark eyes possessed great charm. At fourteen years old she had acquired a certain repose of manner, and had left the impetuous wildness of her childhood far behind. Her hair was thick and wavy, but it was no longer so rebelliously curly as it had been in her nursery days, when it defied all efforts of brush and comb to keep it moderately tidy. In all that she did now, whether of work or play, she was extraordinarily alive, putting her whole heart and energy into it. She was quick and in some ways brilliant. Major Dampier, when he returned after his four long years of exile, could not but be pleased with his daughter. She promised to be good and beautiful as well as clever.

"It's time for me to go, Mrs. Parmeter," she said glancing at the clock. She rose from her seat, flung her arms affectionately round Mrs. Parmeter's neck and kissed her, just as if she had been her own child. She was very devoted to them both.

"Good-by darling," said Mrs. Parmeter. "I hope you'll do well in the exams to-day."

"You're not vexed? I haven't done anything?" said Eunice, a little puzzled at her manner. It was

unlike Mrs. Parmeter to be so silent all through the morning meal.

"Oh, no, Eunice dear, I'm not in the least vexed. You never vex me!" She kissed her again. "Now you must run along or you'll be late."

Mrs. Parmeter dreaded the inevitable awakening. It must be deferred according to the expressed wish of Major Dampier, but whenever it came it was bound to be a bitter thing for Eunice, full of disillusionment.

Mrs. Parmeter had led a suave and sheltered life, very eventless judged exteriorly, yet full of a deep and satisfying happiness. She had married very young the first man she had ever been in love with, and she still loved him with a love that seemed to deepen as the years went by. They were perfectly happy in their children, and perhaps in order that they might not feel the loss of their own little daughter too deeply they had been sent the care of this child, who had grown so dear to both of them. Mrs. Parmeter could not imagine a passion that could be strong enough to induce a woman to leave her home and desert her children. Such an action was almost inconceivable to her; it would have been as impossible to her as to commit a murder or to steal, or to fall into any of the grosser sins She tried to picture herself in the melancholy position of having forfeited the right to tend her own children, and she thought that this alone would have had the power to keep her from any sin that could detach her permanently from them. To give up Julian. . . The tears came into her eyes at the very thought. Nothing could have made up to her for the loss of Julian. And then she realized her own happiness, how great it had been and how it had almost overwhelmed her with sweetness. Her heart seemed as if it must brim over with thanksgiving. She had had so much,

poured forth in such abundant measure, no niggardly draught such as was accorded to so many people, but a happiness renewed daily, and blessed through more than sixteen years.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FEW days later Lady Eliot paid a sudden visit to Mrs. Parmeter, early one afternoon while Eunice was away at school.

The day was warm, and Lady Eliot wore a delicate dress of pale grey muslin and a large straw hat of the same silvery hue. She looked very handsome and hardly a day older than when Mrs. Parmeter had first seen her.

"Dear Mrs. Parmeter," she said, "I am so distressed! I have had a letter from Alaric telling me the most extraordinary piece of news. But of course as you have that unfortunate child under your care you must already have heard it."

"Do you mean about her mother?" said Mrs. Parmeter, feeling vaguely anxious. There had been to her quick ears something of reproach in Lady Eliot's tones, almost as if she wished to suggest that Mrs. Parmeter should have told her sooner.

"Of course I do. Very shocking, is it not? But you know I have always said that Mrs. Dampier was quite the most likely little person in the world to run away from her husband. They never got on, and she has been behaving scandalously all this past year, Alaric says. I am very sorry indeed for Herbert Dampier, but he ought never to have married her. A little nobody from no one knows where, no connections of any sort or kind—and she has always led him a dance. So unfortunate for a really clever

and ambitious man to have a wife of that type. I have been told that Mr. Charles Dampier never forgave him for marrying her. But I have not come here to discuss that part of the business. I only want to know what you propose to do about Eunice."

"I can do nothing until her father arrives, and he will not be here much before the end of August," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"You mean you are going to keep her here?" cried Lady Eliot, in unconcealed astonishment.

"Certainly." Mrs. Parmeter was faintly surprised and offended.

"And have them fighting over her eventually, here in your house?"

"Fighting over her—here?"

Lady Eliot was always inclined to be astonished at what she called Mrs. Parmeter's innocence.

"Why, what else do you expect them to do?" she was able to say at last.

"I don't think Mrs. Dampier is in the least likely to come here. Why should she?"

"She is certain to come. I'm told she's mad with Herbert for divorcing her, and she means to fight the case and get hold of Eunice!"

Mrs. Parmeter was silent from sheer astonishment. Yet had not Major Dampier warned her that Eunice must be guarded from any attempt on her mother's part to gain possession of her? When Lady Eliot spoke to her in this way, thrusting this new aspect of the case with such violence before her, a strange new anxiety invaded her heart.

"But she's in England, and she hasn't attempted to come—" she said.

"She will, now that she knows Herbert has taken proceedings. I am convinced Sir Chandos Mirton will never marry her."

Mrs. Parmeter felt a little sick, as if she had just

heard very bad news. She saw that, far from being an unimportant little pawn in the game, Eunice was destined to play a leading part. She had an instinctive longing to protect her, to shield her, to keep all tarnishing knowledge and experiences from her. She saw her exposed to hurt, and through her Julian would suffer.

"Major Dampier doesn't wish Eunice to know anything about it at present—not indeed until it's absolutely necessary," she said. "I hope if Mildred has heard anything she will not mention it to her."

"Mildred will not have any opportunity," said Lady Eliot, with a little laugh that somehow sounded unkind. "I packed her off to my mother this morning. She'll miss the examinations and one week of school, but that won't hurt her. You know she is not brilliant, poor Mildred! However, there won't be any need for her to earn her living by her brains, thank goodness. It is odd how really clever Jane and Sara and Susan all are. One more brilliant than the other. The doctor urges me not to force them. I believe Jane knows nearly as much as Mildred already!"

But in spite of the digression contained in the last part of the speech, Mrs. Parmeter felt anew that sensation of dismay which had assailed her already several times during the course of their conversation. What possible connection could there be between Mildred's hurried departure from home and the domestic disaster of the Dampiers? Lady Eliot was soon to enlighten her.

"I thought it wiser from every point of view. One must never let girls feel themselves injured. It'll be perfectly easy to tell her later on that Eunice can't join us." She spoke almost carelessly, as if she were convinced that Mrs. Parmeter must have foreseen the necessity for this banishment of Mil-

dred, and yet there was a note of decision in her voice that showed the iron will behind that charming exterior. "I hope it will not be necessary to make many explanations to Mildred. I can count upon her to behave reasonably."

Mrs. Parmeter felt more than ever that her little world—her happy and tranquil world—had been flung into a violent and tragic confusion.

"So there's no question now of Eunice going with you to Devonshire this summer?" she managed to get out at last. It was met with a brisk, instant rejoinder that struck her as sharp and hard, and so clearly outlined that it stood out almost as a relief from the prevalent confusion.

"Oh, I thought you'd see that without my telling you. Putting aside the prospect of having the belligerent parties descending upon me, a woman with a big daughter can't be too careful. I'm so thankful I had planned this change for the summer."

"Poor little Eunice," murmured Mrs. Parmeter.

"Of course, it's poor little Eunice," said Lady Eliot with a touch of impatience, "she must be the one to suffer. But if Herbert Dampier marries again—a really nice, sensible woman—it may be all right by the time Eunice comes out. She's quite nice-looking now—I used to think her so frightfully plain—and she may make a decent marriage in spite of it. I only hope Herbert will be careful in his second choice, but my own experience is that if a man begins by making foolish marriages he generally continues to do so."

Mrs. Parmeter was less concerned with Major Dampier's possible matrimonial adventures at that moment than she was with the contemplation of Eunice's immediate future. Was she to be the cats-paw between these two people?

"You know I am really very sorry," continued

Lady Eliot. "I liked Eunice. She's really a charming child—you've quite civilized her, you know. But this is such a very unpleasant scandal. Of course, she won't continue to live here with you?"

"Do you mean you think her father will insist upon taking her away?" said Mrs. Parmeter, in a dismayed tone. "Of course he can make what arrangements he likes—but after all these years."

Lady Eliot looked at her with a sharp scrutiny, almost as if she were contemplating a very rare and interesting entomological specimen.

"My dear Mrs. Parmeter—I was thinking of *you*. It must be so frightfully unpleasant for you to be mixed up in it at all!"

It was certainly possible, she reflected, to be too simple. She even wondered if such innocence of the world were quite genuine. But surely Norman Parmeter, if he ever raised his nose from his books, must see the unwisdom of retaining Eunice in their midst.

"You can't imagine how the papers will ring with it. Anglo-Indian scandal—and all that kind of thing. I should really get rid of her before it comes on, if I were you!"

Mrs. Parmeter flushed a little, and her hands, that lay clasped in her lap, tightened their hold upon each other, as if with an impulse of self-control.

"She has been with us, on and off, for nearly seven years," she said.

"Oh, yes, I know—you've been quite extraordinarily good. And she's a bright, attractive little thing—I've been glad to have her as a companion for Mildred. Mildred is really very fond of Eunice—I am afraid it may be a blow to her at first—when she realizes——"

"You mean—they won't even meet at school?"

Mrs. Parmeter had rather the feeling that she was learning a difficult lesson.

"I expect Miss Woolton will ask you not to send Eunice back. The religious teaching of the school is, as you know, ritualistic, and the girls are taught to regard marriage as a sacrament—just as you do yourself, dear Mrs. Parmeter. And though there is nothing against the poor child—she's rather a show pupil just now—I feel sure that Miss Woolton will advise you very strongly that she has to think of her school. It wouldn't do for the other girls to be able to say that Mrs. Dampier's daughter was at school with them."

Lady Eliot rose to go. It had been necessary, unfortunately, to speak much more plainly than she had originally intended. But she had found Mrs. Parmeter quite unexpectedly dense.

"I'm so glad to have had this little talk with you," she said. "I felt sure you would understand all my fussiness about Mildred. When we come back in the autumn I am sure we shall find that Herbert has taken his Eunice away. It's really the only thing to be done."

"It is the last thing I wish for. I should like to keep her with us always, and so, I am sure, would Norman."

Lady Eliot's handsome dark eyes narrowed.

"Not with two boys growing up, Mrs. Parmeter? When we have children we are really obliged as a duty to take prudent thought for the future. You surely would not wish Julian or Geoffrey to fall in love with Eunice a few years hence?"

Her tone seemed to put Mrs. Parmeter in the wrong.

"It is such a remote contingency that it is hardly worth while thinking about it now," said Mrs. Parmeter, with a brave little smile.

Lady Eliot felt somehow annoyed. She said coldly:

"I am glad to find you have taken it all so quietly. I was afraid with the very strict views Roman Catholics are obliged to hold that you would have been far more shocked!"

The arrow held a little trickle of poison; it extorted a reply.

"Whatever I may think about her mother's very grave sin, I have only pity and sorrow for poor little innocent Eunice."

* * *

When her visitor had finally departed, Mrs. Parmeter discovered how greatly the interview had exhausted her. This woman had really seemed to think it advisable for her to send Eunice away. She had even suggested the possibility of one of her sons wishing to marry the girl in years to come. It forced her to examine the situation not only with regard to Eunice but far more closely with regard to Julian. For if either of them were to fall in love with the girl, who had been for half their lives as a sister to them, it would certainly be Julian. He loved her tenderly, had indeed always loved her all through his boyhood. The clearest thing she saw was Julian's pain should Eunice be removed. She could almost feel it stabbing her. She was thinking quite as much of Julian as of Eunice.

Eunice came back in a strangely silent mood from school at tea-time. As a rule she always sought out Mrs. Parmeter, or, failing her, she would climb up to Mr. Parmeter's study and spend an hour or two with him, perhaps overlooking her lessons there for the next day. To both of them she often gave a graphic, entertaining survey of the little happenings of the day. But this evening there was nothing of

the kind. She put her head into the drawing-room, where Mrs. Parmeter was sitting at tea, and said:

"I'll have my tea in the school-room to-day. I've got a letter to write."

"Come in and sit down for a few minutes, won't you, Eunice?" said Mrs. Parmeter, feeling vaguely anxious. She also had a very strong suspicion that the letter was destined for Mildred, and she wished to prevent its being written if possible.

"No—I'm afraid I can't put it off. And I've got a lot of work to look over. You know to-morrow we have the history 'exam.' I'm simply awfully weak in history." Eunice's manner was obstinate, with a touch of arrogance. She was like that sometimes when things had not been going too well at school.

"It can not be such a very important letter," said Mrs. Parmeter, "the mail went yesterday. Who is it you wish to write to?"

Eunice's eyes flashed.

"Why must I tell you? Why are you so curious?"

For years she had not been heard to speak to any one in this rude, angry way. Mrs. Parmeter was not certain that she was suffering and that she was anxious to have some explanation of Mildred's sudden absence.

"I am not curious. I think I know. But if you are going to write to Mildred Eliot I had better advise you at once not to do so."

Eunice came abruptly into the room and closed the door. Her white, perturbed face was not pleasant to look upon; it was not quite the face of a child. It had something of the resolute, terrible obstinacy of a thwarted woman.

"Why am I not to write to Mildred? What has she done?" she said in a suffocated tone. "I—I don't care in the least what she's done!"

"Mildred has gone to her grandmother's," said

Mrs. Parmeter quietly, "and I'm afraid if you do write to her she won't get the letter. Eunice, don't ask me to tell you why. It isn't your fault and it isn't Mildred's. But Lady Eliot has her own reasons and the less we say about it the better." She looked pitifully at Eunice, wishing she could have softened the blow, could have held all knowledge from her a little longer. But Lady Eliot, with her swift, drastic action, had rendered that impossible.

Eunice belonged to the type that fights against pain as against some cruel enemy. It made her angry rather than sorrowful.

"I don't believe it! I don't believe a word of it! Mildred would never have gone away without writing to me—without even telling me that she was going. You are keeping something from me!"

"Mildred has to do what she is told. You know that Lady Eliot is very strict about such things."

"Well, I'm going to write to her anyhow! I'll find out what all the mystery's about! Some of the girls were simply odious to-day, especially the ones that were jealous of me and Mildred. They soon found out I didn't know anything." Her eyes were aflame.

Mrs. Parmeter rose from her seat and came toward her.

"Eunice, dear, I'd rather you didn't write. Wait a few days. And I'm very sorry the girls weren't kind. Try to bear it quietly." She laid her hand on the girl's shoulder, but Eunice moved away abruptly.

"No—no—you're in the plot! You are trying to come between us. I know you never really cared about Mildred!"

She went quickly out of the room. During term-time Eunice did not dine downstairs except on Sundays, because when her work was finished she had an early supper and went to bed at nine o'clock. Mr.

Parmeter disliked dining too early, especially in summer, when he often took a long walk in the cool of the evening. Mrs. Parmeter did not see Eunice again that night until she was in bed. She found her reading by the light of a shaded electric lamp.

"I've written and I've sent the letter," she announced in a hard, defiant voice. "Next week, anyhow, I shall see Mildred and learn what all the fuss is about. Some footling thing, I suppose!"

Mrs. Parmeter saw it would be cruel to keep the truth from her. Bitter though it would be for her in her present mood, there would be no use in concealing it from her until nearer the time.

"But I'm afraid you won't see Mildred next week," she said.

"I shall see her in Devonshire. You can't prevent my going. Papa said I might!"

"My dear—I've seen Lady Eliot. She has changed some of her plans. It won't be convenient for her to receive you."

"Do you mean I'm not to go?" Eunice's eyes were wide with surprise and dismay. Her heart sank and she shivered a little.

"I'm afraid that's what I do mean, Eunice dear."

"Why?" said Eunice.

"I can only tell you that Lady Eliot's plans are changed."

"I haven't done anything," said Eunice passionately, "I won't be punished!"

"It isn't a punishment—it's something we can't help," said Mrs. Parmeter. "I'm as sorry as you are, Eunice."

"Mildred has been sneaking! And I've done nothing. She must have been telling lies. I'll go there to-morrow and insist upon finding out."

"You really mustn't go there, dear. I must positively forbid it," said Mrs. Parmeter.

Eunice suddenly began to cry. "Then you really

mean I shall have to stay in this rotten place all the holidays without even Mildred or—or Gilfrid?"

Mrs. Parmeter flinched a little.

"Julian and Geoffrey will be back next week. Julian will be very glad to find you here."

"As if I cared whether he's glad or not! Do you think he can make up for Mildred and all the lovely time I was to have had in Devonshire?"

Mrs. Parmeter said quietly: "You must put out your light and try to sleep. Otherwise you'll be fit for nothing to-morrow. And you know you want to please your father by taking a good place in the 'exams.' I know that it's a great trial—that it's hurting you. Try to be brave. Say some prayers and go to sleep." She smoothed back the dark wavy hair from her forehead and stooping down a little kissed her.

Eunice looked at her with hard eyes.

"I shall ask papa to take me away. I hate Brighton now," she said in a dull, defiant tone. "I've got enemies at school—I don't want to go to Miss Woolton's any more. People shan't hurt me." She was secretly astonished at Mrs. Parmeter's continued patience. Mildred would never have dared speak thus to her mother. But no fear of retribution stemmed the furious current of Eunice's words. It was almost a relief to hurt some one, since she herself had been so savagely hurt. "I feel that *you* are against me too!" she wound up with renewed fierceness.

It was perhaps the first time that Mrs. Parmeter had realized the slenderness of her hold over Eunice, or had perceived how urgent was the need in the child's life of some strong spiritual influence, such as, indeed, she had not been permitted to give her. If Eunice had been her own child she knew that she would have spoken to her as she had so often done to Julian and Geoffrey, pointing out frankly the in-

evitability of suffering and hurt in every life. Of the joy of the saints when they received that suffering as a proof of their worthiness to endure in some measure what Christ had endured in every successive stage of the Redemption. Of the beauty of a soul that has borne with courage and dignity, yes, and with thankfulness, the discipline of such loving chastisement. These were indeed lessons which Catholic children are taught in early youth, not to render their lives hard and joyless, but to endow them with a strong spiritual support, of inestimable value in the hour of trial. If Mrs. Parmeter had been allowed to train Eunice in this way, the child would have had weapons at hand to help her now to stem this futile rebellion, this fierce anger against the sudden infliction of pain. She even wondered for the first time if she had done wrong to take her, with all that had divided them so arbitrarily. Yet she had trained and taught her with a most assiduous care. She had done all she could within the limits allowed to her. But Eunice had so much of her mother's nature, that wilfulness and obstinacy, that impatience of restraint, something too of that fatal fascination which every day became, as it were, more apparent in her. . . Mrs. Parmeter said very quietly:

"You know I am never against you. I love you very much, Eunice." She bent down and kissed her again with a wistful tenderness.

Then she went out of the room.

CHAPTER XXV

On the following morning Lady Eliot sent a little note by hand to Mrs. Parmeter enclosing the letter Eunice had written to Mildred. It was unopened, and she wrote by way of explanation: "I am

sure you will understand why I think it best that the children should not correspond with each other for the present. I hoped, indeed, you had given Eunice a little hint. One can often do this without making tedious explanations."

Mrs. Parmeter had expected something of the kind, yet she too felt the rebuff; it was almost as if Lady Eliot had included her in the rebuke thus delicately administered. And, in a sense, was it not her fault that Eunice had written and sent the letter? Was it not her fault for failing to exact a proper measure of obedience from her? Lady Eliot would not have permitted such an act of disobedience to go unpunished in her own daughter. She was a most kind and devoted mother, but she insisted upon her children obeying her. Even the turbulent babies had learned that they must not transgress in this respect.

Mrs. Parmeter said nothing about the returned letter to Eunice. She shrank from bruising afresh that wounded, mutinous spirit. Later on, perhaps, when Eunice had recovered a little; not now, while the hurt was so new. In her heart she believed that Julian's return would help to restore Eunice's tranquillity; he had an unconsciously soothing influence over her. But a whole week had still to elapse before the boys' expected return, and in the meantime a sullen, defiant Eunice appeared at the customary hours, left in the morning and returned at luncheon to go back again to school in the afternoon, silent and resentful. Norman Parmeter was scarcely aware of the changed condition of things; he was greatly preoccupied with his work just then, and frequently only appeared at dinner-time, when he and his wife were alone.

It was the last day of the examinations, and on the following morning the holidays were to begin

and Miss Woolton's limited number of pupils would disperse, to be escorted for the most part by a competent chaperon to London, there to be met by their respective guardians. The breaking-up concert was to take place in the afternoon. Mrs. Parmeter sat down to luncheon alone. Eunice was sometimes, though not often, late for that meal, but it was extremely probable that she had been detained at school by the preparations for the concert. So she did not feel any anxiety about her at first. But as the meal proceeded and she heard two o'clock strike she rose and went rather hurriedly to the telephone and called up Miss Woolton.

To her great dismay she learned that Eunice had left the house ostensibly to go home at the usual time. She ran up quickly to the child's room in the hope of finding her there. It was perfectly tidy, and there was no sign of any one's having entered it since the maid had done it after Eunice's departure to school in the morning. It was a very dainty little room. It had recently been re-painted and papered; the blue curtains and carpet were new. Eunice had chosen them herself.

But where was Eunice? Mrs. Parmeter opened desultorily cupboards and drawers in the vague hope of discovering some clue to the mystery. They were all full of Eunice's possessions, and the utmost order prevailed. Her shoes were arranged in neat rows; one drawer held gloves and handkerchiefs; another, stockings; and yet another, little piles of dainty lingerie run through with fresh blue ribbons. Nothing had been touched, and, as far as Mrs. Parmeter could judge, nothing had been removed.

In spite of her now sharply aroused anxiety it was not at first that she even suspected Eunice had gone away. One does not normally anticipate the worst. She began to fear that some physical accident had

overtaken her—perhaps even now she was lying unconscious in a hospital. But she did begin to feel even then that something untoward had happened to Eunice. When that thought pressed upon her she was aware that she could no longer cope with the situation alone. She must go upstairs to consult Norman. She hurried to the top of the house, pushed open the study door, for once caring nothing if she disturbed him or not, and stood in front of him, panting and breathless, almost in tears.

"Why, darling Ivy, what's the matter?" he exclaimed, putting down his pen and looking at her through his large, magnifying spectacles.

"It—it is Eunice," she said, with a sound that resembled a sob.

"Eunice?" he repeated, in a bewildered tone. When suddenly aroused from his work he was always at first a little confused, as other people are when roughly awakened from slumber. "Why—what's wrong with Eunice? Her father hasn't come, has he? You said he couldn't be here for another month at least!"

"She isn't here. She didn't come back to luncheon. I've telephoned to Miss Woolton—she left school at the usual time. She isn't in her room—she isn't *anywhere!*"

His mind leaped to what was for him the only possible conclusion.

"Do you think Mrs. Dampier's kidnaped her? One reads of that kind of thing in American novels!"

This idea had certainly never remotely presented itself to Mrs. Parmeter's mind. She had been far too much absorbed by the thought of Eunice's unusual behavior, her ill-temper, her sullenness, to seek further afield for trouble. She whitened a little, sat down by his side, wondering idly why she had allowed herself to be so unmindful of Lady Eliot's

warnings concerning the probable steps Mrs. Dampier would take when she learned that her husband intended to proceed against her.

Norman took her hand in his, caressing it in the way that soothed her. His rare caresses were still wonderful to her.

"I never thought of that. I didn't tell you—I didn't want to worry you about it more than I could help—but Lady Eliot sent Mildred away because she had heard about the divorce and she didn't want the girls to see each other. Eunice was angry—you see I couldn't tell her why—but she was upset, she took it very badly; I think she believed I was in some way to blame. She has hardly spoken to me since. Once she said she wanted to go away—that she hated the place. Poor child—she was fond of Mildred in her own cold little way. She was hurt by the mystery—the absence of any clear explanation."

"Well, we must tell the police at once," said Mr. Parmeter, with that sudden fierce energy which very passive people will sometimes betray upon emergency. "We can't have her wandering about alone. You must give her a good talking to, Ivy, and point out how anxious she has made us. In future she must never be allowed to go to school alone. It would be uncommonly unpleasant for us if anything were to happen—after all poor Dampier's warnings too!"

"I can't believe it's anything to do with her mother. Eunice is in a naughty mood. And it seems too soon to make her disappearance public."

"It's not a moment too soon," said Norman briskly; "she's got a good two hours' start of us as it is. We must have the stations watched. Little minx!" He rose from his seat with a sigh, releasing his wife's hand. "She's been with us all these years,

and, as you may say, she's never given us a moment's anxiety."

They went downstairs together. Norman seemed to know exactly what to do. Mrs. Parmeter admired his practical, resolute way of dealing with the untoward affair; his clear sense of possibilities and probabilities; his determined energy, so unlike his normal physical indolence. There had been very few incidents during their life together to invite the display of these qualities. During the next few hours no stone was left unturned by which Eunice could be traced. Search was made all through the town, to places likely and unlikely; the stations were watched and so were the piers. Mrs. Parmeter, who found herself unable to remain idly indoors, sought her all down the Western Road, through Ship Street, into the King's Road, and along the Brighton Front, with its itinerant musicians, ventriloquists, and preachers—till it met that of Hove. She called ultimately at the Eliots' house, although she had previously telephoned to know if Eunice had been there, but she felt that Lady Eliot might be able to throw some light on the matter. Lady Eliot sent a cool little message to say that she was resting and regretted that she could not receive her. The manservant, respectful but slightly supercilious, added that Miss Dampier had not been there for several days. Mrs. Parmeter turned away from the house, aware that her pride had received a blow. She went back home, tired, exhausted, a little disheveled. Lady Eliot's determination not to mix herself up with *l'affaire Dampier* had no doubt prompted the snub. One could not look to her for any assistance. Mrs. Parmeter was by this time almost demoralized with anxiety. Norman had not returned. She sat for some time alone in the drawing-room, going every few minutes to the window in the hope of seeing

Eunice. Tea was brought in, and she drank two cups of it thirstily, for the day, though cloudy, was very close and sultry. At every ring of the bell she prayed that it might be Eunice. She was sitting there when the door opened and Miss Woolton came into the room. She was the headmistress of the school and had come round as soon as the concert was over and the parents had returned to their own abodes. It was nearly seven o'clock when she came in.

"I am distressed to hear of your terrible anxiety," she said. "Of course, it has been simply odious for me too, having those detectives coming round this afternoon of all days. I really don't know what the parents will say. Every girl in Eunice's class was questioned. My very cleverest girls, Mrs. Parmeter. You know she was so advanced she was nearly at the top of the whole school. Some of them got quite hysterical and we had to strike one out of the program."

"Of course, we had to put the matter into the hands of the police at once," said Mrs. Parmeter wearily. "We must do all we can to find her."

Miss Woolton had a very determined manner, useful enough where the management of children was concerned, but apt to react unpleasantly upon already ravaged nerves.

"I was going to ask you in any case not to send her back to us after the holidays," she proceeded more smoothly. "I've already seen that it would have a detrimental effect on the school if she were allowed to remain. In fact, people have told me so." She regarded Mrs. Parmeter questionably. "All this very painful scandal—and girls unfortunately read the papers so much nowadays, it's difficult to keep anything of the kind from them. But it seems too

bad that this should happen just the very last day of the term!"

. . . . . .

Mrs. Parmeter, prompted by a sudden impulse, said:

"What has Eunice been like these last few days?"

"I have hardly seen her myself, but I asked her class-mistress, Miss Smithson, and she tells me that her work for the first time has been unsatisfactory. Nor has her conduct been much better; she's been sullen and a little impertinent when corrected. But nothing special happened this morning as far as I can ascertain, except that she had some sort of quarrel with Lina Johnson, one of the older girls. Lina was very much upset when the detectives questioned her. You know the way these people always have of making you feel that you are guilty, or at least to blame!"

Mrs. Parmeter listened with a kind of despairing patience. What did anything matter except that Eunice was missing? She felt strangely hard-hearted toward the hysterical Lina Johnson.

"What did they quarrel about?" she asked dully, not because she believed it could possibly throw any light upon the obscure situation but merely to show she was listening.

"Lina did admit under pressure, of course—it was because she told Eunice that Mildred Eliot had been sent away by her mother entirely on her account, and because Lady Eliot didn't wish them to meet again."

"What a very cruel thing to say!" said Mrs. Parmeter. "She told me yesterday that some of the girls had not been very kind."

"Girls are but human, Mrs. Parmeter; and Eunice had never tried to make herself popular; she was very arrogant with them all except Mildred. I dislike their having particular friendships, but Eunice

being a day-girl I relaxed the rule a little, especially as Lady Eliot did not disapprove. And Lina was not cruel. Even if she had been, a little cruelty is not bad discipline for a child so thoroughly spoiled and indulged as Eunice."

"But if it drives them to desperation?" said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Desperation? What a strange word to use, Mrs. Parmeter! Do you really suppose that anything poor, dear little Lina could have said would make Eunice behave in such a wicked way? Lina's been crying her eyes out—she's terribly upset, poor child. That man was quite rough with her! I had to send her home in a cab with one of the maids!"

"Did—did the detective find out anything more?"

"No. He found out very little indeed. But he intimidated poor Lina to such an extent that I am sure she did not know what she was saying. I have had my school for more than twenty years, and I can only say nothing of the kind has ever happened to us before. The police too! Surely you need not have told them where Eunice was at school!"

"We had to supply them with the fullest possible information," said Mrs. Parmeter, drawing herself up a little haughtily, "and the first thing they asked was where Eunice had last been seen."

"Of course, you must not think I am blaming you," continued Miss Woolton, in an aggrieved tone, "but I must say I wish you had been able to give me some hint as to the very peculiar circumstances in which Eunice is now placed. You must surely have known what was going to happen about this terrible divorce, and if you had told me about it I should have recommended you to take Eunice away from school at once and not wait for the end of the term. We could have come to an amicable arrangement by which I should not have allowed you to be the loser."

"I did not tell any one. I was most anxious that the affair should be kept from poor Eunice as long as possible. We have not known it ourselves very long. I do not want this innocent child to be punished."

"The sins of the fathers—and particularly of the mothers," announced Miss Woolton dryly. "And of course if I had been aware of all the facts—and I do feel, Mrs. Parmeter, that I had a *right* to know them—the very unfortunate episode of this afternoon might quite easily have been avoided. It was a most painful position to find oneself in, without any warning and through no fault of one's own! I feel quite afraid to meet Mrs. Johnson—she is, you know, a sister of Sir Dighton Vinn—it will almost certainly end in her taking Lina away. Such a brilliant child, too, she would be a credit to any school; she is an example to the others—so carefully trained at home. Lady Eliot has made no promise with regard to Mildred. I can not be sufficiently thankful that she sent Mildred away last Tuesday. Owing to her great intimacy with Eunice, she would have been questioned even more severely than poor Lina."

Mrs. Parmeter's dark eyes flashed dangerously. She was in her own house, and she resented the tone which Miss Woolton had adopted; it seemed to include herself in the general reproof she was bent on administering. But her voice was very quiet as she said:

"I regret that you should have been so disturbed. But you will understand that in our anxiety about poor little Eunice my husband and I could not possibly leave any stone unturned to find her. I am very sorry if your school has suffered. But in any case I shall make other arrangements for Eunice next term, even if her father does not prefer to take

her away from Brighton altogether." She rose and held out her hand. "I am sorry—I know you will excuse me—but as yet we have no clue and time is precious."

Miss Woolton was a little astonished at Mrs. Parmeter's attitude, even at her evident fondness for Eunice Dampier, a child whom she herself had never cordially liked, in spite of her proficiency and brilliant attainments, which had lent a certain luster to the school. It was astonishing to her that Mrs. Parmeter should dismiss so lightly as mere side-issues the possible harm done to the school and the hysterical terror of Lina Johnson under examination. Only one thing seemed to occupy her mind and that was Eunice's safety. Miss Woolton had, it must be admitted, no fears about Eunice at all. She was not the first girl to run away from home or from school in a fit of temper, nor would she be the last. She would come back driven by fear or hunger, or both.

"I advise you to punish her very severely indeed when she does come home, Mrs. Parmeter," she said as she moved toward the door. "It is the only way to treat such conduct. I remember I had a girl in my charge once who attempted something of the kind. The case was different—it was, in fact, an attempted elopement." Miss Woolton cleared her throat. She could look back with complacency upon her own admirable handling of the situation. But Mrs. Parmeter showed no sign of interest as to the sequel of the narrative. Whatever had been done, it could not help her to discover Eunice now.

When her visitor had departed, Mrs. Parmeter went to look for her husband. He had not returned, and while he was still out she did not like to leave the house lest he should return with some news. The heavy, sultry-looking clouds had fulfilled their

promise of rain; in the distance a low rumble of thunder could be heard. Under that dark, rather lurid-looking sky the sea was stirring restlessly as if aware of an approaching storm. As Mrs. Parmeter stood by the window and looked at the waves a very sharp fear took possession of her. What if Eunice, driven by some childish despair, had taken the irremediable step? She had been in a mood when children very easily become desperate. Her raw little wound had been stung afresh by the remarks of the girls. Miss Woolton had indicated that something had actually been said with reference to Mildred's departure and the cause of it frankly attributed to Eunice, and this must have roughly handled the sore spot with the cruelty, deliberate yet so unconscious of malice, that belongs to childhood. But whatever had happened, the result was the same. Eunice had gone away. Eunice could not be found.

If Mrs. Parmeter had ever imagined so unlikely a contingency as this sudden vanishing of the child who for nearly seven years had been under their roof sharing their life, she could never have formed any mental picture of its probable effect upon her husband. She might have thought he would be as he normally was if any chance domestic disaster disturbed him in his work, that is, as controlling imperfectly his annoyance and resentment at being thus interrupted, and perhaps shrinking from the thought that he might be called upon to act, to assume the initiative. But never could she have pictured the real Norman as he appeared before her now, facing the catastrophe with cool, practical energy; dismayed but not hopeless; aware of great dangers, yet displaying no sign of nervousness.

These unsuspected qualities in him of energy and resource startled her; she had so long looked upon her Norman as a being "with his head in the clouds."

As a loyal, loving, and solicitous wife she had endeavored to make that sojourn in the clouds as undisturbed as possible. She respected his work quite as much as if he had had to go daily to a city office to accomplish it, and she took both him and it very seriously indeed. His lack of interest in domestic affairs, extending sometimes to really important questions concerning their two sons, had often secretly piqued her; his aloof detachment was disconcerting to one so absorbed in her children as Ivy Parmeter. To-day he was very human; his feet trod surely upon the earth. There was something passionate in the eager energy he devoted to this heart-breaking search. He came in to dinner, left again directly afterward and urged his wife to go to bed and get a good night's rest. She would need her strength to-morrow. He had utterly given himself up to the task of finding the little lost Eunice.

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Norman had gone out to renew his search, Mrs. Parmeter went up to her room. The night was still very sultry, and she sat down beside the open window. She could see the long lines of lights on the Front, pricking the brown purple gloom like steadily shining jewels. She could see the sea beyond, lying out under the stars like a deep, somber, restless shadow. And she could hear the sound of it, dull, deep, rhythmical, as it beat against the shore and the great breakwaters that were there to resist it. The sound seemed to be beating with heavy pain upon her heart.

She was up early on the morrow, yet when she awoke after a restless night in which she only won

sleep toward dawn, she found that Norman had already gone out. The boys were to return that day at about three o'clock, and for the first time in her life she actually dreaded their coming. Always before, she had looked forward to their return as eagerly as they did themselves; she was like a girl in her excitement. But now she shrank from that meeting with Julian. He would not reproach her; he would understand that whatever untoward thing had happened she was in no sense to blame. But it was the thought of his speechless suffering that unnerved her.

Eunice had always accompanied her to the station to meet the boys on their return. Sometimes, it is true, she had made some remonstrance, voted the expedition a bore, and announced that she was making a sacrifice in leaving Mildred that afternoon. But she had never failed in the end to come, and the boys would certainly have found something missing to the perfection of that first moment had she not been there.

To go alone, therefore, meant the first inception of some tragic change that must certainly impress them immediately. It would convey its sharp significance to Julian, emphasizing the slenderness of their hold upon Eunice, a fact that of late had almost ceased to torment him. She could imagine his, "Where's Eunice, mother?" and even now she could think of no reply to avert subsequent questioning and explanation. It would be cruel to keep anything back from Julian, to torture him with the curiosity that is an essential yet somewhat degrading factor of love.

Sometimes she wished she had not that close and intimate consciousness of what was passing in Julian's mind. It was like a sixth sense with her, so sharply intuitive that she could not repel it. She

hid it from him, knowing that the knowledge would hurt that curious reticence and detachment of soul. She knew as much or even more of his inarticulate suffering than he did himself. And she knew too of that fear that had grown up with him from his boyhood—the dread that Eunice's parents would come and take her definitely, decisively away.

She went alone to the station. It was crowded and astir with people, eager, energetic, or merely fatigued and bored. She noticed the now familiar face of the detective watching with his professionally observant and vigilant eyes the arrivals and departures—always on the lookout for a girl of fourteen with dark hair and eyes, dressed in a blue serge coat and skirt, a white muslin blouse, a straw hat with dark-blue ribbon. She herself saw many that answered to the description (there was nothing very distinctive about Eunice's manner of dressing in those days; she looked like a hundred other school-girls), but they were all accompanied by older people and mostly formed part of a group of children going home for the holidays.

It was very hot at the station and the acrid smell of smoke filled the air disagreeably. She was too early for the train and wandered rather aimlessly up and down the long grey platform. She could not help thinking of those other homecomings when Eunice had been with her, prattling at her side. . The tears rushed to her eyes. It had all been such a pitiful failure, this endeavor to make Eunice feel as if she were part of their lives and like their own daughter, only a daughter that must be treated with an added tenderness and indulgence. Had they never won their way to this alien child's heart? She remembered Eunice's hard little speeches, announcing her hatred of Brighton, her wish to live elsewhere. And then, without a word to any one, she had gone.

Mrs. Parmeter controlled her tears. She must at least look happy and smiling to greet her boys.

The train rolled into the station at last with a shriek and roar that sounded triumphant. Doors were flung open; hurrying travellers emerged with cinematographic effect. Mrs. Parmeter saw two tall figures running eagerly down the platform. She went forward to meet them, almost forgetting Eunice in her pleasure at seeing them again. How tall Julian was—his face on a level with hers. Next holidays he would outstrip her in height altogether. Geoffrey was smaller, built more squarely and strongly, fair and beautiful. She kissed him first, still keeping up the old custom. Geoffrey never seemed changed to her, his development was so normal. But with Julian it was different; he was more changed, even outwardly, each time. He was taller, paler, and thinner now, with something thoughtful and manly in his expression, though the eyes were sunken and a little weary, a sign that he had been working desperately, though the results might not prove very brilliant. She had barely released him when his mouth framed the words: "Why, where's Eunice? Hasn't she come?" And he looked about him as if sure that she must be there.

"She couldn't come to-day. I'll explain presently," said Mrs. Parmeter.

The words slipped easily from her lips as she had intended they should. They mustn't be allowed to know as yet that things had gone so horribly awry. Later—yes, later—she could break it to Julian. A cloud had already gathered on his face, as if he felt that somehow Eunice had failed him.

"Gone with her darling Mildred, I suppose?" said Geoffrey, with his broad, charming grin.

"No—not to-day. Mildred's in Devonshire with her grandmother."

She occupied herself with porter and luggage, and when the trunks were piled on a cab she and the boys got in and drove away. Julian sat beside his mother, not speaking. Geoffrey chattered cheerfully during the short drive home. They had glimpses of a dark blue sea, running high and flecked with lines of white, framed perpendicularly by the houses on each side of the narrow streets that run shoreward. There was a strong salt breeze, and sharp gleams of sunlight illuminated the irregular lines of tall creamy white houses along the Front. In the King's Road there were many carriages and a few motors which were, however, less frequently to be seen in those days. The summer season was at its height, with its crowds of excursionists that poured daily into the town, its innumerable children and nurses thronging the beach. Something of the very gaiety that prevailed hurt Mrs. Parmeter. She gazed earnestly at all the passers-by, as if trying to discover Eunice's slight, blue-clad figure among them. The task of telling Julian assumed every moment a more formidable aspect.

The cab stopped in front of the house in Brunswick Terrace. Geoffrey flung himself out and Julian followed more gravely. The door was opened, the servants smiled discreet, respectful welcomes, and they passed into the hall. Mr. Parmeter emerged from the dining-room, where evidently he had been waiting for their return.

"Hullo, boys!" he said, and then he turned to his wife. "Ivy," he went on, "I've had a telegram—Eunice is in London with her mother."

The door was shut, already the luggage was disappearing into back regions. They all four stood facing one another in bewildered silence. The boys, knowing nothing of the happenings of the last few days, received the news as if a small shock had been administered. Mrs. Parmeter was the first to move.

She took the telegram from her husband's hands. "*Eunice is with me. Do not try to find her. D. Dampier.*" The postmark was a London one, beyond that there was no clue.

"Won't she be here these 'hols'?" inquired Geoffrey.

"No, dear, I don't think so."

"Jolly good thing! She was getting an awful rotter!"

Julian's eyes flashed. His face was curiously set and white.

"She and that putty-faced Mildred!" pursued Geoffrey, with his gay, insolent laugh.

In the general tension it was almost a relief to have one person so indifferent, so disagreeably normal and unmoved.

Norman Parmeter appeared to take no notice of what his son was saying. His thoughts were pursuing a perfectly different line, and he said suddenly:

"So now we've got Dampier to reckon with. That woman snapped up her prey at the psychological moment. We've been criminally careless, my dear Ivy, and Dampier has every right to tell us so!"

Julian spoke for the first time.

"Why did she go? Didn't she know we were to come back to-day? I thought you told us she was to go to Devonshire with the Eliots? She might have waited one day more!"

"Poor Ju! He's going to blub!" said Geoffrey. "He was always soppy about her."

Julian looked at his brother with dark, almost tragic hostility, but he said nothing more. For it did not matter—nothing really mattered except the one incontrovertible fact that she had gone. Her mother had fetched her, as surely they had always known that she would. She had the right to step in, just whenever she chose, and break their hearts. Eunice didn't belong to them. She wasn't really

their sister, as they had often tried to make themselves believe. She had gone—perhaps she had been glad to go. She would regret Mildred, perhaps, but not Geoffrey, not himself. Last holidays she had sometimes laughed at him, at what she called his queer ways. She had reminded him that once Gilfrid Eliot had called him a freak. And now she had gone back to her mother. He felt that this time it would certainly be forever. This time there would be no reprieve.

Slowly he turned away and stumbled toward the stairs, almost as if he had been blind. He went up to his own room. How thankful he was that he didn't share it with Geoffrey now. He went in and shut and locked the door. To be alone. . . Yes, that was the only thing. Otherwise it was torture . . .

He sat looking seaward, puzzled, bewildered, and with a kind of deep, passionate despair that filled not only his whole heart but all the world. Never had he felt thus since the day when they had come to tell him that Baby Sister had gone to heaven. There had been the same surprise that seemed to hit one senseless, the same mystery, a clutching of thin air in a world grown suddenly unsolid, confused, obscure. . .

Hours and hours passed away. So many hours that he was able to watch the dusk fall outside. First the color went. It had been brilliant with the sunset, the sky was all painted with rose and gold and bars of pure bright green, and the sea lay beneath it like a silken silver shield. Twilight took away those rainbow hues, robbed the summer raiment of passing women of its color, and changed all to a uniform grey-purple that was one with the night. Then gradually the darkness spread itself over the scene as if it had opened broad sable wings that swallowed up all shape and detail. . . The

lights showed steadily now all along the esplanade, in regular lines that formed a perspective of moonlight-colored ovals. Beyond was the sea, hushed too by the spell of approaching night; its voice was almost drowned by the passing traffic.

So it had come true—this bad dream which for so long had ceased to molest him. Its failure to recur had wrapped him in a false peace. Yet he had always known this very thing would come to pass. He had wanted, when it came, to meet it bravely. But always he had pictured himself as being there—as exacting promises that she would return to them. He had thought it would be abrupt, like the sharp cut of a knife. And Geoffrey had pretended to be glad. He often hid his feelings by a display of bravado, yet it was horrible to Julian that he had been able to express his pleasure at Eunice's departure. He had gone very near to hating Geoffrey then.

In time they would tell him more. Just when she went, the manner of her going. Perhaps there had been some message for him—surely she could not have gone carelessly, without throwing him a single word. He dreaded exact knowledge on these points almost as much as his curiosity demanded it, feeling that perhaps it would hold some fresh pain. All the time he was saying to himself subconsciously: "It is wicked of me to feel in such despair. I ought to be willing to give her up. I oughtn't to feel as if I had lost everything in heaven and earth." Yes, soon he would begin to pray. The refuge of prayer! He began to see in this sorrow a punishment for all his wretched mean little sins. Sins of childhood, of his school-days—jealousy of Geoffrey, of his powers, his popularity, even of his success—outburst of petulant anger that caught him unawares—a miserable little lie or two. They arrayed themselves before him now, a somber, stained procession,

gathering darkness from one another. His good conduct had been praised, as it seemed, to his own shame. He deserved punishment. But this? There were some souls, as he knew, to whom detachment from creatures was taught by violent processes.

It was a long time before even his mother sought him. When she did, it was under cover of darkness. He was so still as she came softly to his door that she fancied he must have gone out. But he rose in response to her knock and unlocked the door, switching on the light as he did so.

"Come in, mother," he said quietly.

It was a relief to her to see how calm his face was in spite of its deathly pallor.

He led her to the window; they sat down side by side.

"Tell me, please. There's a great deal I don't know," he said.

And she told him. It was kinder not to leave anything unsaid. She even showed him Major Dampier's last letter. He heard, before she left him, of Lady Eliot's visit, of Mildred's departure, of Eunice's misery at school during those last days, of her final flight, which had not as yet been fully explained to them. He utterly forgot himself—as, indeed, she intended that he should—in the contemplation of Eunice's unhappiness, of the sudden disaster that had overtaken her life.

"I was getting to think she'd be here always," he said at last. "These last years I haven't been afraid any more that they would take her away."

"And I hoped, too, that her father would continue to leave her with us," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"But he will—when once he finds her. It ought to be easy. I don't see how she can go on hiding her. Especially as Eunice will hate being with her mother."

"Why, what makes you think that, Julian?"

"They will be quite strangers to each other after four years," he said, "and Eunice was never happy with her mother even when she was quite little. It was bad enough when they were in Rome, but it was ten times worse that winter she spent in London with them. She told me about it—you see, she always talked to me when she felt like it. And she had got used to being here. She'll want to come back—she'll find a way, no matter how much Mrs. Dampier may try to stop her." He strained his eyes toward the darkness that now somberly embraced sea and sky, as if he could picture across it that young, slight, vivid figure coming toward him. . . "She will come back," he went on, with hard determination in his voice, "if only she wants to enough. And if he goes back to India whom can Major Dampier leave her with if it isn't with us?"

"Don't count upon it too much," said Mrs. Parmeter; "he may prefer her to live where the story is less known than it is here."

"Then we ought to go away too," he said, "to make a home for her wherever her father likes. We can't just leave her to be miserable with strangers."

He went down to dinner that evening with a face which bore no traces of extraordinary emotion. The boys were alone with their mother. Norman Parmeter had gone to London.

CHAPTER XXVII

Now one knew for certain that she was—or rather had been yesterday—in London; there was no ground for the hopelessness that up till the arrival of the telegram had so possessed the Parmeters'

household. Julian only wished that he had been invited to accompany his father; he felt the restlessness of enforced inaction; and he had a secret conviction that in some way he could have materially assisted in the search. Now that he was in possession of all the facts of that tragic little sequence, he was able to assure himself that some trick had been played. Eunice would never have gone off with her mother of her own accord and without a very vital reason for so doing. She had been lured away under false pretences, undoubtedly encouraged by the knowledge that since things had been going so badly in Brighton, an exchange for the worse, just then, was hardly possible. If his father had only realized that he was nearly sixteen and fast growing up he might have thought of allowing him to go with him. But Norman Parmeter seemed somehow persistently to overlook the fact that his sons were approaching manhood. He often spoke of them and probably nearly always thought of them collectively as the "brats," persons who if unduly encouraged might be found to thrust themselves forward and occupy too prominent a position in the little cosmos of Brunswick Terrace. But as a matter of fact on this particular occasion Norman had not contemplated his sons from any point of view. They had hardly existed for him, except in that first moment of their arrival, when they had shown a disagreeable tendency to squabble, to give each other "back-chat." One of them—which was it?—had accused the other of "being soppy" about Eunice. By the time Julian had made his exit, groping his way, bewildered and confused, toward the stairs, Mr. Parmeter's mind had once more assumed its absolute absorption in the task of finding Eunice—a feat that seemed less difficult now that they held this clue. She must be found before

Major Dampier's arrival. If he decided to come overland from Brindisi or Marseilles—Mr. Parmeter was a little vague about the route from Bombay—he might be here even sooner than they imagined. Mrs. Dampier was as obviously bent on vengeance as any heroine of transpontine melodrama, and his present occupation was to frustrate this pious intention. Otherwise, how could he meet Dampier face to face, with the avowal that he had so signally, colossally, failed in his suretyship?

Norman never once, even in his thoughts, blamed Ivy; he only blamed himself for his selfish absorption in work that was of no mortal consequence just when things were advancing to a crisis. He hadn't even known that his little Eunice—it was thus he designated her—was going through a time of sharp trial, tragic to a sensitive child. She had felt hostile forces about her, and had groped blindly in the dark to try to ascertain whence they came and why they were persistently directed against herself. He ought to have realized this, and, because their mutual relations were so sympathetic, so intimate, he would have taken her aside and told her as much as he could of that unhappy story of which she was the innocent deeply-to-be-pitied victim. She had needed some assurance, some explanation of the kind, to help her to bear it all with courage. Above all, he wouldn't have let her return to school after Mildred's departure; she should have been spared those last unhappy days and the petty stabs of Lina Johnson and her kind. When he was in the train, on his way to London, he remembered that she hadn't, for at least a week, climbed the stairs to his den. He had not thought much about it, knowing that the school examinations were taking up most of her time. He had really been too busy just then to miss her. The knowledge of his own remissness attacked him

now, flagellating him. He had made a fetish of his work while all the time a tragedy, in which the being who was almost dearest to him in the whole world was involved, was being enacted under his own roof. Could egoism further go than in that dreadful, callous indifference of his? Oh, when she came back how he would make up to her for all his past negligence!

* * *

He ran the pair to earth on the following afternoon at a hotel in Bath. Mrs. Dampier—unaware or perhaps contemptuous of the ability of Scotland Yard in following up so slight a clue as her telegram afforded—was already congratulating herself upon having got safely away. She was not at all disturbed by the weeping of Eunice who, enticed to accompany her while on her way from school with the lure that her father was eagerly awaiting her in London, had come to realize that she was the hapless victim of a plot which if successful might prevent her from seeing him again. Mrs. Dampier's schemes for the future were slightly wild and inchoate, but she had visions of taking Eunice to one of the more accommodating republics of South America where English law would be powerless to touch her, and there make her own terms with Major Dampier. Eunice was to have her hair cut short and to be disguised as a boy. They would leave England by one of the smaller ports, where no one would be on the lookout for them. Mrs. Dampier counted very largely upon a lack of practical wisdom which had seemed to her so largely to characterize "those excellent Parmeters." She didn't believe them capable of summoning the strong arm of the law to their aid and even assisting it in the following up of clues. In any case, they would probably delay for several days before taking so drastic a

step; people in England had always a nervous dread of anything like publicity, and of seeing their names in the papers, and she was certain that the Parmeters held all those conventional superstitions. It was curious that she never suspected the extent and measure of their devotion to Eunice; there was not one of them—with the possible exception of Geoffrey—who would not have submitted to being cut in pieces, as the saying goes, for her. Mrs. Dampier found Eunice so unattractive herself that she could not believe the child was likely to evoke any such passion of devotion in other quarters. Eunice, finding that she had been grossly deceived and lured away under totally false pretences, was aghast at the situation in which she now discovered herself. She would have communicated with the Parmeters if she had been able to; it was at the sight of her writing a letter that her mother revealed to her how utterly she was now separated from them.

"Give me that letter, Eunice," said Mrs. Dampier; "I can't let you write letters."

Eunice had laid her hand on the sheet. "I can't give it to you," she had told her. "It is for Mrs. Parmeter. She will wonder where I am."

"Let her wonder!" Mrs. Dampier's laugh held a disagreeable sound. "Now give me that letter at once!"

Eunice's hand kept close hold of the paper. Mrs. Dampier went across the room and took up her parasol. It had an elaborately carved ivory handle. She brought it down suddenly and with considerable force upon the rebellious little hand. Eunice gave a cry of pain and withdrew her hand, which showed a little trickle of blood where the sharp carving had cut through the skin.

"You have still to learn obedience," said Mrs. Dampier, possessing herself of the letter. "It is a

pity I have not had the care of you all these years. You would have learned it long ago if I had." Her voice was very hard and in her beautiful eyes there was a wicked little look of triumph.

That incident had happened the first night in London, when the distracted household at Brighton was in the throes of its first anguish. If Eunice had been less unhappy herself she might have given more thought to the misery her unexplained absence must have produced. But the scene, the blow, the knowledge that her father wasn't there after all, eagerly awaiting her, the cruelty which prevented her from communicating with those beloved people who had every right to know that she was at least safe and well, blinded her to other considerations of their possible anxiety. If only she could run away—go back to them—implore their forgiveness. For there had been at the back of her own rash action a desire to get away from all the abundant unpleasantness of the past week; a rebellious little resolve to show her own independence of every one at Brighton. Except at the first moment, she had not needed any very great persuasion to accompany Mrs. Dampier to the station. "Couldn't she go home and fetch a few things—just what she needed for the night—and say good-by to Mrs. Parmeter?" That had been the sum total of her hesitation, which was quickly overruled by her mother's: "Certainly not. We shall miss the train if you do anything so utterly silly. And papa's promised to meet us at Victoria—you can't disappoint him."

She had hustled Eunice into a cab; it was the quick way she contrived everything that took the girl's breath away, and seemed to sweep her before her as dust before the wind. Eunice had barely had time to give another thought to poor Mrs. Parmeter—sitting down to a solitary luncheon by this time, in

all probability—before she found herself sitting opposite to her mother in a third-class railway carriage. The train moved out of the station and they were on their way to London and papa. Papa would be sorry to hear how horrid the other girls, especially Lina Johnson, had been to her at school.

The London detectives had let no possible clue escape them, and two of them accompanied Norman Parmeter to Bath, "in case the lady gave trouble." Norman would have preferred to go alone, but he concluded professional etiquette demanded that he should be accompanied; so he made no demur. And, of course, if he failed to take advantage of the undoubted clue now offered, these two colleagues might prove useful in disentangling others for their subsequent guidance. He was new to the game, he confessed to himself, and there was no doubt but that he had to deal with a desperate, determined woman who had kidnaped her own child and would be little likely to surrender her without a struggle. It became more and more pitiful in his eyes that Eunice should be exposed to such tragic and sordid experiences when their whole policy throughout the past seven years had been to preserve her from all contaminating knowledge. He knew the crystal purity of that mind, and he hated to think that it should have suffered any pollution.

Mrs. Dampier had not much chance of eluding the sleuth-hounds, as Mr. Parmeter secretly called those two genial men who traveled to Bath by the same train as himself but in a different compartment. It was hardly to be supposed that so striking a pair could be missing for long. And when Mr. Parmeter walked into the dingy sitting-room occupied by Mrs. Dampier and her daughter—taken, however, under quite a different name—he saw that she was more striking-looking than ever. He had always been

sensible of her beauty, which was of an uncommon kind and varied a good deal, but it had now a far more arresting quality than of yore. She had had recourse to artificial aids to simulate the bygone delicacy of her skin, the beautiful fairness of her abundant hair. It was skilfully done, and she was wise enough to leave the grey eyes with their thick but fair lashes untouched.

As he came into the room he was aware of a little stir. Mrs. Dampier sprang up, indignantly vociferous at the unsolicited interruption. But Eunice dashed past her mother and with the old, childish, confident gesture flung herself headlong into Mr. Parmeter's arms. It gave him quite a thrill to feel this sudden expression of her affection so spontaneously offered. There was no doubt of her joy at seeing him again. He held her, stroking back her disheveled dark hair, while she cried and sobbed with sheer relief. He tried to make her feel by the very tightness of his clasp that she was safe, dimly discerning that some assurance of the kind was just then extremely necessary. And she was trembling so that he had to use some strength in order to support her. He never imagined, however, that fear played any part in the emotions that swayed her.

"You understand, don't you," he said, his face turned full toward Mrs. Dampier, "that I've come to take Eunice home?"

"You can't take her away!" said Mrs. Dampier, her grey eyes flashing dangerously; "she's my own child—I've a right to her—you'll only get yourself into trouble."

"I have her father's letter warning me that you would probably make some attempt to get hold of her. We've been busy following up clues for two days. You don't suppose that having found her I should leave her here with you?"

Eunice felt strangely comforted and reassured by these resolute words. She looked up at him through her tears, and Julian's old phrase came back to her mind when as a little boy he used to say that "father had sparks in his eyes." There were sparks in them now that threatened to kindle into actual flame.

"Eunice, tell him you won't go back to them! Tell him you prefer to stay with me. Remember, I am your mother!" said Mrs. Dampier, in a harsh, commanding tone.

"No! No!" said Eunice, clinging more closely than ever to Mr. Parmeter's protecting arm.

Mrs. Dampier made a sudden forward movement and tried to wrench Eunice from his grasp. She was beyond all control and she made the sudden fierce dash to possess herself of Eunice with such force that she almost succeeded in gaining her objective. Eunice screamed and clung desperately to Mr. Parmeter, hiding her face against him. With his free arm he managed somehow to ward off the approach of that fierce, tigress-like woman. She was terrible in her undisciplined anger. If she had been prompted by love for Eunice he could have made excuses for her. But he knew perfectly well that her sole reason for wishing to possess herself of the person of her child was for purposes of revenge upon the man whose home she had ruined, whose honor she had stained.

She needed now no artificial aid to color her face; her cheeks were stained with an angry crimson.

"Give her to me! You shall not have her! I tell you she's my own child. I shall teach her that I'm her mother—that I've a right to do what I like with her!"

"Don't let her touch me!" shrieked Eunice,

shrinking from the hand she saw suddenly upraised.

Mr. Parmeter parried the blow. He felt that in this mood she was capable of tearing the child in pieces. He gave a shout and the door was immediately opened, and the two genial gentlemen whose plain tweed suits gave no indication as to the nature of their calling came into the room. Mrs. Dampier fell back before them and became a little hysterical. They stood there, forming a guard, while Mr. Parmeter half-carried, half-supported Eunice out of the room.

"Are you really taking me home? Can you forgive me?" was her first intelligible remark when he had put her into a cab and they were rattling over the cobbled paving of the streets.

"Yes, we're going home. Don't talk now, darling. Some day you shall tell me all about it."

It needed nothing more than the infinite tenderness with which he uttered those words to prove to her abundantly that she was forgiven. She had awakened from a most evil dream, in which the principal factor had been her own blind terror of her mother, to a knowledge that she was once more safely protected by these people who had assumed responsibilities toward her that they were not inclined lightly to forego.

He stopped once at a post-office to despatch a telegram to his wife so that she should not be left in suspense a moment longer than was necessary, and then they resumed their journey to the station.

"When shall we get home?" Eunice asked sleepily, when they had been about an hour in the train.

"Well, we may catch a late train down to-night," said Mr. Parmeter.

"Will Julian be there?" asked Eunice.

"Yes, he came home yesterday," said Mr. Parmeter, a little astonished at the question.

"I want to see Julian," she said, and then she fell asleep.

CHAPTER XXVIII

ALTHOUGH Eunice was thus restored to them, the Parmeters knew they could not regard this as in any way a permanent arrangement, until Major Dampier came to England and accomplished the unpleasant task of divorcing his wife and obtaining the custody of their only child. He arrived in Brighton not many weeks after Eunice's return to Brunswick Terrace, and when she had recovered with the happy elasticity of youth from that brief but terrible time with her mother. If he had not been expected so soon they would certainly have taken her away from Brighton, fearing perhaps other and more determined attempts to abduct her. But Julian was there and Julian constituted himself her bodyguard; she was never allowed to leave the house without him. Geoffrey had plunged into that whirl of cricket and golf which the summer holidays always meant for him, with spells of sea-fishing in between.

Major Dampier was considerably changed since his last visit, nearly five years ago. His white hair was as thick as ever and gave him an imposing, leonine appearance; but his face was oddly thin and deeply lined, and his eyes were even more restless and unhappy than they used to be, softening only when they rested upon Eunice.

It was so difficult for him to break to the Parmeters—to whom he was, when all was said and done, so deeply indebted—the news that he was going

to take Eunice away with him. He couldn't live without her any longer; she was all he had to care for, and if for her own sake he had had to part with her for so long, circumstances were now changed and he could have her with him without detriment.

It could never take a visitor to the house in Brunswick Terrace very long to perceive that Eunice was the fixed planet round which everything else revolved. It was due to no effort on her part; she had simply, as it were, assumed that position and oddly retained it through all the difficult years of her somewhat unruly childhood. She had them all, more or less, at her feet, with degrees of devotion, strongest in Julian and weakest in Geoffrey. It was not easy to detach her violently from this environment; more than one person would be hurt by the accomplishment of this purpose. Only that she was, after all, his own child; he had a right to her; he wanted her; these last lonely months had taught him how much. The truth was that he had been offered and had accepted an appointment in Malta; the pay was good, and he could offer her a home which would not compare too ill with the one she had enjoyed all these years. She was rather young to leave school, but he intended to continue her education by engaging a governess, and she would have facilities for studying languages, Italian and French, with native teachers.

He didn't detach her all at once. A few days at first, then a few weeks. The old affection between them was as ready as ever to spring into new life. Eunice was of an age now to be a companion to him; the fact that he needed her was extremely pleasant and flattering. She was the one to suffer least; the prospect of going to Malta with him attracted her by its novelty. But she was careful not to disclose her pleasure too openly to Julian. The boy was

obviously very unhappy, and too proud to speak of it. Her little flittings backward and forward, from her father to them and *vice versa,* filled him with an odd unrest. But he and Geoffrey had gone back to school before the divorce-suit came on. It caused rather more sensation than such cases are apt to do where the parties concerned are not very prominently before the public, and the attempt that Mrs. Dampier had made to kidnap her daughter lent it a peculiar, lurid interest. It lasted two days and Major Dampier left the court a free man, having obtained the custody of his only child. They left for Malta together the following week.

It has often been remarked that some people's lives continue in a regular, uninterrupted, and unbroken routine of small daily events for a number of years without any change coming to alter it, but that when once that routine is broken by some violent, untoward affair the change is almost always the precursor of others.

When Julian was a man he used to look back upon their life in Brighton up till the time of Eunice's departure for Malta as a completed chapter, arbitrarily defined. It comprised all his so well-remembered childhood as well as his school-days. All the distinctive changes that had come to them took place earlier—the death of Baby Sister, the sojourn in Rome, the return to Brighton, the arrival of Eunice in their midst. If it did not hold days of great brilliance, this period between her first arrival and her ultimate departure with her father it always appeared to him as a sunlit interval, not eventless but varied with events that were natural, harmonious, forming part of a well-ordered whole. He had been aware through it all of great happiness in those surroundings that were peopled for him by the figures of his parents, of Geoffrey and afterward of

Eunice, in a very satisfying way. He had not desired change; he had even disliked and dreaded the necessary one of going to school, which to Geoffrey had appeared simply as a joyous adventure. Geoffrey was stimulated by school life; he liked success; he was ambitious; already one could see that he would be a man of strong purpose, knowing exactly what he wanted and obtaining it by hard personal endeavor. He had pushed his way up through the school, leaving Julian far behind and wondering how he did it. They had had precisely the same training, the same advantages, and Julian was morbidly conscious at times that he had not profited by these things as much as he ought to have done. But school was only an interval, not a radical, destroying change; they returned home for the holidays to find their father and mother and Eunice still enjoying the old remembered conservative life. He had felt and hoped that things would continue forever in this way. After that first brief unsuccessful time Eunice had spent with her parents in London as a little girl, he had been lulled into a kind of security concerning her. And now those false hopes of his had been destroyed. Major Dampier had taken her away, not unmindful, it is true, of the pain he was inflicting upon them, but keenly resolved to possess his own child, giving, alas, no indication that the present arrangement would not prove permanent. And she was glad to go, eager for the new adventure, the fresh, untried life. Julian never saw her actual final departure, but his mother told him she had shed but few tears. She was flushed and full of excitement. . . He used to picture her, knowing well just how she must have looked.

He was back at school when the news reached him. Geoffrey, immersed in his brilliant climbing toward the top of the Sixth, took little notice of the

affair. Julian struggled on with his dogged work that produced so little in the way of results. He was not idle, but he was often preoccupied and without concentration. It led to his being rather frequently punished, kept in, given extra tasks. But he did not suffer under this discipline, for he felt that nothing that was done to himself could ever hurt him. The things that hurt came from outside, brutal, wounding things such as being separated from the people you cared for.

It was exactly as if Eunice had been a sister and that she had died.

But Eunice's departure was, alas, only the beginning of greater changes that seemed to close the door abruptly and definitely upon their boyhood, and to destroy with violence that quiet, ordered life at Brighton. It was in the winter following Eunice's departure that Mr. Parmeter caught a chill. No one thought very much about it at first; he remained in bed a few days and then got up and seemed very weak and disinclined to work. Then graver symptoms manifested themselves. It was recalled that he had a delicate boyhood, but, though never a very robust man, his health had always seemed good and his constitution sound. He went out imprudently in a cold east wind; a sharp attack of pain followed; there was even talk of an operation, which did not, however, materialize. He made a partial recovery. Weeks of dragging indecision followed. By the time the two boys came home at Easter he was a semi-invalid; they noticed a great change in him. A shadow seemed to hang over the house, emphasizing the blank still caused by Eunice's departure. They didn't hear much from Eunice, but when she did write, her letters were overflowing with happiness; she was delighted with her new life. She had a far warmer affection for her father than she had ever had

for them, Julian reflected. He had often thought her cold and unresponsive, but for Major—now Colonel—Dampier she had evidently developed a kind of worshiping love. It was good to know that she was so happy, and sometimes Julian could feel glad that she had escaped the mournfulness that had come upon their home with this chronic illness. He himself found it difficult to shake off the feeling of intense melancholy that prevailed; it surrounded him wherever he went. Geoffrey, less susceptible, spent as little time indoors as possible. He was always out boating and golfing, leading a vigorous, active life and getting daily more bronzed and hardy. He was very tall now; he had shot up wonderfully this last term, and for the first time was taller than Julian. He was broad-shouldered and had an air of great physical strength, and he was very handsome, with his thick fair hair and keen blue eyes. People called him "the good-looking Parmeter boy," to distinguish him from Julian. Julian envied him that power of emerging from an atmosphere of devastating anxiety, and of being able to pursue his normal life of active wholesome amusement and sport. His own inability to accomplish it made him the more admire Geoffrey's powers of doing so.

But it was not until the following August that still graver symptoms set in which changed anxiety to definite alarm. There were consultations; specialists were called in. It was wonderful, Julian thought, to see his mother's determined high courage in the face of such threatened disaster. Julian was a slim, delicate, dreamy-looking lad, looking more than his seventeen and a half years. More than ever he envied Geoffrey, who, although really concerned about his father, was still able to pursue his usual normal life of games and even work, for he was soon to try for Sandhurst. On the very day for

which an important consultation had been fixed he was to play in a cricket-match. He had been proud to be chosen; his mind was full of it; he had never been asked to play in such an important match before. Julian, hardly realizing this, ventured to say:

"I suppose you couldn't get out of it, Geoff?"

"I shan't even try," said Geoffrey carelessly. "I couldn't do any good by moping here and making myself and every one else more miserable than we are already." He regarded Julian with something of the old, uncomprehending curiosity. "That wouldn't help father a little bit, you know!"

"No," said Julian almost humbly.

He saw that it was quite possible and even right for Geoffrey to go, just as it would have been impossible, even wrong, for himself. Egoism and unselfishness had nothing to do with it. It was only a question of what you were capable of, what you could bear. And long ago he had discovered that things didn't hurt Geoffrey in the same way and with that keen edge with which he himself could be wounded. Geoffrey would pass through life in a state of easy forgetfulness and unconcern. If he were hurt he would shrug his shoulders, pass on to the next absorbing interest, and forget his wound. He would treat all the pain and torture and devastating anxiety of life in the same careless way in which he would meet bodily hurt, wounds of the flesh.

"I wish I were more like Geoff," thought Julian. "I wish I could have gone to look on at the match."

For, as Geoffrey had pointed out, he could do no one any good by moping indoors. The atmosphere of the house was one of tragic, almost breathless suspense. His mother, absorbed in the task of tending his father, was invisible to him. He sat there in the quiet school-room waiting, as it seemed, hour after hour. The tension of a house where there is

dangerous illness had descended upon him. All his nerves were taut. He had a book open before him, but he could not read. Some confusion came into his mind presently, for as he sat there he became drowsy, and in his thoughts the cricket-match and his father's illness became inextricably mixed. Downstairs the doctors were consulting together about his father's chance of life, and the London specialist became the umpire, wearing, however, a black coat instead of the traditional long white one. And they were waiting for his decision, his verdict. . . "How's that, umpire—in or out?" The familiar words echoed in his ear, just as if they had been spoken by an eager, excited, school-boy voice with just that note of anxiety he had heard so often. One waited so breathlessly for the verdict which no one would dare to gainsay. Julian seemed to hear a loud voice cry, *"Out!"* It roused him roughly from his lethargy, and he was unable to believe that it had not really been uttered. He did not think that brief monosyllable could have held such awful meaning and power, so as to assume the very voice of doom. Echoes caught up the sound and repeated it with thin, elfin, mocking reiteration. "Out. . out. . " repeated Julian, still stupid and confused and not quite sure whether he were awake or asleep.

A sudden noise aroused him; he looked up, rubbing his eyes. He must have fallen asleep, he thought, with his arms on the table, his head bowed upon his hands. And the noise that had aroused him was the opening of the door. He was confused, like a person who has just awakened from the effects of an anaesthetic and whose brain is still clouded. His mother was standing in front of him—not the man in the long white coat whom he had almost expected to see.

"Was it in or out?" he said in a dazed way.

"In or out?" Mrs. Parmeter repeated.

Her face was very white; she looked with an expression almost of terror at Julian.

He suddenly laughed in a mirthless way, like one who laughs in his sleep at some ghastly, meaningless jest.

"I thought you were the umpire," he said. "I've got mixed, I think. I must have been asleep."

"I woke you," she said. "I had no idea you were asleep. Why didn't you go with Geoff?"

"I wanted to hear what the specialists said," answered Julian. "And then I must have fallen asleep and dreamed of the cricket-match. And the doctor became the umpire."

Mrs. Parmeter went to the window and looked at the garish summer scene outside, the strong glare that blazed on the pavements, the passing groups of amorous cockneys, the crowds moving up and down, the blue line of the sea very delicately colored.

"Norman is very ill," she said quietly, "more ill than we thought. They do not think there is actual disease—that is a comfort and gives one hope. It is his weakness that alarms us. We shall have to go abroad this autumn to a warm climate."

It was the way she spoke that made Julian's heart sink like a stone. So the umpire had said *"Out,"* after all.

"Go—go away from here?" he said.

It seemed impossible—incredible—surely he was still suffering from that clouded confusion.

"Yes, dear," she said. "I shall have to make plans. You will have gone back to school by the time we have to start, but I must think about the Christmas holidays."

Julian felt as if the solid ground were slipping from beneath his feet. He longed for her to tell him more, but all the time he knew there was no need

for her to do so. He really knew all that she knew. The umpire had said *"Out,"* and his father was going to die. Going abroad would only prolong his life. He thought of Keats, sent abroad with Severn when his life was hanging on a thread, dying in Rome a few months later with an unopened letter from Fanny Brawne by his side. He had always thought of Keats's life as a deep, haunting tragedy. Not the least tragic part of it lay in the fact that so soon after his death people had come to realize that the consumptive boy of twenty-four had won his place among the Immortals. One wasn't allowed to have and to realize earthly glory; perhaps it was harmful to the soul. . . He remembered his father's words uttered half-playfully, "My dear boy, I'm not quite a classic yet! No one has ever heard of me!"

Again he roused himself. For his father really wasn't at all like Keats, he had nothing the matter with his lungs. He was a much older man; he had had a very happy life; he had loved and been loved; things had gone smoothly with him. And the doctors had said they did not think there was actual disease of the grave, internal kind that had been feared.

"Where shall you go?" he said at last.

"Probably to the south of France. He doesn't care to go as far as Italy. But we haven't decided anything as yet."

He looked up. "I must write to Eunice," he said. "Eunice will be very sorry."

He was almost thankful that she wasn't there to taste the bitterness of this hour. She seemed suddenly very far away, as if she had no more part or lot with them. Perhaps it was best that she had gone before this great trouble came upon them. There was a reason for everything.

"You can tell Geoffrey when he comes in," said Mrs. Parmeter. "Don't make him too unhappy.

If we take things in time Norman may get quite strong again. He has always had a good constitution."

"Yes," said Julian.

"And now I must go back to him." She stooped suddenly and kissed him on the forehead, pushing his heavy dark hair with her hand. "I wanted you to know, Julian."

Something of its bright courage had gone out of her voice. She went quickly away as if she did not want him to make any reply. He continued to sit there, pondering over her words.

The summer dusk was beginning to fall when Geoffrey came in, heated and flushed with triumph. It had been a simply topping day. They had had a "top-hole" lunch. And he had carried his bat for a hundred and ten. They had won—the other side hadn't had a look-in. He had taken four wickets himself for thirty runs. Geoffrey looked splendid in his white flannels and brilliant school "blazer." His open throat was all burned brown by the sun. He sat down near his brother, lit a cigarette, and talked eagerly.

To see him just now, so careless and unconscious in his egoism, stabbed Julian. He remembered his mother's words, asking him to tell Geoffrey, but not to make him too unhappy. How careful she was of Geoffrey, always trying to screen him. Was it because she knew that Julian with his smaller physical strength had yet no need that the wind should be tempered for him?

"Well, did the doctor come? What did he say?" said Geoffrey at last. He spoke as if it were an afterthought, yet his very way of saying it assured Julian that this thought and no other had been in his mind all the time.

"He said father must go abroad."

"Abroad? How simply ripping! I hope it'll

be to one of those places in Switzerland where we can skate. Will they be there at Christmas? It'll be awful fun to go abroad."

"Mother didn't say we were to go. She said she would have to make plans for the Christmas holidays. You see, she was rather worried, for he's very ill, though there's no disease. But I don't think they will go to Switzerland—it's more likely to be the south of France."

"Oh, well—that won't be half bad. We shall get lots of lawn-tennis and golf," said Geoffrey.

"There's no reason why he shouldn't get well," said Julian.

"Of course he'll get fit again," said Geoffrey cheerfully. "Well, I must go and have a bath."

Presently Julian went up to his room. As he passed the door he could hear Geoffrey splashing and singing in his bath and something in the cheerful, normal sound made him shiver. Geoffrey always sang in his bath, yet this evening the sound held a jarring note. He shut his own door so that he might not hear it. There was something disordered and menacing in this change, as if a blow had been struck at the very heart of their lives. It seemed to him more than ever a providential arrangement that Eunice had gone away. She might have had to go in any case. Now she would be able to look back upon her life with them as an uniformly happy time, unchequered by ugly changes.

Outside, the rich summer dusk was full of harmonious purple tones that colored sky and sea, and even endowed the passing crowds on the Front with a mysterious quality. Somewhere in the distance a band was playing, and the sound filtered through with an almost intolerable melancholy. It was very still to-night; one could hear the crisp breaking of the waves on the beach, a rhythmical accompaniment

of sound. There was no wind stirring and it was unusually warm.

The moving mystery of the sea, never quite silent even when very calm, always stimulated in Julian that condition of reverie which grew upon him in time of calamity. He must be quite calm—as calm as the sea and the grave night sky—before he dared to pray. Then prayer would come and bring that desire to co-operate, against which the flesh so often rebelled, trying to hold the spirit back with chains and imprisoning its fine impulse of generosity. So far he had had only a childish vision of death; he had never seen it except once, when he had stolen up at night to look at Baby Sister in her narrow crib. But it was not only that death threatened his father; he felt that his own life was being convulsed by change, it had lost all sense of security, of stability. This was the hour of trial, when only spiritual things could help, when one could only hold out pitiful, groping, human hands to the Unseen and ask for courage and resignation.

He longed and yet dreaded to see his father again under these new conditions. It was not quite curiosity, for his love for him cried out to be consoled by some outward sign of well-being, of physical improvement. But he had not been allowed to go into his room for three days. His father was too weak to talk; he must keep very quiet; to see his sons might upset and excite him.

He and Geoffrey dined alone rather miserably. Mrs. Parmeter took her meals as opportunity offered. After dinner Julian was going back to his own room when Geoffrey called to him:

"Look here—I simply can't stand being alone. Come and play rubicon bézique."

Julian came back obediently and they entered the drawing-room, and Geoffrey dragged out the old card-table with its faded green top and some packs

of well-used cards. He stood in front of his brother with flushed cheeks and shining, nervous eyes. But he did not allude to their father; it was evident that he was refusing to allow his mind to dwell upon anything so painful. He was resolutely directing his thoughts to another channel and insisting upon Julian's doing the same. But it was a mere bright pretence, the melancholy fact hovered like a shadowy bird at the back of all they said and thought. At such moments Julian would feel the terrible strength of Geoffrey's will, as of something hard and irresistible, imposing itself upon him. Under its influence he concentrated his mind wholly upon the cards and played as well as he could. In fact, he had a nervous dread of making a mistake that should reveal to Geoffrey that his thoughts were elsewhere employed. The game was a brilliant and hotly-contested one. Even the swift mental arithmetic it involved was good for Julian, obliging him to concentrate and control his thoughts. But though his intellect approved, his heart rebelled against the cold wisdom of Geoffrey. He even thought him a little cruel to capture and dominate him in this way. For his heart was full of an overpowering emotion of love and anxiety and pain, so that the temporary banishment of these feelings hurt him as with some obscure sense of disloyalty.

It was as if they had no care in the world except the losing or winning of this trivial game of cards.

CHAPTER XXIX

JULIAN often felt in the few weeks that were left of their holidays that Geoffrey had usurped the place of the elder son and had assumed a certain ascendancy even over him. His presence made

itself felt in the house; several times he took upon himself to arrange something that required organization. Julian realized that Geoffrey was doing this on purpose, and he surrendered and let himself be dominated, aware that it was not done out of pride or unkindness, but simply with a wish to draw him away from a too morbid contemplation of the threatened calamity. It was as if something superlatively sane and wholesome in Geoffrey's mind wished to set even their father's illness upon a normal plane. And Geoffrey himself was a little changed. He rose every day and went to Mass with Julian. He was devout and recollected, but when he left the church his bright cheerfulness was unimpaired. They had their breakfast together directly they went in, and later they went down to the sea to bathe. Outwardly they seemed very close friends, for they were more together than was their usual custom, but Julian felt that the gulf between them had never been so wide. It was perhaps because Geoffrey hardly ever spoke of his father's illness or of their future, which seemed so obscure. But Julian knew that if he were to dub him careless and indifferent he would be wholly unjust. It was because he did care so much that he turned his head away as if from the contemplation of something that affected him too terribly to be borne. Julian knew that he cared because he prayed. He could not help watching him sometimes at Mass, his fair face looking very earnest and sincere. In spite of himself Julian drew nearer to Geoffrey. He realized how immensely he admired him for his hard, sharp qualities, that were more like those of an experienced man upon whom others relied in moments of difficulty. It was rather like the process of studying a complete stranger and discovering the existence of shining, wonderful qualities of head and heart. He had

never seen Geoffrey as it were so close before, and he discerned in him a curious carefulness of conduct. He was perfectly simple, but he was seldom now impatient or violent; he was thoughtful to others and very kind. But always he seemed to be guarding his own heart from pain.

Julian had a letter from Eunice. She was evidently grieved and distressed at the news of Mr. Parmeter's illness; she sent him loving messages. But the letter made Julian feel as if she had traveled very far away from them. Their interests were not her interests any more; she had her own father to love, to think of; it was clear that their intimacy was daily growing greater. "I know what I should feel like if it were my own darling papa," she wrote. She had been gone nearly a year, and to Julian the house seemed still to be haunted by the ghost of that bright, lovely young presence.

* * *

It was in September, before the holidays were quite ended, that Mr. Parmeter's departure from home took place. Geoffrey helped his mother in all the arrangements for the journey; like Julian, she submitted to this new young force that was asserting itself as if impelled by circumstances. The boys would be left alone for the last four days of the holidays. Mrs. Parmeter had indeed hoped to remain till they had gone, but the weather had already become chilly and wet and it was considered more prudent to make an earlier start for a more sunny place.

When Mr. Parmeter was helped out to the motor-ambulance that was to convey him to Newhaven it was noticed that he was very feeble, and had need of a great deal of help to accomplish those few steps. Geoffrey supported him on one side; he pushed the

servant who had been deputed to assist him aside and assumed the task himself. The boys realized for the first time how altered their father was. They had only seen him lying in bed or on the sofa, and now that he stood up he looked almost like an old man with stooping shoulders and grey hair. He was thin to emaciation and his eyes were sunken and dull. But his smile had still something of its old ironic quality as he greeted his sons, and there was a look of pride in his face as he glanced up at Geoffrey, his tall, handsome boy with the yellow hair of a Viking, the sea-blue eyes.

"It's rotten you're having to go away like this, father," said Geoffrey, smiling bravely.

Mr. Parmeter said gently, but in a voice that was audible to his wife and to both his sons:

"We must be ready to co-operate with the divine will, Geoff. It is wonderful how easy it makes everything."

Geoffrey turned his head away abruptly; Julian did not dare look at him. They both perhaps felt that there would be no difficulty in remembering those words, which held the secret of all courage, all endurance, all resignation.

When Geoffrey helped his father to get into the ambulance his face was very grave and stern with the effort of self-control.

Julian believed after that episode that Geoffrey's suffering was greater than his own because it was more highly centralized. It was not attenuated by any previous grief, as his own sorrow always seemed, being, as he felt, the prolongation of the anguish he had felt at Eunice's departure. He thought now that there was something fierce in that strongly-controlled grief of Geoffrey's.

As he returned to the house, Julian felt more than ever that all the old, stable things were slipping from

him. Eunice was gone and there was no doubt that the bonds of affection established through those long years of her residence with them were rapidly slackening. His father was mortally ill, and his mother had taken him abroad. It was terrible to be in that great echoing house without his mother. Although he had seen her so little these last few weeks he had never been without her morning and evening embrace to reassure him of her love. He knew that in the hours that followed her departure he should have given way to an almost despairing grief if it had not been for Geoffrey. How odd to look to Geoffrey for support. Yet one could not deny it, he was a rock. And it was far easier to accept his help now that one knew he was suffering under that hard, bright surface. He had so nearly broken down; that glimpse of his averted profile had shown a chalk-white cheek; it was only by dint of an iron self-control that he had been able to maintain his calm composure.

Julian wrote down those parting words of his father's in his prayer-book: *"We must be ready to co-operate with the divine will. It is wonderful how easy it makes everything . . . "*

Mr. Parmeter never rallied from the fatigue of his journey. Although Mentone had been fixed upon as the venue of his sojourn, it was considered advisable by the nurses who accompanied them, that they should stop at Marseilles and not go any farther that day. He was already prostrate with exhaustion. He was little accustomed to traveling; the modern habit of restlessly scouring Europe had never appealed to him, and the physical exhaustion—common to many nervous, highly-strung persons—consequent upon a long night journey had made a wreck of him before he reached his destination. He went to bed

upon arriving at the hotel, and to his wife especially the increased weakness was very alarming.

It soon became perfectly clear to them all that Mr. Parmeter would never again leave Marseilles. They had been there two or three weeks when he requested that his sons might be sent for. He wanted them, especially he wanted to see Geoffrey. Mrs. Parmeter telegraphed, asking that they might be allowed to start immediately. They arrived two days later and she met them at the station. Their eager, anxious faces showed her how fully they realized the situation. On the way to the hotel she told them that their father was very happy and peaceful; he was longing to see them. There was no need for her to say more. They knew that he was going to die. Her calm was wonderful, Julian thought. She was, as usual, full of solicitude for their comfort; on arriving at the hotel she insisted upon their having something to eat before they were admitted to the sick-room. She would have made them rest a little, but this they both declined.

"We slept in the train," Geoffrey explained. "I don't want to rest, but I'll go and have a bath."

They had some hot coffee, some fresh rolls and butter. The fragrance of the food tempted them; they had not eaten much on their journey. Geoffrey was hungry and he made Julian eat. When he had gone off to have a bath, Julian found himself alone with his mother.

"Geoff's been splendid," he said. He wondered if she had yet realized the active part Geoffrey was playing now, his initiative and thoughtfulness.

"Yes, yes, I'm sure he has," she said.

"He seemed to know exactly what to do. I—just sat in the train and did what he said," said Julian.

"Yes—he's very clever, very practical."

"He does care, you know," said Julian. He was

terribly afraid that his mother had failed to discern how greatly Geoffrey cared.

"But of course," she agreed quickly.

"When may I see father?"

"Very soon. He's always brighter in the morning."

"But he's worse—much worse?" said Julian, putting his hand on hers.

"Yes, much worse." Her fingers clasped Julian's with nervous strength. "God is going to take him away from us. I want you—and Geoffrey, too—to look at it like that."

"To co-operate," Julian was saying dreamily, "just as he told Geoffrey."

"Yes, it's the only way. Otherwise things would be—unbearable. God has been so kind, so merciful to us—all these years. We have tried to serve Him in our happiness. Now he asks us to serve Him in our sorrow. We mustn't be less ready—less faithful—less willing. Some parents wouldn't have perhaps let their sons come, so as to save them pain. But you and Geoffrey—yes, I could count on you to be brave, to help me."

"I'm so glad you let us come," said Julian, simply. It was wonderful how brave her words made him feel, giving him a glow of calm courage, as if he were going into battle for some splendid cause for which it would be good to die. "Geoffrey helps me to be brave," he added, "even though he doesn't like to talk about it."

He wanted loyally to let her know that Geoffrey had helped him. Sometimes he thought she still believed that he led and that Geoffrey followed, just as they used to do. He wanted her to realize the change that had come in their mutual relations, and that their positions were now reversed. He had lost his first mean little envy of his brother, and was

prepared to submit to him. He wished, too, that he could always see a clear bright path in front of him, lit by the lamps of faith and hope and high courage, such a path as Geoffrey saw and determinedly followed. To himself there seemed always so many byways, floating in such murky mists of indecision and faltering and hesitation. He even felt that Geoffrey had taught him to pray better, as if with a more pure and single intention, a greater simplicity. He had always been groping, feeling his way, beset by a thousand difficulties, yet stubbornly clinging to the anchor of faith, while Geoffrey moved lightly and confidently forward.

"Geoffrey has developed very much lately," said Mrs. Parmeter. "I have noticed it too. He's beginning to take the lead."

"Yes," Julian agreed. "I haven't always understood him, but now I see how splendid he is. He makes me want to be more like him."

It cost him a little effort to say it, but he wanted to be generous toward his brother, as if to make up for his old want of sympathy, his tendency to consider him unfeeling and selfish.

"Dear Julian," said Mrs. Parmeter. As usual, she had penetrated his thoughts—such a perplexing maze!—had become aware of the little struggle that had cost Julian a certain amount of painful effort, and of the small victory he had won over himself.

They went in one by one to see their father. Julian first, because he was the elder. He went timidly and nervously toward the sick man. Even in these few weeks the change that had come over him was alarmingly apparent. One felt now that, humanly speaking, there was no hope of recovery. And one felt—oh, how strongly—that whatever struggle there had been against the premature sentence of death, whatever mutiny of the rebellious

flesh against the divine mandate, all these were splendidly, triumphantly, at an end. Death for Norman Parmeter, with his secret passionate religious fervor, meant only a glorious going forward. Whatever pain of purification purgatory might impose would mean but another step toward the goal for which he had always striven.

When he saw Julian his first question was for Eunice. Had there been news of her? Julian was able to say that he had had a letter. "I wish she could have been here now," said Norman, "I should like to have seen her again. She is a dear child." His words found a wistful echo in Julian's heart.

It was as if they had all agreed to be calm and happy during the weeks that followed. Those days were filled with a curious, beautiful serenity of sadness that made them never too painful to be recalled. They were all very united, and the hours they spent with Norman were too peaceful to be very sorrowful. He already did not seem to belong quite to this world. The very emaciation of his body made him spiritual in aspect, as if by some subtle conquering of the flesh. He was etherealized, and it seemed too as if the body were already weaned of every earthly desire. Although he suffered greatly, more from acute discomfort than from actual pain, he very patiently accepted all the misery of it. He was too weak to speak much.

Every morning a priest came to say Mass in his room. It was Geoffrey who prepared everything and then served the Mass. Julian watched him almost enviously. All his actions were so careful, so considered, and in his movements there seemed a perfect commingling of reverence and grace. He recited Latin with a clear liquid flow of sound; he knew the responses and prayers by heart. Even here, in the things that actually concerned religion,

he had the mastery of Julian, who had always been the more deeply religious of the two. Mr. Parmeter's eyes would watch his son with a curious look of pride in his sunken eyes. Further away he could see, when Mass was over, his wife and Julian kneeling side by side, their dark heads very close together. His happiness at such moments was perfect. Ivy would not be left alone and unprotected with these two strong young sons beside her. They would always be good sons; he felt that more than ever in those days at Marseilles.

He had taught his wife to look upon the coming separation as he looked upon it, much in the same way as afterward she had told Julian. He shrank from any clamorous manifestations of grief. They had had so many happy and undisturbed years. The only sharp trial that had been sent to them was the death of Baby Sister in infancy. And as if to compensate for that loss they had had for years the joy of Eunice's presence in their home. How much he had missed Eunice he could never tell; but now, like Julian, he was able to see that her departure, just before the changes had come upon them, was perhaps for the best. Yes, God had been superabundantly merciful to them, had overwhelmed them with the fruits of His love, with benefits beyond all their poor desert.

The end came very quietly and rather suddenly one evening, just when the autumn sunset was fading from gold to dusky purple, and the sea was pale as a pearl seen across a pallid veil. The doctor had just gone away; the priest was already there, for all knew that death was coming very near. Mr. Parmeter repeated twice the Name of his beloved Master, whom he had so faithfully served. His lips moved once or twice as if in response to the prayers for the dying which the priest was uttering

aloud, but no sound was audible. He had received the Last Sacraments that morning and later in the day the Viaticum. Thus, fortified by all the rites of Holy Church, the soul of Norman Parmeter went forth upon its last journey.

CHAPTER XXX

It was Geoffrey who did everything, relieving his mother, who was physically very tired and exhausted, of all painful details and occupying himself first with the arrangements for the funeral and then for their journey. His bright composure never failed him, and his solicitude for his mother was even greater than Julian's. He had the not too common power of putting himself quite outside the picture, as if his own personality had no connection with contemporary events. Yet all the time Julian felt that he must be undergoing a great strain, in fitting his youthful strength to a man's hard tasks. When they were all in the train on their way home Geoffrey slept very soundly, as if he were utterly fatigued. Julian, who was lying awake, and feeling sick and miserable, cried quietly, ashamed of the tears he could no longer control. The desolation of it all seemed to take him by the throat. He was not able to be calm and resigned any more, and yet he felt that his very grief was an act of rebellion against the divine will. It was at variance, too, with all that his parents had demanded of him. He wanted to pray, but he could not pray. Ever since the funeral he had not been able to pray. His heart and his mind were alike a blank. He looked down at his mother lying there on the third couch of their narrow com-

partment and he saw that she was awake. Her face looked very pale in the greenish light diffused by the shaded lamp that hung above their heads, and the shadows upon it were deep and marked. Her white hands were uncovered and he saw that they held a rosary and that her lips were moving in prayer. Geoffrey sleeping—he could hear his regular breathing; his mother praying; and he himself agonizing, shedding passionate, mutinous tears. He felt ill with grief and loss, and physically he was tired and weak. Why couldn't he be strong—continually strong—like Geoffrey? He always broke down under a long strain, while his brother seemed to gain fresh strength. Was it only because he was physically less robust? The sound of Geoffrey's calm, deep, rhythmical breathing calmed his nerves a little. He could picture him on awakening the next morning, refreshed by all these hours of sound sleep, ready to take up the burden of another day, eager and helpful, while he himself would be only a nervous wreck, his white face showing perhaps traces of these ignoble tears.

They spent a few days in Paris, because Mrs. Parmeter was really very tired and seemed disinclined to continue her journey at once. While they were there Geoffrey insisted upon Julian's accompanying him to see picture-galleries and churches and museums. In the afternoon they drove in the Bois with their mother. The November days were warm, as if summer were loath to leave the world that year. Julian felt that if he had been alone with his mother things would have been different; they would have been quiet and a little sad, like all people who have sustained a recent loss. This bright young presence forbade any manifestation of sadness. And yet Geoffrey had been his father's favorite son; Norman had always been proud of his

manly, vigorous character. That was the strange part of it. Geoffrey had really lost more than Julian.

About a week later they started for England. The wind was blowing fiercely when they reached Boulogne. Mrs. Parmeter disliked the sea, especially in its rough moods, and she disappeared at once into a small deck cabin and lay down on one of the couches. Geoffrey and Julian remained outside watching the passengers who were coming on board in hurrying groups. Suddenly they saw two people coming toward them, an elderly woman and a tall young girl whose dark hair was all roughened and disheveled by the wind. Julian uttered a little exclamation, which he tried the next moment to check, but Geoffrey's ears were too quick. "Why, what's up, Ju?" he said.

"It—it is Eunice," said Julian, stumbling over his words. Then he ran forward, forgetting his shyness, forgetting indeed everything except that she was there. He came up to her with shining eyes.

"Why, it's Julian!" she cried and held out her hand. "Is Geoffrey here too?"

At the mention of his brother's name Julian felt suddenly chilled. "Yes, he's over there," he said indicating that great, well-set-up, manly figure with the uncovered yellow hair tossed by the breeze.

Eunice turned and made some explanation in a low tone to her companion, then she said to Julian:

"Let's go and talk to him. And your mother?"

"She's lying down," said Julian briefly. He wanted dreadfully to tell Eunice about his father's death, but he felt that the moment had not come. He moved down the deck swiftly to keep up with her. She still had the same lithe, quick movements, delicately graceful. The wind lifted her hair in thick long strands. She had grown very much and

was nearly as tall as Julian himself. She ran up to Geoffrey and held out her hand.

"Hullo, Eunice!" he said with a smile, "what luck to meet you! Are you going to stop in England long?"

"No—only about two months."

"You must come down to Brighton to see us."

"I should love to, but Miss Brent is such a cross old thing—she never wants me to do anything. She's my governess and companion and I don't like her." She wore her old droll expression as she said the words. "Where have you all come from?"

"We've been at Marseilles and then in Paris." His face grew suddenly grave. "My father died there ten days ago. You heard, I suppose, that he was very ill?"

The tears rushed to Julian's eyes; he turned his head abruptly away. Yet he was thankful Geoffrey had told her; he felt then that it would have been an impossibility for him to speak of it. Suddenly he was aware that a hand was thrust into his.

"Oh, I'm so sorry, Ju! More than I can tell you. He was a darling to me—I did love him. I've often thought about him and all he used to teach me. I *am* sorry, Ju, dear."

At this unexpected sympathy, at the sound too of the little catch in her voice as she spoke, Julian felt as if his heart would truly break. The tears flowed freely; he was scarcely ashamed of them. Geoffrey stood there, bright-eyed, his arms folded, watching the little scene. Eunice's hand still clasped Julian's, but she was looking at Geoffrey and observing the change in him, that new manliness, that cold strength, something that removed him forever from the mere school-boy. He had changed much more than Julian, who in his unhappiness recalled a thousand little scenes to her memory.

"And your mother? Shall I see her?"

"When we get to Folkstone. She prefers to lie down," said Geoffrey, "and you know it's going to be pretty rough."

"Jolly good thing. Miss Brent will vanish then," said Eunice.

She was still the same, Julian thought, only developed strangely in the past few months. She was more independent, less of a child, and her careless charm was informed with the least touch of superiority. He would have liked to find her softened, more in keeping with the mental pictures he had sometimes formed of a Eunice grown older. But he was sensible—unwillingly almost—of her deadly power to fascinate him; a power that had, alas, increased a thousandfold so that it was sheer rapture to listen to her voice. When she had slipped her small warm hand into his, he had thrilled oddly to the touch. Tongue-tied in her presence, as so often he had been in days gone by, he could envy Geoffrey's perfect, unruffled ease. But how pretty she was, when all was said and done, with her lovely soft coloring, the masses of shining black hair, the brilliant dark-brown eyes, her small pointed features drawn with such delicate, perfect finish.

"Tell me more about your father," she whispered to Geoffrey, as if she could not trust Julian's self-control.

Geoffrey told her in a quiet, steady voice the brief story of Norman Parmeter's illness and death. He told it so simply that one could hardly have guessed how sternly the tragedy had touched him. Eunice stood between the two brothers all the time, but her face was turned and uplifted toward Geoffrey's. While he was speaking, the steamer began to plow her way out of the harbor into the rough swelling

sea beyond. A rush of spray splashed into their faces and made them tingle.

"You'd better not stand here," said Geoffrey, "it's the weather side. We'll go over there." He held Eunice by the arm, for the deck lurched beneath their feet as the steamer rolled into the trough of a great wave. Julian was just going to follow them when Mrs. Parmeter appeared at her cabin door.

"Ju, darling, do come and sit with me. You know how nervous I am on a rough sea," she said smiling, though her face and lips were white.

Without a word he followed her into the cabin and sat down on a low seat by her side. She seemed comforted to have him there, and lay down again and closed her eyes. Outside they could hear the wind shrilling with unquiet voice, and the heavy splashing of the waves; it sounded as if the steamer were waging a battle with the elements and the sense of conflict oppressed him. He was thinking of those two figures on deck; it had cost him an effort to leave them. He had wanted so passionately to be with Eunice just for the short time they were to be on board. He longed to know where she would be in London, when she would come to visit them, when she was to return to Malta.

Meanwhile Geoffrey had found two chairs in a sheltered spot, where he and Eunice remained until they reached Folkestone harbor. They were practically alone, for most of the other passengers had vanished. It was raining and no glimpse of the white cliffs of England were visible through the thick mists that enveloped the coast.

"Now tell me about yourself," said Geoffrey.

"Oh, there's nothing to tell. I'm awfully happy with papa, you know. But he took it into his head that I ought to have a change, so I'm to go home for a couple of months."

"That's splendid. You'll be able to come down to see us in the Christmas holidays."

"Yes, I'd love to. Are the Eliots still living in Brighton?"

"No—they left last spring. They are living in London, I believe, now Mildred has come out."

"Has she really come out? I wonder if she'll marry Gilfrid Eliot? But I'm glad they've left. I hate people who throw you over as they did me. My mother's married again—perhaps you heard?"

Geoffrey shook his head.

"She's married Sir Chandos Mirton—he was a widower with three sons all older than I am. I don't hear from her, of course. She does not want me any more. Sir Chandos has heaps of money and a place in Gloucestershire. I'd like to see it."

"Oh, you'll never go there, I hope," said Geoffrey lightly. "You belong altogether to Colonel Dampier now."

Eunice said reflectively:

"It must be nice to have heaps and heaps of money. Papa isn't at all rich, you know. Where has Julian gone?"

"He went to be with mother. She called him just now. Shall I go and take his place? Then he can come to talk to you."

Eunice deliberated for a moment. "No," she said at last, "it upset him just now to talk to me. I think he's happier with your mother. But if you want to go, too, never mind me. I suppose if I hunt about below I shall eventually find Miss Brent!"

"But I don't want to go in the least," said Geoffrey, smiling. "It's ripping up here, isn't it? I love a rough crossing."

At Folkestone Julian reappeared and came up to them.

"Will you come to see mother, Eunice?" he said.

Eunice sprang up. "Of course."

She ran up and kissed Mrs. Parmeter, lifting a glowing, flushed face to hers. "Oh, Mrs. Parmeter, it's lovely to see you and Geoffrey and Julian again!"

"But you must be sure to come and spend a few days with us later on," said Mrs. Parmeter; "the boys will be at school till nearly Christmas time and I'd like you to come when they're at home. It is their last term at school—Geoffrey is to go into the army next year. He wants a few months at a crammer's first."

At this moment Miss Brent appeared, looking decidedly the worse for the brief but unpleasant crossing. "Come, Eunice," she said, "we must collect our things." Her voice was a little sharp. She had witnessed the meeting between Eunice and the two Parmeters, and she had disapproved of the manner in which her charge had rushed up to them.

Eunice kissed Mrs. Parmeter, shook hands with Geoffrey and Julian, and followed Miss Brent obediently down the deck. Beyond a passing glimpse at the station they did not see her again.

Almost Julian wished that they had not seen Eunice. That fleeting vision of her had confused the memory that dwelt in his mind with such extraordinary clearness of detail. She was immensely changed; her beauty was now a vivid, arresting thing that no one could fail to perceive; she had become older, more assured in manner. In quite a short space of time she had established a great friendliness between herself and Geoffrey, and in the old days they had never cared much for each other. He felt as if his own old intimacy with her had been swept utterly away. They could not meet as strangers, but they could not, on the other hand, have the easy intercourse of people who see each other for the first time.

"Her mother's married again—she's Lady Mir-

ton. Her husband is a very rich man. She doesn't want Eunice any more. Queer, isn't it?" Geoffrey said in the train.

"What else did she tell you?" asked Julian. He was longing to hear more. To be unselfish that day and sit with his mother had cost him an incalculable effort. He saw again with envy how easily things came to Geoffrey, even things that were of no real value to him. He hadn't wanted—yes, and prayed—to see Eunice again all these past months, yet he had been able to spend all the time of the crossing with her. Julian would have given worlds to change places with him.

"She's grown very tall," said Mrs. Parmeter, "and she's even prettier than she used to be. I like the way she does her hair."

"She seems very happy," said Geoffrey. "Happier than she really was with us. She must have wanted a home of her very own all the time."

Julian turned his head toward the window and began to watch the chilly, misty November landscape as it flashed past them in the waning daylight.

CHAPTER XXXI

OUTWARDLY there was so little change in the life at Brighton that it would hardly have seemed strange to any one had Mr. Parmeter suddenly returned, to vanish, as had been his custom, into the study at the top of the house. It often seemed as if his quiet, ironical presence had not been entirely removed, and it was difficult to accustom oneself to the thought that his departure was permanent.

Mrs. Parmeter used his study a great deal. She left everything in the room almost exactly as it had

been during his lifetime. They had spent very many happy hours there together, hours that were precious to look back upon, and filled her still with the quiet contentment his love had given to her. She was his literary executor, and was editing his collected poems for the press, and also writing a short biography of him which a firm of Catholic publishers had invited her to prepare. The task was a congenial one to her, but when she submitted very diffidently the first few chapters to her publishers she was astonished at the cordial praise they bestowed upon them. She was surprised to find that they accredited her with a certain literary skill. Norman had valued her opinion, and she had always imagined he was indulgent toward her on account of his love. Now she was made to believe by quite impartial judges that she had ability of her own, at once critical and literary. In the months that followed his death she had an extraordinary amount of leisure, during which she devoted herself to these tasks. After Christmas, when Geoffrey was working at a crammer's in London and Julian had returned to school for two more terms without him before going to Oxford, she took up the work without delay and the book was published during the following autumn. Not one of Norman's own books—not excepting "The Vision of Saints," which had attained to a far greater measure of popularity than the others—had ever made so immediate a success as the little memorial volume prepared by his wife in all its delicate and fastidious simplicity. Afraid of saying too much, of revealing too intimately the poet nature which she had studied so lovingly and loyally, she scarcely said enough to satisfy the majority of her readers. The letters she included were perhaps the most beautiful Norman had ever written. One especially, written to a young man at Oxford, an

intending convert, might, she felt, have been written by a very experienced priest long trained to the guidance of souls. She had known the end of the story, the boy's subsequent conversion, by which he forfeited a rich and important inheritance, and his heroic death a few years later in some frontier skirmish in India. When she herself read the letter (it had been sent to her by the man's sister, who had followed him into the Catholic Church and then become a Carmelite nun) she felt that the fierce flame of faith seemed to make the very pages glow as with some interior fire. She felt, too, that she had never known all that she might have known of Norman. He had been enigmatic, as silent people so often are, not giving greatly by the spoken word.

The twins seemed to grow up with appalling rapidity after their father's death. Already they were eighteen, and Geoffrey was having a brilliant career at Sandhurst. Julian was at Oxford, and had so far evolved no very crystallized line of action for the future. He said sometimes that he would prefer to have a profession that would allow of his living at home with his mother; writing, for instance. He had three or four years of Oxford before him and there was no need to make an immediate decision.

Nevertheless, Mrs. Parmeter was often anxious about Julian. The contrast between his dreamy indolence and indecision and Geoffrey's ability and energy were getting more marked. The two brothers were now very close friends. Since his father's death Geoffrey had slipped into the position of elder son, and Julian never contested the point; he knew quite well that Geoffrey was far better able to arrange things, details of business, financial matters, than he was. When they were twenty-one they were each to possess one-third of their father's

fortune, the remaining third being allotted to Mrs. Parmeter, who was quite well off, having money of her own. Although Geoffrey would scarcely ever be at home, she and Julian resolved to keep on the house in Brighton. Both of them disliked the thought of making any radical change in their way of living, and Geoffrey agreed with the decision; he liked to have the house to come back to when he obtained leave.

Geoffrey spent the autumn of their twenty-first birthday in London. He was on leave, and was spending the time in studying for a special course which he wished to take. He was still very hard-working, very ambitious, and extremely popular with every one. He liked going out almost as much as Julian disliked it. Julian came back for the winter vacation and stayed in Brighton all the time. He was always writing, secretly, as it were, in the old school-room, which had now become his study. He never talked to his mother about this work of his, and if she ever mentioned it he answered evasively. Was it poetry? she used to ask herself, almost in dismay. Was he to follow in his father's footsteps? With all her heart she hoped not. She knew something of the poet's striving and unsuccess and frequent disappointments. She knew how little demand there is normally during a poet's lifetime for his work. There was, it is true, very often a certain degree of posthumous fame, as there had been in Norman's own case. And she did not think that Julian had the same quality of courage to meet that want of success as his father had met it, in a brave, calm, half-ironic spirit. It would perhaps throw Julian back upon discouragement, upon hurtful idleness. It was strange that Julian, whom she had always understood the better of the two, gave her so much more anxiety in those days than Geoffrey.

By a variety of circumstances it had fallen out that they had none of them seen Eunice again since the chance meeting on the Channel steamer. She had not been able to visit them before her return to Malta, which had taken place rather earlier than she had expected. And after that meeting Julian found it far less easy to write to her. The correspondence between them, always fitful and irregular on her side, had now entirely ceased. But Julian had by no means forgotten her; he clung to those early memories of her with a fidelity which would have touched her had she known it.

Lady Eliot, after a couple of years in India, had returned to London to educate her younger daughters, who were now quite big girls, gay, fascinating, sophisticated children who seemed to belong to quite a different order from Mildred. They lived in a large and roomy house in South Kensington, and Geoffrey meeting them at the house of a mutual friend was invited to dinner. Lady Eliot was charmed with the handsome, clever young man, tales of whose brilliant attainments had already reached her. He had the reputation of being quite well off and was a steady boy, ambitious and serious. She therefore resumed the acquaintance without hesitation. When Geoffrey arrived at her house on the evening arranged she greeted him with the words:

"You'll meet an old friend to-night, Geoffrey."

"Do tell me who it is," said Geoffrey, smiling, pleased at being addressed by his Christian name; it gave him an agreeable sense of intimacy.

"I want you to guess."

"You don't mean—Eunice Dampier?" he hazarded, failing at the moment to recall any one else who had shared with the Eliots those far-off Brighton days.

The next moment he remembered the coolness

that had sprung up between the two families after the scandal of the divorce had been made public, and he colored, fearing he had made a *gaffe*.

"Yes, Eunice and her father are coming," said Lady Eliot. "You know Colonel Dampier's quite a big-wig now at the War Office—they've been in town for the last two months. I'm surprised you haven't kept up with them."

Geoffrey was astonished into saying: "And I'm surprised that you have!"

"Oh, there's nothing surprising in that," said Lady Eliot, secretly thinking that the young man had far too ready a tongue. "We met them in Switzerland last summer. It was awfully dull—they were the only possible English people besides ourselves in the hotel. It was a question, you see, of going away ourselves—and we'd only just come—or of burying the ancient hatchet—which was never really a hatchet! Mildred and Eunice had fallen into each other's arms before I had time to come to a decision, so Colonel Dampier and I had to make the best of the situation." She wanted to show Geoffrey that the *rapprochement* had been quite fortuitous, there had been no deliberate reconciliation, on her side with a man who had just become an important big-wig. "Eunice is very much admired," she went on lowering her voice, "so much personality—she always had that—and she really is quite pretty."

"I haven't seen her for ages," Geoffrey confessed, "it must be nearly five years. It was just after my father's death."

He found the prospect of seeing her again a very agreeable one. Geoffrey always got on well with women and girls.

Mildred interrupted his thoughts by saying:

"She's lovelier than ever," in a tone of humble adoration.

"Dear child—you must let Geoffrey judge for himself," said Lady Eliot.

The guests began to arrive. Geoffrey already knew some of them, to others he was presented. At last Colonel Dampier entered, his tall, impressive, soldierly form still very upright. He had filled out a little in the course of years, was no longer so thin; his thick white hair and heavy black brows gave his face an arresting quality. By his side was a tall, slender girl, with black hair and eyes, very graceful and dressed in a delicate, fanciful, artistic manner that pleased Geoffrey. It gave her an air of individuality. She and her father made a striking pair.

"Here's a very old friend, Eunice," said Lady Eliot, indicating Geoffrey.

Eunice looked at him. "Why it's Geoffrey," she said with a charming smile as she held out her hand. "Papa—this is Geoffrey Parmeter."

"I don't think I dare call you Eunice now," said Geoffrey.

"But you mustn't really offend me by calling me anything else. Must he?" She appealed to her father, who smiled indulgently upon his very beautiful young daughter.

Her eyes met Geoffrey's squarely; he felt almost abashed by their quick scrutiny and he longed to know the result of that criticism. Her beauty—the very brilliance of it—had startled him a little; he was not quite at his ease, a sensation which was as rare with him as it was embarrassing.

"You must take her in to dinner," said Lady Eliot kindly, "then you can talk over nursery days."

"You two always fought like cat and dog, didn't you?" said Mildred, who was often unfortunate in her reminiscences.

"Well, we will promise not to fight now," said Geoffrey cheerfully.

He found himself presently sitting beside her at the long table in what was for him a strangely tongue-tied condition. But Eunice was the least shy of mortals; she chattered gaily and soon set him at his ease again.

"Now tell me about Julian," she said; "is he in London too?"

"No—I'm reading with a tutor. You see, I'm going up for a course. I'm on leave. Did Lady Eliot tell you I was in the army?"

"She never mentioned you at all. I expect she wanted to give us both a surprise. Papa was delighted to hear you'd gone into the army; he likes everybody to—all young men, I mean. You must talk to him presently." She threw an affectionate glance at her father across the table. "Is Ju in the army too?"

"No, he's still at Oxford. And he's not exactly cut out for a soldier." Geoffrey's blue eyes brimmed with amusement.

"Is he clever?"

Geoffrey hesitated, as if reflecting upon the matter. He did not wish in any way to denigrate his brother nor to belittle him in the eyes of his old friend, but he found the question extraordinarily difficult to answer. What could he say when he considered that painstaking and industrious disability to get through the necessary examinations? It was doubtful if Julian would ever take a degree at all.

"Not in the way that counts at Oxford," he said at last, and then was angry with himself for choosing those words.

Eunice looked a trifle disappointed. Long ago Julian had been her very faithful, adoring friend. She liked all that she remembered of him immensely;

he had been far dearer to her than Geoffrey, who had now evolved into the clever, handsome creature at her side.

"You mean he couldn't pass at the top like you did?"

"Oh, that's only knack," he hastened to assure her, "it doesn't mean anything at all. And how did you know anything about that?"

"I saw it in the paper. Papa noticed it too. Nothing in the 'Times' ever escapes him!"

"At school they didn't want me to go into the army," he confessed; "they wanted me to try for the Indian Civil."

"We want clever men in the army too. Papa will tell you that." There was a little touch of flattery in the speech that charmed him.

"You never let us know you were in England," he said in a tone full of reproach.

"We have only been here such a short time. And until now I was never here for more than a few weeks when there was always so much to do." He remained, however, under the impression that something had held her back from taking up those old Brighton threads.

"You must blame papa, not me," she continued; "he keeps me under lock and key. He doesn't look like a tyrant, but he is." She smiled straight across the table at Colonel Dampier as she spoke, and his hard, sad, tired face lit up wonderfully in response. There was something very pretty in this attitude of filial devotion.

"And I have to keep my eye on him too," she went on. "If I went away very often he might take it into his head to marry a horrible wife. I've lived in dread of a stepmother all these years. Every one has told him it was his duty to marry again—on my account, if you please!"

"I'm glad then for your sake he resisted every one," said Geoffrey, in his frank, pleasant way.

"Are you still a Catholic?" was her next question.

It was unexpected. "What do you think?" he parried, his blue amused eyes holding hers.

"Because I like to go to the Oratory—we live so near. I enjoy the music."

"Perhaps we shall meet there one day," he suggested.

She took no notice of this. After all, if she had an ulterior motive in going, it wouldn't be to meet him. He wondered if there could be any possible solution to this question in her next words.

"And Julian?"

"What of Julian?"

"Is he still—so very devout?"

"As far as I know he is. We don't see so much of each other now."

"I should like to see him again," she said. "I—I used to be very fond of Julian. He was like—my own brother."

"Get Colonel Dampier to bring you down home one day," he said.

"I'll try. But he's simply awfully busy at the War Office. You must come to tea with us—tea on Sunday." She made the slightest possible grimace. "Papa likes me to stay at home on Sunday afternoons and receive swarms of old fogies—people he knew in India in the Year One!"

"Let me come and be a fogy too," said Geoffrey. "I'd like to come this very next Sunday if I may."

"There's no chance, I suppose, of your being able to bring Ju?"

"None at all, I'm afraid. He's in Brighton now. Shan't I do nearly as well?"

She laughed. "You'll do beautifully. But it

won't be the same thing. I want to talk about heaps of things to Julian."

"I'm sure he'll be tremendously flattered," said Geoffrey.

"Oh no, he won't. Julian will understand just what I mean."

Geoffrey was thinking that for years he had never heard Julian mention Eunice. Had he forgotten her? Certainly he could never imagine her as she was now, with all the charm of her twenty years, and all the extravagant beauty of her youth. But he had been deeply devoted to her during their childhood; even Geoffrey had never been quite able to forget the white, dumb look of misery on his face when he heard of her sudden departure. Now he felt something akin to jealousy at her eager interest in Julian, her evident desire to see him again. He thrust the feeling away from him as an unworthy one. He was meeting Eunice to-night almost as a stranger. She was no longer the small, passionate, turbulent girl with whom he had quarreled and fought times out of number; she was a woman, soft, delicious, alluring. He felt keenly attracted by her, and the charm of her voice entranced him. He wished that the evening might never end. It even came into his head that when he married—perhaps in about ten years time—he would wish to marry some one very like Eunice Dampier. He should certainly write to tell Julian he had come across her. Julian would like to hear news of his old friend. Perhaps for her sake he would condescend to come out of his shell.

After dinner she insited upon taking Geoffrey up to her father.

"Papa—you must talk to Geoffrey. He's in the army. Give him lots of good advice!"

"Very glad to hear you're in the army," he said to Geoffrey. "We noticed—Eunice and I—how

high you passed into Sandhurst. It did you very great credit." And he looked approvingly at Geoffrey's wholesome, manly, sunburned face crowned with its thick crop of yellow hair.

They remained in conversation for some time, discussing service matters, while Eunice left them and went across the room to talk to Mildred. Before Colonel Dampier took his daughter away that night he said to Geoffrey:

"I hope you'll come to see us whenever you like. Onslow Square—I hope Eunice has given you the address. Come on Sunday as a beginning."

"Thanks very much indeed, sir," said Geoffrey.

He went home to his rooms in Albemarle Street, feeling thoroughly satisfied with his evening.

CHAPTER XXXII

To see Eunice Dampier doing the honors of her father's house in that pretty and charming way of hers was an agreeable sight to Geoffrey Parmeter. He found her on the following Sunday surrounded by quite a throng of people of all ages and descriptions. There were grizzled, elderly retired officers and their wives and very often their grown-up sons and daughters; here and there an Anglo-Indian of note was visible; fashionable young married women came, sometimes accompanied by their husbands. Eunice had her own circle of friends, and certainly—as Geoffrey soon perceived—her own little group of devoted admirers. She had a special greeting for him when he came, introduced him to some of her friends, and he was only disappointed because he had the chance of saying so few words to her himself.

Mildred was almost always there, and though he liked her as little as ever, he often found himself talking to her. Once he remembered to ask after Gilfrid Eliot.

"He's been away traveling round the world. He's been gone ages, nearly two years. But he's to be back this spring, and then he's going to settle down at Denscombe—his place in Surrey." Mildred offered this information without comment. She was perfectly aware that her mother intended she should marry Gilfrid, and his return to England gave her a feeling half of pleasure, half of dread. Rich, handsome, and popular as he was, she felt certain that he would never care for her.

"It's a large property," she went on, "he's very rich, you know." She felt that Geoffrey was interested. "You must see him when he comes. I remember you used to be friends."

Best of all, perhaps, he enjoyed his rare conversations with Colonel Dampier. Under his advice his present studies had become very serious indeed, and his work all that winter was very strenuous. The flame of ambition had been fanned; he wanted ardently to succeed. But in writing home he refrained from mentioning the Dampiers. In this reticence he was guided by an obscure but persistent feeling that his recovered intimacy with them might wound or at least annoy Julian. He was so aware of Julian's ancient childish devotion to Eunice, and he wondered how much of the sentiment survived still. It was an affection which had even in the old days won but little in return from her capricious waywardness, yet now it was certain that she was interested in and curious concerning Julian. Geoffrey could remember that for his own part he never cared for her, had often despised her. Now, strangely enough, she was the only girl who had

ever even remotely attracted him. He liked her attitude toward her father, filial, almost maternal, invariably solicitous, yet bright and playful, as if to cheer him, from his always profound melancholy. She charmed Geoffrey altogether, and he would often in the midst of his work pause to think of her, to visualize the pale little oval face, the dark hair and vivid eyes. He could not quite picture Julian in the midst of that rather gay and worldly throng, and he wondered if he would ever have to escort him thither. Yet even there Julian would have slight opportunity of gathering up the threads of that past intimacy, and the field was already overcrowded; he had often idly wondered which of the many charming and brilliant young men to be seen in Onslow Square was destined to be the husband of Eunice.

He had been going there on Sundays pretty regularly for some weeks with an occasional invitation to dinner in between, when he decided in favor of a Major Ardley, who was at home on leave just then. He had known Colonel Dampier very well in India and he spent a great deal of time at their house, and was evidently very welcome there whenever he chose to go. Geoffrey didn't altogether take to him. He made him feel boyish and awkward. He was about fifteen years his senior, a tall man with a hard, decided face and keen, sharp eyes. He had a clever, witty tongue, a bitter expression, as if things had not always gone quite well with him. Nor had Geoffrey's frequent appearances in the house escaped his notice. He said one day casually to Colonel Dampier:

"Who's that yellow-haired boy with a pretty good conceit of himself? He's always here."

"Oh, that's Geoffrey Parmeter—the son of the people Eunice lived with when she was a little girl."

Ardley frowned. "What's he in?"

Colonel Dampier named the Lancer regiment to which Geoffrey belonged. "Parmeter left both his boys pretty well off. He has a twin brother."

Ardley was not rich, and much of his life had been spent in a bitter uphill struggle with poverty.

"He is making the most of an old friendship," he remarked acidly, for at that moment Geoffrey was sitting talking and laughing with Eunice, quite unconscious that he was being observed.

"Oh, there's nothing of that sort," said Colonel Dampier; "besides, it wouldn't do at all. They are a Roman Catholic family."

"Girls are always ready to become Roman Catholics," said Ardley.

"I'm sure that sort of thing doesn't appeal to Eunice. And Geoffrey is a mere boy—he's quite refreshingly young and simple," said Colonel Dampier.

He was suddenly aware how much he should dislike Eunice to marry a Roman Catholic; it would take her so utterly away from him. But he had had no scruple about letting Geoffrey come to his house. It was Julian, the brother, who had been her friend. There might have been some danger about encouraging *him* on so intimate a footing. . . . He was aware that Ardley wished to marry Eunice, and though he liked him he could not feel that he was the right man for her. The difference in their ages was too great, and he did not want Eunice to live in India. She was very dear to him, and if she married he hoped that she would not live too far away.

Geoffrey went down to Brighton toward the end of January to see Julian before he returned to Oxford. His own leave was up, and he had been for some weeks back at Aldershot, generally contriving to spend the week-ends in London. The house in

Brunswick Terrace seemed to him unusually quiet. Mrs. Parmeter was at work on a fresh volume of critical essays, and she was silent, as many people are when engaged upon literary work. And Julian? Julian was a little more incomprehensible to his brother than he had ever been before. He spent most of his time shut up in his study writing, and resenting any interruption. Geoffrey knew that they had been living in this dull, quiet way for the past two months. The thought irritated him, yet why should they not spend the time as they chose? It was unreasonable that he should cavil at it. He had been working himself, but in a different way and with a very fixed and special purpose in view, yet he had found time to go out a good deal, he had seen all the new plays and pictures, and had dined out quite as often as he had wished to. If the quiet were necessary for Mrs. Parmeter, who enjoyed the new task of expressing herself with all the zest of a person who has come fresh to it in middle life, it could not possibly be so essential for Julian. Julian was young, he needed waking up; a little of Colonel Dampier's ardent inspiring influence would be very beneficial to him. He wanted stimulating . . . Geoffrey felt that in the last few months he had traveled far away from his home, and he was aware that something of his sympathy for it had left him.

At dinner that first night he found an opportunity of saying carelessly:

"I've been seeing something of Colonel Dampier and Eunice in town. He's got an appointment at the War Office."

"Oh, are they back in London?" said Mrs. Parmeter, surprised; "you never told us."

She did not look at Julian; she wondered what effect the news would have upon him.

"I met them at the Eliots'," said Geoffrey, in the

pleasant way that made all his doings sound so perfectly plausible and reasonable that one quite forgot to be surprised.

"Are they friends again with the Eliots?" Somehow Mrs. Parmeter had believed that rupture would be permanent. But modern people have a happy facility for burying hatchets.

"Yes, they met in Switzerland when it wasn't apparently possible to cut each other. Lady Eliot was rather funny about it. And, as Mrs. Dampier has completely vanished from the scene, there was really no reason to cut so important a person as Colonel Dampier is now. Eunice is busy keeping house for her father and she does it all very prettily."

"What has she grown up like?" asked Mrs. Parmeter; "is she much altered?"

"Oh, she's a very charming person indeed," said Geoffrey, smiling; "she's not at all like the rampageous little girl we used to know." He turned for the first time to Julian, who sat there, pale and silent, with oddly blazing eyes. "She asked after you, Ju. Wanted to know when you were likely to be in town."

"I'm astonished she should remember us," said Julian. He had no idea why he said those words; they were the first that occurred to him. The whole conversation was like a dream. To think that Eunice should be in England—should be living in London—and he had not known it!

"Poor little Eunice—I should like to see her again," said Mrs. Parmeter softly.

"There's nothing about her that deserves your pity, mother," said Geoffrey.

"She must be nearly twenty. How time flies!"

Julian relapsed into his brooding silence. But his thoughts, his hurrying, confused, crowded thoughts, were full of Eunice; and he was trying to stifle a

dark, cold feeling of jealousy that was invading his heart like a bitter wave. That Geoffrey should have been the one to see her again after her long years of absence and silence! But Geoffrey had all the luck. Things came to him easily, almost unwanted, and he accepted them lightly, welcoming them with a pleasant simplicity that never cost him a moment's emotion. That was how he would go through life, winning honor, perhaps fame. He would never struggle and strain and then know defeat. Were they friends now, these two, forgetful of their early enmity? Geoffrey had spoken of her in a tone of half-jesting admiration. Was he in love with her? For Eunice still remained to Julian a beautiful vision that had inexpressibly gladdened his childhood and early boyhood, and whose perfect memory could never be wholly effaced from his heart.

"Isn't she coming to see us?" he asked at last, and his voice was a little hoarse with effort.

"I'm sure she'll come if she's asked, and if Colonel Dampier can spare her," said Geoffrey. "They're tremendously devoted to each other—she hardly ever leaves him."

"I suppose that's why she has never written to suggest coming," said Mrs. Parmeter. She, too, was a little hurt by the omission. Eunice had been so much her own child for such a number of years, she did not like to think that the tie was altogether broken. And there was Julian. . . She longed to know what was in his mind.

Julian was silent all through the rest of the meal. He played with his food, eating very little. When dinner was over he soon made some excuse to go up to his den.

To-night he felt unable to work. Outside, the winter wind was slashing the rain against the windows; there was something savage and violent in its

onslaught and the sound made him restless and uneasy. From a drawer he took out a heap of typescript, scored with frequent corrections, and glanced through the pages inattentively. The novel he had been secretly writing in his spare time for two years past was nearly finished. Before his return to Oxford he intended to send it to a publisher. Like all dreamers, he dreamed of fame—fame sudden and far-spreading. This book was to win him fame. And through it many fair and desirable things were to come to him. Eunice would read it—she would see the name of her old companion on its title-page, she would write to him, the long silence between them would be broken. His last two letters to her had remained unanswered, probably because she had forgotten or been too lazy to write. There had been no deliberate breaking of the old friendship; it had died a natural death on her side from long separation, and the coming of other interests. But always he had lived with the hope that had never left him of seeing her again, of resuming something of that delicious intimacy, that close interchange of thought, which they had known as children. As yet it had not occurred to him that the friendship might, if resumed, deepen, especially on his side, into a love that might prove the making or marring of his life.

And now it seemed to him that Geoffrey had stepped in and robbed his dream of something of its shining, wonderful quality. Geoffrey with his carelessly-drawn picture of Eunice had set her a little farther away, a little more out of his reach.

All through the vacation he had been working very hard at his novel and at last it was beginning to assume a shape that did not quite dissatisfy him. He had felt that his father's reputation as a poet might be of use to him. . . By Julian Parmeter—son of the well-known poet, the late Norman Par-

meter, author of "The Vision of Saints." Yes, that was perhaps how they would speak of him, and even try to discover in his work something of his father's careful felicity of phrase. . . He was very young to write a book, but younger men than he had written books that had procured for them name and fame. And he meant to succeed, to succeed in his own way, clinging to his quiet and solitary life that was so unlike Geoffrey's.

In the drawing-room Mrs. Parmeter was saying to Geoffrey:

"I should like Eunice to come down to pay us a visit. Perhaps at Easter, when Julian will be at home again. I'm sure he would like to see her."

Geoffrey only said: "He was very queer at dinner. What's the matter with the man?"

"You know he never says much," answered Mrs. Parmeter gently; "but I suppose he was thinking about her—perhaps he felt a little disappointed at her not taking any steps to see us."

"I don't believe that they'd get on now a little bit," said Geoffrey.

He half expected that Julian would propose accompanying him to visit the Dampiers on his way through town, but he did no such thing, and never once alluded to Eunice during the rest of Geoffrey's stay. After the first abrupt feeling of disappointment, Julian returned to his novel actuated by a fresh and powerful impulse. In that indulgence of imagination which was so growing upon him he again pictured himself as the successful young author before whom all trivial barriers would give way. He would win fame, perhaps even more quickly than Geoffrey, with all his superior abilities. He would be the first to possess laurels to lay at the feet of Eunice.

It was odd how the thought of Eunice still obsessed

him after all these years, showing how completely he lived in a world of dreams that had little connection with his practical, every-day life. He had grown up with the image of her fixed in his heart, and no girl of flesh and blood had come into his life to dethrone that now half-imaginary figure. It was not, certainly, the Eunice whom Geoffrey knew, the pretty, charming, indulged girl he saw so often in London. Julian had never seen her, did not know her. But she was still for him the little girl who had cried with her head on his shoulder here in this very room, with the summer dusk deepening about them and the rush of the waves in their ears. This one clung limpet-like to his memory, refusing to be banished.

CHAPTER XXXIII

GEOFFREY walked across the park to South Kensington one sharp February afternoon. The sky was opaque, leaden-colored, promising snow. A shrill wind beat the leafless boughs of the trees to a frenzy of futile revolt. Winter—the bleak, dark, uncompromising winter of London—held the city in its iron grip. But the cold was not disagreeable to Geoffrey. He walked fast, battling with the wind with the careless strength of a boy that spends itself so generously upon physical effort. Half-way across the path that dipped to the Serpentine he encountered Colonel Dampier walking alone.

"Hullo, Parmeter—I didn't know you were in town," he said.

"Just for a couple of days' leave, sir," said Geoffrey, "and I'm on my way to see Eunice. Shall I find her in?"

"Yes, and I think you'll find her alone. She's

got rather a cold—I advised her not to go out. This wind is a bit cutting, isn't it?"

He looked rather fixedly at Geoffrey's handsome fair face all flushed with the cold, and some words of Ardley's came back to his mind with faint misgiving.

"You must cheer her up," he said, after a moment's pause. "I'm afraid I leave her too much alone."

"She seems to me to be hardly ever alone," said Geoffrey, "she's got such crowds of friends."

"Well, I won't keep you. I'm on my way to the club."

They parted and Geoffrey resumed his walk, pleased rather than otherwise with the little encounter. He walked more quickly; it was pleasant to think that he was to find Eunice, that in a few minutes he would see her again. He had feared that Ardley might be there. He had not been to Onslow Square for some weeks, and a certain timidity came over him as he stood on the doorstep and rang the bell.

Eunice was sitting alone by the fire in the drawing-room when he was ushered in by the man-servant—obviously an old soldier. She looked up quickly when Geoffrey was announced and then sprang from her chair and came toward him.

"Oh, Geoffrey, when did you come back? I'm so glad to see you!"

With such a spontaneous welcome Geoffrey's courage returned. He took the hand she held out and looked down upon her from his great height.

"How awfully nice of you to say that," he said; "by the way, I met your father in the park just now—he said I should find you in."

"We'll have tea," said Eunice.

"Oh, it's too early for tea," he remonstrated.

"No—you must be cold—you ought to have some." She pressed the bell and gave orders for tea to be brought. Then she lay back a little in her chair and contemplated Geoffrey.

"How's Ju? Did you see him?" she said at last.

"Yes—I was down there just before he went up to Oxford this term," he answered.

"I thought—I thought—you would be sure to bring him here," she said with a touch of hesitation.

"He didn't suggest it," said Geoffrey.

"I wanted to see him. I wanted to talk to him."

"If he'd known that I'm sure he would have come," said Geoffrey carefully, "it's a pity you didn't write to ask him."

"How could I? When I don't even know that he wouldn't think it a bore."

"You must have forgotten your Julian," said Geoffrey dryly.

"No—I haven't forgotten him. But people change, you know."

With great temerity the suggestion forced itself to his lips.

"I'm Ju's twin brother. In his absence won't you try to make me do?"

She shook her head, with the resolute gesture he remembered.

"Ju was just like my own brother in the old days. You never were."

"Let me make up for it, then," said Geoffrey, still smiling, "by being like your own brother now. And don't remind me, please, what a horrid little boy I used to be. It isn't fair!"

"You *were* horrid," she said laughing. "I hated you. But that was because you hurt my pride—you didn't want to be friends with me."

"I don't remember it," he said frankly, "but then I never remember anything. Mine's a very happy

kind of memory—just the right sort for 'exams' and reminding me to go to places I want to. But, if it's true that I didn't want to be friends with you then, Eunice, you must really believe me when I say I'd most frightfully like to be friends with you now!"

He put enough warmth and enthusiasm into this speech to convince Eunice that he was really in earnest in spite of his light, jesting manner. She said almost absent-mindedly:

"That's awfully kind of you."

"I'd like to try to make up for all my beastliness when I was a horrid little boy!" he continued.

"But it wouldn't even then make talking to you quite the same thing as talking to Julian," she objected.

He protested, however, against this view.

"Why, you haven't seen Ju for years! It's at least five years—six, perhaps—since you went away to Malta. Six years makes a lot of difference. He'd be just as much a stranger to you as I was the first time we met again at the Eliots'."

She was still unconvinced. "He could never seem like a stranger to me. I should always find it easier to talk to him about certain things than to any one else. And I did want to talk to him now about something very particular."

Again he had the feeling that he was taking advantage of Julian, of his curious reticence, his shy, retreating nature. It was Julian who should have been sitting here in his place—Julian by reason of those long years of dumb, dogged devotion.

"I don't see what's to be done, then," he confessed ruefully, "short of trying to dislodge him from his fastness. He's at Oxford now—he's got his nose in his books—I even doubt if he'd come."

"He'd come for me—if I asked him," she said with decision.

Geoffrey waited a moment. He didn't understand Julian, couldn't make out why he hadn't hurried here when first he learned that Eunice was living in London. It was at least as inexplicable as her never lifting a finger to come down to visit them at Brighton. If they really so desired to see each other again, why did they both avoid the simple, obvious method? Geoffrey had no sympathy with people who made unnecessary complications and difficulties about getting what they wanted, when the way was quite clear and no scruple of conscience prevented them from taking it.

"He's awfully changed, you know," he said at last, "even to me he seems different."

"Of course he must be changed," a little impatiently. "I'm not so silly as to think he's still a boy of fifteen or sixteen. But he's still Julian, for all that—just as you're Geoffrey and I'm Eunice!"

"Am I still," he ventured, "the Geoffrey you remember?"

"Not quite." She considered him gravely with those dark-brown eyes of hers that were almost too beautiful. "You're nicer, you know. And I think you like me better now—I think you really do want to be friends."

Geoffrey's handsome fair face was quite triumphant.

"And if that's so, my dear Eunice, do try to make this important communication to me, because I'm here and Julian isn't!"

Eunice looked away; her eyes fixed meditatively upon the glowing fire. Her little chin rested on her hand. She was charming in this posture, so slight and dark and vivid. Geoffrey, who had been assuring himself for the last three months that he wasn't the least bit in love with her—it was simply rot for a man of his age to imagine he was in love at all—

now felt with every nerve the fascination of her. He would have liked to sit there for hours, just watching her, not caring greatly what she said, nor even if she spoke at all.

"There's one thing," he continued, as she didn't speak, controlling his voice so that it sounded at once strained and soft, "you couldn't if you tried find Ju a more sympathetic listener than I should be if you'll make the experiment."

While he said the words he felt again that queer sense of disloyalty toward Julian, as if he were robbing him of what should have been his just reward. "I am reaping where I have not sown," he thought.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," said Geoffrey, with smiling conviction.

"Because—I want advice."

"But your father—surely?"

"No. He would be of no use. He wouldn't approve."

"Perhaps if that's the case I shouldn't approve either," he said gaily.

"Yes,—I've been afraid of that. And, you see, that's where I should feel so sure about Julian!"

She scored the point without apparent triumph.

"For you see if he's changed in every thing else in the world he won't have changed in that," she added.

"I give it up!" said Geoffrey. He was dismayed and puzzled. All sorts of possibilities floated nebulously through his mind. "Won't you tell me? Try to think of me as an old friend who wants to make up for past unkindness. And who wants to help you with all his heart."

He bent over and some impulse prompted him to touch Eunice's hand. She did not draw it away and he came a little nearer, holding her thin brown fingers in his. He had never thus held a girl's hand

before, and it seemed to him rather surprising that he should wish to do so now. Julian's courage, he reflected, would never have been equal to this, he was not the one to seize opportunity by the wings.

"With all his heart," he repeated.

Eunice turned and looked at him with a sudden cold scrutiny, as if she were silently and deliberately weighing the worth of his words.

The scrutiny was apparently favorable, for she took her hand away saying: "Sit over there, please, and I think I will really tell you." The unemotional, practical tone flung Geoffrey back to earth. He obeyed her without demur, half-ashamed of his own actions, of his own words.

"Don't talk to papa about it, please. I did once and it only made him miserable. But I'm thinking of becoming a Roman Catholic and perhaps as you're one you could tell me how to set about it."

"Oh, if that's all it isn't very difficult," said Geoffrey, at once relieved and disappointed; "you're so near the Oratory, you have only got to call and ask to see one of the priests and he will advise you."

"Oh, isn't there something I could learn alone first? Just to see how I got on? Until I make quite sure?"

"Yes, you could read some books, of course. And then if you felt like going on with it you could place yourself under instruction."

"Instruction! Is there much to learn?"

"It depends upon what you know already. In Malta you must have learned something."

"Yes, and when I lived with you."

"Did you learn then?" he asked astonished. "You were so little."

"Julian taught me a lot. Would it take long to become one, Geoffrey?"

"Two or three months."

"As long as that? Is it so difficult?"

"No, but a priest always wants to satisfy himself that a person's in earnest, really has the faith and so forth. You're on trial, you know." He smiled, wondering what was at the back of this wish of hers. "Besides, are you sure you're right in going against Colonel Dampier?"

"He doesn't like it; but he's quite ready to let me do what I want. He won't stop me."

"You're so sure, then, that you do want it?" he put in abruptly.

"Perfectly certain," said Eunice.

"Then you'd better do what I have just said."

She said after a moment's pause: "I don't feel as if you were encouraging me."

"Perhaps I'm thinking too much of your father."

"Julian wouldn't have thought of him. He told me once long ago when we were children that to be a Catholic was the only thing that really mattered in one's life. And I'm sure he hasn't changed."

"Oh, no, he hasn't changed about that," said Geoffrey. "But it can't be because of anything he said to you as a child?"

"I suppose it can't. But it has been for me a comforting phrase to remember, especially when I have felt bewildered or uncertain."

They were having tea when the door was opened once more and the servant announced: "Captain Ardley."

He came in looking very tall and grim, and blue with the cold. "Well, Eunice," he said, "I've come to say good-by. Did your father tell you I was going off at the end of the week?" He nodded rather cursorily to Geoffrey, who immediately began to feel that his presence was not required.

"Yes, he said something about it," said Eunice in her cool little voice.

She gave him some tea and he sat down near the fire and rubbed his hands. His face plainly said: "There's that yellow-haired Parmeter boy again! What's he doing here? Why does her father let her receive all these people alone?"

Very soon afterward Geoffrey got up to go. He felt injured at having his *tête-à-tête* disturbed and their conversation interrupted. And he felt that he disliked Captain Ardley very much. Was he really going to marry Eunice? He was miles too old for her.

"I'll see about those books, Eunice," said Geoffrey.

"Thank you," she said.

She too made him feel that she did not want him to stay now that Ardley had come. What was he going to say to her? Was he going to ask her to marry him? Why was she so suddenly silent and pale when he came into the room? Geoffrey asked himself all these unanswerable questions as he walked sharply through the Square and turned in the direction of the Brompton Road, where the east wind met him like a knife.

CHAPTER XXXIV

GEOFFREY was back at Aldershot when he received a little note from Eunice asking him to go there on the following Saturday afternoon.

"I am sorry our conversation was interrupted today" she wrote, " but it was Captain Ardley's farewell visit. As you heard him say, he is going back to India very soon. If you can come, do bring the books you spoke of."

He accepted the invitation with a pleasure that robbed him of all the irritation Captain Ardley's

appearance had induced. He looked forward quite eagerly to Saturday, it seemed to him that he had never felt quite such a strong anticipatory pleasure before. He was glad that Eunice had spoken to him, although she had made it quite clear she would have preferred to speak to Julian. The feeling that he was robbing Julian of something that was his by right had been a very transitory emotion with Geoffrey. He wanted to see her again, and he liked to think they were to discuss this intimate personal matter together. Geoffrey, it is true, had never before discussed his religion with a non-Catholic. He was perhaps a little less devout than he had been as a boy; the opportunities of being devout were more rare when one had definite work to do. But if his religion meant less to him than it did to Julian, it was still a very important factor in his life. He had read about it, was more learned in it even than Julian, who loved it with his heart rather than with his brain.

It was raining heavily on Saturday when he arrived in London, and the wet weather gave him an excuse for taking a taxi instead of walking to Onslow Square. He thought he had never seen the room look so comfortable and attractive, for Eunice had shut out all that was disagreeable in the winter's day. There was a glow of firelight and of flowers that responded in a bright, rosy manner to the old silk of the hangings. Eunice was dressed in a little grey woolen frock, and over her shoulders she had thrown a stole of white fur which made a delicate contrast to the darkness of her hair. She held out her hand to Geoffrey.

"Have you brought the books?"

"Yes—here they are."

He unwrapped a brown paper parcel and gave the books to her, one by one.

"What a lot," she said. "Must I read them all?"

Geoffrey laughed. "I recommend you to study one at a time."

She turned over the pages. Her remarks were characteristic. "Does one really have to believe all this? Do *you?*"

She was young in spiritual things. No one had taught her anything about them since she had left Brighton. To-day she was obviously not in an amenable mood. She questioned, argued, debated. What was the good of it? Where was the use of it? Why was it all made so hard, so rigid? "And if you don't believe it I suppose they won't have you! Is that the idea?" she ended by saying in a tone of rebellious anger that was almost childish.

"Yes, that's the idea," he assented gravely.

Eunice relapsed into silence. The hard sayings were new to her; she could not in her present spiritual infancy receive them. To become a Catholic was not the easy thing she had supposed.

"But then you are not obliged—" he said.

"I'm not sure that I'm not. I think and think about it—it worries me."

"You have to pray," he told her, "to pray for faith. There's hardly a case, I suppose, when God hasn't listened to that prayer."

All of a sudden it seemed to Geoffrey of the most pressing importance that Eunice should become a Catholic, should receive that final spiritual grace to crown all those natural gifts and graces with which she was endowed. His own faith, his beautiful treasured inheritance of Catholicism transmitted through so many generations, suddenly became of immensely increased importance to himself. And he wanted her to share it.

"I can only tell you this. If you pray for faith, God is *quite certain* to hear you." He emphasized

the words strongly as if to overcome all that was weak and vacillating in her. Yet even as he spoke he asked himself inwardly: Would Julian have said that? What *would* Julian have said? Something profound and convincing in his hesitating, diffident utterance; something perhaps that would have touched her heart.

"You are quite sure?" she said, swayed unwillingly by his words.

"Yes," said Geoffrey.

"But you didn't?"

"No." He quoted under his breath: *"But I was born free."*

"If I could only feel about it as Julian used to feel! He was the most convinced Catholic—I see it now—that I've ever known."

"Have you known many?"

"A few in Malta. There were children I used to play with. But none like Julian—so desperately—painfully—in earnest."

So there were links surviving still that bound her curiously to Julian—indestructible bonds that made her still feel differently about him than about any one else.

"I don't suppose there are many people—outside priests, perhaps—who are as keen as Julian," he admitted.

"I felt sure he couldn't have changed." There was always that suggestion of reserve, of reticence when she spoke of Julian, almost as if she did not trust herself to dwell upon him. He began to think it was necessary for him to bring about a meeting between them; he had been mistaken in thinking he could ever take Julian's place. He could only approach her as a new acquaintance, a new friend, with the endeavor to destroy anything that still remained as disagreeable in her remembrance of him. But

with Julian it was different; she kept still something of her old, childish feeling for him. When he saw him again two things might conceivably happen. She might be disillusioned by the present-day Julian, so ineffective, so much of a dreamer still; or she might find her old feeling for him immeasurably strengthened. In which case it was possible that they would marry. The notion struck him as grotesque. This gay, modern, lovely young creature to marry Julian, a man without any profession, an idler, a dreamer! He had never summed up Julian with such cruel accuracy before, and the next moment he was inwardly accusing himself of a terrible disloyalty.

"I see that it isn't easy for you," he said at last.

"But it's easier for me when I think of all of you. Of Julian—your father and mother—a Catholic household that I knew so intimately and loved so much!"

"I'm glad to hear you say that."

For on looking back there was no doubt that Eunice regarded those years at Brighton as the principal formative influence of her life. She realized all that she owed to Mr. and Mrs. Parmeter for their careful training, and all too that she owed to Julian. But to Geoffrey—the first one of them to come back into her life—she never had felt that she owed anything. He had been indifferent to her, going about his work, enthusiastic about his games, passing her by with scant notice. When they had met again in London all these years afterward she was astonished at his eagerness to come to see her, to reap all the benefits of an old boy-and-girl friendship. And she had learned quickly to like him, to look forward to his coming, as to some link of her old life. Colonel Dampier had taken a fancy to him, and encouraged him to come; he was glad, too, to have an oppor-

tunity of repaying something of his old debt to the Parmeters for their long sheltering of his child. It did not occur to him that of all the family Geoffrey had the least claim upon his gratitude.

There was a stir of voices and footsteps on the landing, and Mildred Eliot was announced. She came in with a tall, slim, black-eyed child, and rushed eagerly up to Eunice.

"I had to bring Jane," she said, "she's just come from one of her classes and I promised to fetch her. How are you, Geoffrey? I thought you had gone back to Aldershot. Oh, Eunice darling—I've such wonderful news!"

"What is it?" said Eunice. There was always a cool little touch of contempt in her attitude toward her ancient friend.

"Gilfrid is coming back—he is in Egypt—he'll be here now in six weeks."

"Well, you can hardly expect me to be so wildly excited," said Eunice, "considering I haven't seen him for about seven years. But I'm sure it's thrilling for you!" And she looked at Mildred with a smile that held something of irony. She was perfectly well aware that Lady Eliot had marked him down for Mildred.

"I should have come earlier if it had not been for Jane." Mildred went on. "These children are such a bore, with their perpetual classes."

"You would have interrupted a very important conversation I was having with Geoffrey. So it's just as well," said Eunice. "Well, Jane—what are they cramming your head with now, my child?"

Jane smiled—a broad, humorous, rather charming smile.

"The Art of the Renaissance. I'm reading Pater," she said.

She looked admiringly at Eunice, contrasting her with Mildred, much to the detriment of her own sister. She decided that when she was grown up she would do her hair as Eunice did, and cultivate that gracefulness of pose.

"Gilfrid writes that he means to have a regular house-warming when he goes to Denscombe. The tenants have left and the place is being put in order. He wants mother to invite any one she likes. You'll have to come, Eunice!" said Mildred.

"Shall I?" said Eunice, looking very faintly bored. "I'm sure he won't want me. He has probably forgotten my existence."

"We've none of us seen him for two years. But I'm sure he's nicer than ever, and you do remember how nice he was, don't you, Eunice?"

"Indeed I don't," said Eunice laughing. "I've seen such heaps of people since then."

Mildred looked disappointed.

Jane said:

"I think Mildred's making a foolish fuss. She thinks he's going to fall in love with her. As if it were likely!"

"Have some more cake, Jane, and don't be rude to your elders," said Eunice, with mock severity.

Jane took a piece of cake and subsided. Mildred looked a little piqued and vexed. She turned to Geoffrey.

"Doesn't Julian ever come here?" she asked.

"He hasn't been yet. You see he's at Oxford."

"Isn't it funny that he never comes, when he used to be so fond of Eunice?"

"Well, I think it is, rather," admitted Geoffrey.

"And you two used to be always squabbling. Don't you remember?"

"We've found it more convenient to forget it," said Geoffrey good-naturedly.

"When are you coming to see us, Eunice?" asked Mildred.

"Quite soon," said Eunice.

She wanted them to go, but Mildred had immense capacities for sitting people out. Soon it would be time for Geoffrey to depart and she wished to have a few more words with him.

Jane, who was an *enfant terrible* and oddly enough was encouraged by her mother in the role as something quite clever and amusing, said suddenly:

"Do let's go home, Mildred. Can't you see Eunice wants to talk to Mr. Parmeter?" She slipped down from her seat.

"If you were my little girl, Jane, you wouldn't be allowed to talk like that." Eunice's voice sounded quite sharp. "You'd get an extra chapter of Pater."

Jane did not look at all abashed. Mildred, however, bore her off; but not before Jane had said: "Mr. Parmeter's as bad as Captain Ardley—he used to hate us to come when he was here. And then he wasn't nice about it like Mr. Parmeter."

When they had gone, Geoffrey burst out laughing. "What a terrible child that is. They ought to stop her."

"Oh, her mother encourages her to say things like that. The others—Sara and Susan—are even worse."

"She made me want to box her ears," said Geoffrey.

As he said good-by to Eunice she said:

"You heard what Mildred said? That it was odd about Julian. You might ask him—couldn't you?—to come."

"Of course I'll ask him," said Geoffrey; "he'll help you better than I can."

"You think, then, he'll come?" she asked.

"Oh, yes, I think he is sure to come," said Geoffrey.

CHAPTER XXXV

JULIAN worked hard that term, but when the summer came he failed to pass "Greats." This failure synchronized with the eighth return of his novel on its journeys from publisher to publisher. "*We* have never heard of your father, Mr. Norman Parmeter," said the enclosed typewritten letter, "and in any case we do not think his reputation would be sufficient to awaken any extraordinary interest in your novel. While we consider it most promising as a first work, we regret that we do not see our way to publishing it."

Geoffrey met him on his way through London; they had not seen each other since the Christmas holidays.

"I want you to come to see Eunice with me," he said as they met on the platform at Paddington.

"Oh, no—not to-day," said Julian nervously. He looked so wretched at the proposal that Geoffrey could only suppose he was suffering from one of his attacks of nerves. "I've been ploughed again," he went on hurriedly, "you heard, I suppose? I shall never take my degree."

"Eunice won't care about that. You needn't tell her, in fact," said Geoffrey.

"There are other things. I think I'll go straight home now," said Julian.

He was almost afraid that Geoffrey might insist upon taking him off there and then to Onslow Square. And he felt as if his recent failure must stare out of his very eyes.

"She wants to talk to you about religion," continued Geoffrey. "I gave her some books a few months ago, but she doesn't seem to have read them much. You see, she goes out such a lot. But I think in her heart she wants to be a Catholic."

"Some day I'll go to see her," said Julian, a little stubbornly. If she were to see him to-day, depressed by his unsuccess, he felt that she must certainly despise him.

"She's beginning to think it queer of you," said Geoffrey.

He was a little annoyed at Julian's obstinacy, for which there seemed to be no adequate reason.

"You must tell her it isn't because I don't want to see her very much indeed," said Julian hastily.

"Well, you're certainly shown her you weren't in any hurry," said Geoffrey, in his light, cutting way.

"She'll understand."

They drove away in a taxi together. On the way to Victoria Geoffrey said:

"We're all going down to Denscombe on Saturday for Gilfrid Eliot's housewarming. He's been away traveling for about two years and the place has been let up to now. Lady Eliot invited most of the people—Eunice is to be there and the Eliots and myself. She asked me if I thought you'd care to come."

Julian laughed nervously.

"I hope you told her what a hermit I am," he said.

"Why don't you come, Ju?" Geoffrey looked at his brother curiously and wondered why he cared so little for society—even for the society of charming, agreeable people.

"I should hate it," said Julian, with a dull finality in his tone.

"You're getting more and more misanthropic," mocked Geoffrey.

Julian said nothing, but his dark eyes looked out of the cab-window and rested on the delicate emerald tints that decorated the blackened branches of the trees in the park. People were walking there—women in light summer dresses looking like moving

flowers, white-frocked children, men in London garb. He wondered if Eunice were among those idly wandering groups.

"It would be strange if she became a Catholic," he murmured. "I wonder what made her think of it?"

"She attributes it, I think, to her early life with us," said Geoffrey. "But if you refuse to help her—" He stopped short, exasperated.

"I'll help her when the time comes," said Julian cryptically.

"Aren't you curious to see her again? She's awfully pretty, you know," said Geoffrey. "Lots of people admire her very much."

"She could never be anything but very pretty," said Julian.

They parted at Victoria. "I'll come down perhaps the week after next and tell you about Denscombe," said Geoffrey.

As he walked away he felt that he had never had so unsatisfactory an interview with Julian. One could do simply nothing with him—nothing! He lived in a small, narrow world of his own—a world of dreams. He even pitied him a little, because he felt that when Eunice saw him again she would most certainly be disillusioned.

"I believe he's afraid to see her," he thought to himself. He wondered what possible excuse he could make to Eunice. She would be hurt when she heard that Julian had actually passed through London and had refused to come. She would certainly attribute it to indifference, if not to actual dislike.

He did not see her again until they met at Denscombe on the evening of their arrival. It was a great house of cream-colored stucco with a castellated roof that made people always allude to it

locally as "The Castle." But though it was unlovely in itself it was extremely beautiful and comfortable within, and it was situated in the midst of a lovely undulating English park that stretched away into deep pine-woods, with here and there tracts of gorse and heather.

Geoffrey arrived just as tea had been brought out onto the south terrace. Lady Eliot, in pink muslin, was doing the honors. Gilfrid was sitting by Eunice's side and from time to time exchanging scraps of cousinly persiflage with Mildred. At a little distance a heated-looking group of people were playing lawn-tennis.

Geoffrey was immensely interested in seeing Gilfrid again. He was still very good-looking, almost better looking than he had been as a boy. He looked older than his twenty-four years, and his face was bronzed with traveling and exposure. But he had enjoyed nothing so much of it all as this return to take possession of his own property.

"Glad to see you, Parmeter," he said with a friendly smile; "sorry Julian couldn't come too. I'd like him to have seen the library here."

Lady Eliot smiled approvingly upon her young relation. She expected great things from this visit. Mildred was looking charming to-day; she was one of those pale, rather pasty-faced girls who always look their best in light summer clothes. Lady Eliot had been careful to select those exact pastel shades which should improve her daughter's worst point—her complexion. Mildred's hair was fair, neither flaxen nor brown, and she had not a great deal of it, but the maid was a clever coiffeuse and knew how to make the most of it. She was looking quite her best to-day, very animated and pleased with things in general. Denscombe had made a profound impression upon her and she felt she would like to rule

over this important house. In the great trunks now on their way from the station there were quantities of fresh frocks to flatter her youthful good looks. Lady Eliot knew that her daughter was not startlingly pretty, but she had nice blue eyes and a pretty, neat figure. She was the type, too, that the average young Englishman chooses for his wife. Mildred was perfectly well aware that her mother intended her to marry Gilfrid, and she was on her side ready to fall in with these views. If she had not been, the sight of the castle would have converted her. It would "do" very well. She was glad to see that Geoffrey was showing an incipient interest in Eunice; that would clear the field of a possibly dangerous rival. Lady Eliot was as blind as she had always been to Eunice Dampier's charm; she didn't admire her herself and could not imagine that any one else would. Mildred in this respect was wiser than her mother. She saw in Geoffrey Parmeter a very useful auxiliary.

From the first moment, however, of their stay at Denscombe Lady Eliot's plan went awry, although it had been laid with all the skill of which an intelligent woman of the world with a marriageable daughter is capable. Gilfrid was the weak point in the attack. He was the Horse that could not even be Led to the Water. Effort was arbitrarily checked from the outset, for his attentions were from that first afternoon bestowed upon Eunice Dampier. Geoffrey was shunted to one side; he had none of those opportunities for conversation with her that he had hoped for. Lady Eliot could no longer blind herself. It was her own fault for inviting Eunice. Gilfrid hadn't seemed especially keen; when it was proposed he had only said: "By all means let Miss Dampier come, if it won't bore her too much to hear me make a speech." And Lady Eliot had thought

—foolishly, as it now seemed—that Eunice would make a useful foil. She was too unusual to attract Gilfrid, who liked more conventional girls who could play tennis and golf. Eunice was too fanciful a picture.

But it was rather hard, all things considered, that Eunice should without visible effort slip into that place which should have been Mildred's. Under the circumstances Lady Eliot could hardly blame her daughter for embarking upon a perfectly senseless flirtation with Captain Grimble, a polo-playing officer, who came over from Aldershot, which was at no great distance from Denscombe. It was a matter for thanksgiving that Mildred shouldn't show her disappointment in true Victorian manner; still, her counter-move lacked subtlety, and Lady Eliot felt bound to remonstrate with her for her late walks by moonlight in the woods.

"It's all right—he's engaged," said Mildred cheerfully. (If she had said "married" her mother could scarcely have been more shocked.) "Such an ugly girl, too, and years older than he is. He showed me her photograph. But she's got pots of money and he's head over ears in debt. Is Eunice engaged to Gilfrid?"

"I hope not, indeed," said Lady Eliot, in a tone of simulated dismay.

Mildred raised her eyebrows. "Why shouldn't she be?"

"He must do better than that. Eunice hasn't a penny. And then—her mother——"

"What's her mother got to do with it, if he likes her?"

"Men don't generally care to marry into a family where there's been such a scandal," said Lady Eliot.

"I don't see why he should mind about that stuffy

old story. And I'm sure he isn't the kind that would."

Lady Eliot resolved to have a little talk with Gilfrid, such as his dear mother, a long-deceased lady, might have had, had she been still alive. Just a hint, in case he didn't know, and before he had gone too far to be able to extricate himself honorably. She was always a little baffled now when she had an intimate talk with her daughter, whose standards were now so surprisingly different from her own. She who had been still young and daring in the early nineties felt that a girl who was twenty-one in the first decade of the twentieth century surpassed all her own wildest dreams of the remotely permissable. She hoped that Gilfrid would prove more amenable to her point of view.

As she sat there one morning at the window of her own sitting-room she saw Eunice and Geoffrey pass together across the south terrace. Their two tall, white-clad figures made brilliant patches in the sunlight. Why couldn't Eunice content herself with Geoffrey? Why must she, so to speak, rush in to destroy Mildred's chance of making a good marriage? She would have been still more mystified had she been able to overhear the substance of the conversation between Eunice and Geoffrey.

"Do you really mean," she was saying, "that he actually refused to come?"

"Well, I suppose that's what it amounted to," confessed Geoffrey unwillingly; "he wasn't in the mood, evidently—he was a bit hard-hit at getting ploughed again."

"You did tell him though how really anxious I was to see him?"

"Yes—and I told him why."

She looked puzzled and disappointed. "I'm afraid

he's quite forgotten me," she said, "and I made so sure that Julian would never forget."

"Oh, indeed he hasn't forgotten," Geoffrey was eager to explain; "he said something about your understanding."

"And that's just what I can't do. I wish he'd come to explain. I feel as if in some way I had offended him."

"I can only suggest that you should come down to see us when you go back to town," he said.

"But don't you see how quite impossible that would be?" she said. "While I'm so uncertain if he's really offended or not."

He longed to say to her bluntly: "He's not worth your bothering about." But he had still an instinctive loyalty that prevented him from denigrating his brother to other people. Yet he had never come so near to despising Julian for a useless and invertebrate creature as he had during that last drive together. His nervous refusal to see Eunice had been the culminating point to all his miserable weakness.

"Does it matter so much?" he couldn't help saying. It was a source of wonder that Eunice could think twice about so unimportant a thing. It was so obvious to every one at Denscombe that Gilfrid was in love with her, and that if she chose she could marry him. From a worldly point of view wasn't it the best thing that could happen to her? He longed to ask her about it, but he did not dare. This was almost the first opportunity he had had of talking to her alone, and her thoughts were strangely occupied with Julian and his odd refusal to come to see her.

"It matters because I feel that there must be something behind it all—something I don't understand."

"I told him you wanted his help about becoming a Catholic," he ventured to say. "Unless you have

given up that idea?" He had a sudden conviction that Gilfrid, young, rich, and with so much to bestow, would scarcely be likely to choose a Catholic wife, nor listen patiently to any talk of conversion.

"Oh, you told him that too?" she said coloring. "I should think that would have made him come."

"Well, you see, it didn't," said Geoffrey. "I'm sorry—but I don't understand him either. He's got some motive, only we can't discover it. Except that he was awfully disappointed at not passing and said he was certain he should never take his degree."

While this conversation was in progress, Lady Eliot had seized upon Gilfrid whom she had met in the hall looking busy and preoccupied. He was going to have an interview with his agent; had promised later to play croquet with Eunice, so he was scarcely in the mood for a heart-to-heart talk with Lady Eliot.

Although she saw his disinclination she held firm to her resolve. Things were going at too formidable a pace to allow of any procrastination on her part. Her ancient authority triumphed, and he came unwillingly to her sitting-room, where they were not likely to be disturbed.

"I've been wanting an opportunity, dear Gilfrid, to discuss things with you."

"We must make it a very short discussion, I'm afraid," he said good-humoredly, "for I've two appointments—important ones—during the next hour."

"Ah, you're finding out what it is to be a man of property," she said smiling.

"Yes, but I'm liking it enormously," he told her. He sat down opposite to her and the light fell on his handsome sunburned face. "Now, dear Aunt Vera, do tell me what's been happening?"

"I promise not to keep you long. I only wanted

to say a few words about Eunice Dampier. Dear child, she has just gone off so happily for a walk with Geoffrey Parmeter!"

"Oh, has she?" he said, and his face fell a little. "She won't be gone too long, I hope, for one of my appointments is with her—I've challenged her to a match at croquet."

"I'm sure she will be back in good time. But, of course, that's a very old friendship—with the Parmeters, I mean."

"I thought Julian was her pal more than Geoffrey," said Gilfrid.

"Ah, that was in the old days. Geoffrey is much the nicer now—a very popular, brilliant young man—a great favorite of Colonel Dampier's."

She could see by his face that he didn't like the turn the conversation had taken, and she went on softly:

"I'm telling you this, dear Gilfrid, because—well, I had a little fear that you were falling in love with her yourself."

"I am not falling in love with her," said Gilfrid, in a steady voice.

She looked immensely relieved. "I'm delighted to hear that. You see she's a very charming girl· and I can't forget I'm really responsible for bringing her here. But in your position—your *great* position—" she glanced significantly toward the park, as if it were in some way mysteriously connected with his matrimonial responsibilities, "you can't be too careful." She fixed her large black eyes upon him, but he met the look squarely.

"I am very careful. And do you mind being a little more explicit please, Aunt Vera?"

He spoke very politely, but she felt that the tone was hindering to further explanations.

"I mean—it's possible you know that Eunice may

misconstrue your attentions. Especially, as you say, you don't mean to marry her."

In a moment she became aware that she had damaged her cause by a false move.

"But you must be dreaming," said Gilfrid. "I never said such a thing in my life!"

"You assured me you were not falling in love with her. It's the same thing, isn't it?"

Gilfrid was silent. His face was very expressionless. He said at last:

"Is it?"

"Well, I mean much the same thing. I want to see you happily married to some woman who will understand you; it's one of the dreams of my life. But not—certainly not—to Eunice Dampier."

"And why not?" His smile was disconcertingly brilliant; "why not to Eunice?"

"Well, she hasn't got a penny, of course—but that is a detail."

"I have surely enough for two," he said. "I shall never begin to get through my income unless I have some one to help me. I've appallingly few extravagant tastes."

"Of course, I see her being penniless would hardly be an obstacle, though I'm always sorry for a girl who depends upon her husband for every sixpence she spends. You're so extraordinarily fortunate in having all this in your own hands at your age. But the real objection of course with regard to poor Eunice is her mother."

"Her mother?" he said. "I didn't know she had one. I imagined Colonel Dampier was a widower. Isn't her mother dead?"

"You've forgotten about the divorce?" said Lady Eliot, rejoiced to see that her words were taking effect at last. "It happened just at the time we were

all in Brighton. Let me see—Eunice is twenty now—she was fourteen when it happened. Mrs. Dampier married Sir Chandos Mirton very soon afterward. One never hears much about her now except that they don't get on at all."

"Sir Chandos Mirton," he repeated, in dismayed tones. "Are you sure about this, Aunt Vera?"

Lady Eliot nodded an affirmative. She had scored her second point and felt secretly triumphant. She could see Eunice's chances dwindling away to nothing. Her mother's identity had visibly shocked Gilfrid Eliot.

"Why? Do you know him?" she asked.

"I know his sons. Two of them were at Oxford with me, and Dicky Mirton—the eldest of them—is a friend of mine. He—he simply hates his stepmother; they were very angry when their father married her."

His face was sullen and clouded; all the bright look had gone out of it. Lady Eliot was not sorry; she was thinking: "This can't hurt him. Later, if he'd found out, it would have meant real suffering."

"You understand now," she said gently, "why I'm so thankful to know there's nothing between you and poor little Eunice."

Gilfrid did not exhibit any signs of sharing her thankfulness. The blow had been a rough one, and how was he to explain to his aunt that his answer just now had been an equivocal one when he had assured her he was not falling in love with Eunice, for the simple reason that he had already done so. For the last twenty-four hours, so rapid had the process been with him, he had been making up his mind to put his fortune to the supreme test and invite her to marry him. But he was not sure of her. There was that frank friendship of hers with Geoffrey Parmeter which took him back to the gay, noisy,

quarreling days at Brighton. She could not know enough of him to care for him yet. Her very friendliness—of a different quality from that which she showed to Geoffrey—her lack of self consciousness, were miles away from the first embarrassments of a dawning passion. He was angry with Lady Eliot because she had ever so slightly succeeded in smudging his idol. Not that it really mattered, not that it would make, in the long run, any difference at all. Eunice was wonderfully untouched by these dismal family happenings; fortunately she had been too young at the time to grasp their significance. He only shrank from the thought of having his wife forever labeled as Lady Mirton's daughter. Her stepsons cordially, implacably, hated her, and had not hidden from him how miserable she made their father and their home by her bitter tongue and evil temper. Hints of more degrading habits had also been casually dropped. Not one of Sir Chandos's three sons would spend an hour under his roof if they could help it; they preferred to see their father elsewhere. Sir Chandos spent a good deal of time in solitary traveling; he haunted continental watering-places in the summer and gay southern cities in the winter. He had learned to hate the woman for whom he had sacrificed so much of his honor.

All this Gilfrid knew, and he wondered why it had never reached his ears that this Lady Mirton was the divorced wife of Colonel Dampier. He shouldn't in that case have encouraged Lady Eliot to bring Eunice down to Denscombe, for the simple reason that up to the very last moment he had fully expected Dicky Mirton to form one of the party. It was an everlasting reason for congratulation that he hadn't been able to come.

The lamentable connection that existed between this woman and Eunice pierced his pride as if with

an arrow. But something stronger than pride forced him to say now:

"I am really awfully interested in what you tell me. You see, I'd made up my mind to marry Eunice —if she will have me."

"But my dear Gilfrid—you positively assured me——" she began.

"I'm sorry I misled you. If I told you I wasn't falling in love with her it was because I have already done so very completely indeed. I haven't dared speak to her yet—I've been afraid to put my luck to the test. It's such a big thing, isn't it? You see everything's gone so tremendously well with me up till now—perhaps Dame Fortune will think it's about time to show me the other side of her face!"

"Let me give you a word of advice, Gilfrid. Wait a few weeks before you speak to her—think it over very seriously. Don't try to see her in the meanwhile. It is, I am sure, nothing but a very natural, passing fascination. All young men go through infatuations of the kind."

"Are you suggesting I'm suffering from calf-love, Aunt Vera?" he inquired, with a bright, amused look.

"Oh, no, dear Gilfrid; you are too wise, too well-balanced. I never think of you as a boy. But I feel that you are exaggerating Eunice's charm. Many people don't admire her at all."

"Don't they? They must be jolly blind, then," he said, good-humoredly.

"You see, I've always felt that having such a mother must certainly stand in the way of the poor child's making a decent marriage. Now Julian Parmeter's just the kind of dreamy, quixotic boy who would not mind. And they've got some money—both those boys. I've sometimes thought perhaps later on —when he was older—he'd want her to be a

Catholic; but Eunice has always had *leanings*. I cured her of quite a bad attack of Roman fever when she was a little girl."

"That was very kind of you. Not that I've any prejudices, but I couldn't be a Catholic myself, so I shouldn't like my wife to be one. You did me a good turn, Aunt Vera."

She passed over this flippancy without comment. "Her early training was all in favor of her 'verting. You never know when influences of that kind may crop up again."

"Oh, if she *really* wanted it!" he said cheerfully. "I'd give her the moon if I could. But I don't like that idea of yours about Julian Parmeter. I'm almost sure she told me that she hadn't seen him since she was a child. I remember thinking him a bit of a freak the only time I saw him. Geoffrey's a very decent sort. I've been, to tell you the truth, a little bit afraid of Geoffrey."

She wished she could have agreed with him that there was anything to fear from Geoffrey.

Gilfrid had forgotten his agent, who was even now waiting for him and wondering bitterly at the unpunctuality of youth; he had indeed forgotten everything except Eunice and his own hopes and fears. He wanted to go to her that instant, as he expressed it in his own thoughts, and ask her to marry him. He was getting over the shock of knowing her to be Lady Mirton's daughter. For a few minutes it had been a "nasty jar." He rose.

"Well, wish me luck, Aunt Vera! I think I'll put off my agent till a more convenient season."

She shook her head. "Think over what I've said. Be prudent, Gilfrid. You are too young to make a mistake that may affect your whole life."

Gilfrid made a tiny grimace as he went out and shut the door.

He went off to his study, and sent the man away with an injunction to come to-morrow instead. Then he sat down and began to think things out. Of course, all he had learned from his aunt could not fail to affect him. He must make it clear beforehand that he couldn't have Lady Mirton "chipping in" to their lives, supposing Eunice agreed to marry him. Mother and daughter must be kept apart. He must find out if they ever saw each other now, privately, secretly, so that the world shouldn't know. He hoped not. He hoped that Eunice's life was quite free from muddy influences. She had been so little with her mother as a child. Why, she was still very young when he had seen her in Brighton first, living with the Parmeters—excellent, worthy, conscientious people. No sign of any parents then, though she talked sometimes, he could remember, of her father with a glowing affection. He had heard Lady Eliot say that the Dampiers were in India and that the Parmeters had taken charge of Eunice, no one quite knew why. But she was happy with them, they were extremely kind and treated her like their own child. "But, then, no doubt," she would even then add mysteriously, "they want to Get Hold of her ultimately!" This phrase puzzled him at first, until he got Mildred to explain it, when he discovered she had been alluding to a conspiracy on their part to capture her, a new victim, for the insatiable Roman Catholic Church, with its ceaseless Empire over the souls of men. And now Lady Eliot had just informed him that Eunice had had—certainly when she was a child, and perhaps even now—"leanings." Well, if he gained her love—and he was as hopeful as most young men with great possessions as to this—he felt he could easily divert her mind from so undesirable an orientation. But her mother—he sincerely hoped there would be no

difficulties there. As long as there was no communication, no correspondence, he felt capable of removing her forever from any fear of such influence. Lady Eliot had been a little malignant in planting these two obstacles before his enamored eyes, in an effort to detach him which he still believed to be quite disinterested. She had failed, for he was already too deeply in love to withdraw without a pain that would darken his whole life. But she had shown him precisely where danger lay. Not such very formidable dangers, after all, even with regard to her mother. There could not be any love lost between Lady Mirton and Eunice. He rose at last, and looking out of the window saw two white-clad figures coming toward the house. They were Eunice and Geoffrey returning from their walk. He watched with great content her light, graceful way of walking, the dainty freshness of her clothes. He said to himself in a tone that was brightly hopeful and entirely free from misgiving:

"It seems the sooner I speak the better!"

CHAPTER XXXVI

GILFRID did not find it altogether easy to speak to Eunice during the hours that followed upon his high resolve. Lady Eliot had a vigilant eye, and Captain Grimble having departed she imposed upon Mildred the task of keeping as much with Eunice as she could. Between them they made it almost impossible for him to take her away to some remote spot in the garden and there pour out his hopes and fears. To force the situation was not an alternative that pleased him; he felt that he might do it at an unpropitious moment, when she would be little likely to listen. If he played croquet with her Mildred was

certain to be hovering about, giving humorous advice that he felt to be irrelevant. But on the following day a change came over the condition of things in general at Denscombe. A heat wave set in that owed its origin, so the press informed him, to America. The hour of siesta was meticulously observed, as in Eunice's experience it was only observed in India and Malta during the hot weather, when it became a tyrannous rite that enfolded the whole world for at least two hours in the afternoon. After tea there were languid attempts to play tennis and croquet, but most people preferred to go for a drive in one of Gilfrid's fast new motors. In the evening everyone played bridge, and it was more than ever difficult to detach both himself and Eunice from one of those interminable rubbers.

He did at last achieve it under the very eye of Lady Eliot, one evening when the moon had risen above the pine-trees, painting the whole scene a dark rich blue, and lighting up a sky in which few stars were as yet visible. It was when they had all settled down to their game, with the addition of two young officers—who had been invited to dinner with secret purpose—that Gilfrid asked Eunice to go for a walk down to the lake with him. He did it with a sense of seizing opportunity clumsily by her fragile wings, but truth to tell he found the delay and incertitude every hour more insupportable. He had arranged the tables without even asking her if she wished to play, and Lady Eliot, perceiving the manoeuvre, had resisted with a final attempt to defeat him. "Oh, do let Eunice take my place!" she implored; "she's a much better player, and then she's so keen about it."

"Miss Dampier can play presently," said Gilfrid.

Eunice was standing at a little distance from the others, and he now went up to her. She was wear-

ing white, and her dress, at once narrow and loose-fitting, disclosed a slim silhouette full of a lissom grace that gave, through all her quiet movements, a suggestion of wildness, of power.

"Come for a walk," he said, going up to her; "it's frightfully hot in here."

"Which way shall we go?" said Eunice.

"Oh, down to the lake—there's always a breeze off the water. You are not afraid of the damp?" with a glance at her thin shoes, her uncovered dark head.

"It can't be damp," she said smiling.

They walked across the terrace and through the rose-garden, where drooping heavy clusters of blossom gave forth a faint evening incense. The long path, arched by a pergola of Dorothy Perkins now in the height of its beauty, seemed mysteriously pale as they passed along it. Gilfrid opened a gate at the bottom of the garden with a key, and in a moment they had crossed a path into the pine-wood that dipped to the lake. The trees almost met above their heads, shutting out all but a mere streak of that pale, moon-washed sky. Yet the moonlight managed to trickle through the boughs and filled the place with fugitive lights and shadows, milk-pale and ebony-black.

They descended by a narrow path imperfectly delineated, and came suddenly upon an open space in the trees that disclosed a full view of the lake lying like a pallid silver shield with black shadows under the moon. There was a seat by the boat-house, and he led her up to it. A little breeze, timid and cool, blew off the water, and added another allurement to the summer night, diminishing its hot and breathless stillness.

"You see—I want to know if you'll marry me," said Gilfrid, and as he uttered the words they lost

all surprise for Eunice, who felt that he had brought her here to this remote spot on purpose to say them.

She was silent and he went on speaking, gaining courage as he proceeded.

"I love you so very much, Eunice. Of course, you must think it's awfully sudden and all that. I know you can't care for me in the same way. . . But you've seen the place, and I wish you could feel as I do that we might make a charming life here." He glanced at her wistfully; she all at once seemed so very far away, a remote, sphinx-like figure of whom he knew so little. "But don't be in a hurry—I know I've been clumsy, springing it on you like this. Only you will think about it, won't you?"

Eunice turned and looked at him. In the wan moonlight her face was very pale, but the eyes were dark and burning.

"Do you know—about my mother?" she asked.

"Yes—yes. At least, I know that she's Lady Mirton now. We needn't let that fact disturb us." He could not be too thankful that Lady Eliot had imparted this sinister information to him. Eunice would not have to witness his first discomfiture at that horrid surprise.

"And in spite of this you want to marry me?" she said.

"I only wish I could tell you how much!" he answered.

"Do you know that even when I was a little girl I couldn't be entrusted to her care?"

"I didn't know, but I must have guessed it. You see, you were always living with the Parmeters. I'm glad to think now that she had so little—at any time—to do with you."

"Still, I am her daughter," said Eunice in a low, quiet tone.

"Dear, what does it matter? She has gone out

of your life, I hope forever. But you mustn't think I'm acting in ignorance—I know Dicky Mirton—the eldest son—quite well."

"Oh," said Eunice, looking relieved.

Then suddenly, almost inconsequently, her thoughts flew back to Brighton days—to the Parmeters. The old links had been revived and strengthened of late by Geoffrey's frequent visits. She had not seen Julian, but she had heard of him; he had become a real, not a shadowy, figure to her through all that his brother had carelessly revealed of him. And she was aware that if this marriage did take place, with all its brilliant possibilities, it would cut her life in two. The future would stand in no relation to the past at all, to all those influences that had so surely gone to the making of her. She would be taken away into quite a new sphere. Gilfrid could give her practically everything. She liked him and more than ever at that moment she felt the glamour of his personality, his power, his attraction, even his tenderness. Yet something held her back as if with strong hands—the remembrance, shadowy, imperfect, but very enduring, of Julian Parmeter. The memory of his strange interior life, into which she alone perhaps of all the world had been permitted to gaze. . . As Gilfrid's wife she could never take up those old threads. And yet, was it not true that Julian had refused to go to see her? He had never sought to revive that old intimacy; he seemed to shrink from seeing her again. Only the other day he had been in London, scarcely more than a mile away from her home, yet he had persistently refused all Geoffrey's requests that they should call upon her. It was Julian, not she, who had determined this continuance of their separation. He had shown her that she had no place now in his life. Even for old comradeship's sake he might

have gone once to see her. Her pride had suffered under that blow. . .

Gilfrid bent toward her and took her hand in his. He was aware that some struggle was taking place within her. Love gives such swift, inexplicable intuitions. It made him afraid to speak, as if a word from him might sway the balance not in his favor. . .

Beyond, on the opposite shore of the lake, which was long and narrow in shape, the trees came down to the edge of the bank and their reflections were lost in the black water. He heard the sudden rough plunge of a water-rat, followed by the half-muffled, startled cry of a wild-fowl disturbed by the sound. These little, half-stifled noises scarcely diminished the intensity of the silence that reigned there. He found himself longing for Eunice to speak.

"I don't think I can give you an answer to-night," she said.

A chill of disappointment came over him. He had made sure that before they returned to the house they would have indeed plighted their troth, exchanged perhaps those first kisses of love that could make the world a new, shining place.

She stirred as if she were going to rise and move away. His hand increased its pressure upon hers, as if to detain her. He said imploringly:

"Don't go yet please, Eunice. Tell me—can't you?—what's making you hesitate?"

Ah, that was something that must never be told! . . . The very fact of putting it into words must surcharge it with all that was ridiculous, impracticable, absurd!

"Is it that you don't think you can care for me?" he asked humbly.

"No, it isn't that. I do care—but perhaps not enough." She looked at him with dark, questioning eyes. In the moonlight his face was almost beauti-

ful, with its fine brow, the thick brown hair, the large eyes set well apart and filled with an eager, intelligent look. Half an hour ago the thought that he might be in love with her had never entered her mind. He had never singled her out for any special attention—Lady Eliot had indeed been too vigilant to permit of that—but he had been ceaselessly solicitous that she should never for a moment feel bored or out of it among his old friends and near relations.

"If you care at all, that's enough for me," he said, quick to take advantage of even this timid admission.

She said: "You see, it would mean leaving my father. I must think of him."

"You could see him often. He must come whenever he likes. We'll rig up some rooms for him that he can look upon as his own. He wouldn't surely stand in your way?"

"No—not if he thought that my happiness depended upon it."

"You see, I want it to depend upon it!" he assured her eagerly. He lifted her hand and raised it to his lips. It was almost like an act of homage. "Eunice, dear," his voice was not quite steady, "I love you very much. More than I can tell you." His eyes were fixed upon her face, so marble-pale in the moonlight. Something in her expression—a softening, a relenting, gave him sudden courage. He drew her close to him and kissed her. Her head rested for a second upon his shoulder. And curiously she saw herself back in the old school-room, sitting beside Julian in the twilight just after her fierce squabble with Geoffrey. Only then she had been soothed and quieted. Now the touch of Gilfrid held something at once beautiful and tormenting, and awakened within her a strange, unaccustomed excitement. She felt a little out of herself, as the French say. The witchery of the moonlight, the

mysterious darkness of the woods that surrounded them, the pallid, shining lake, seemed to combine with the words of love she had just been called upon to hear, to lift her into a new world of sensation and experience. She seemed to have passed through a door that led from her old life into scenes of deadly enchantment, shutting out all that was past, whether of good or ill. She could almost hear the clang of its closing, chilling the glamour of her new, passionate adventure. But his kiss strangely thrilled her.

"You must love me," he said; "you must marry me."

"Yes," said Eunice.

It was late when they walked back to the house, and the terrace was in darkness as they approached it, except for an oblong patch in front of the drawing-room window, which had been left open. Gilfrid half hoped that his guests had retired, perhaps guessing the errand which had taken him away from them for the whole evening.

Eunice walked by his side, shivering a little in spite of the windless warmth of the night. She was saying to herself: "I have been dreaming. It can't be true that I am really engaged." Yet Gilfrid, with his new little air of triumph, seemed to give the lie to these mental asseverations. She could only hope that Lady Eliot had gone to bed. She felt that the affair would not meet with her approval, and she did not want—late as it was and exhausted as she now knew herself to be—to encounter those inquiring, experienced eyes. She was disinclined to explain exactly how matters stood. First her father must be told, and she inwardly resolved to return home as early as possible on the following day. She couldn't live through so intimate a period as the

first days of her engagement anywhere but in her own home, where at least she could know seclusion. She wanted dreadfully a little breathing-space, where even Gilfrid couldn't disturb her with wonderful words and still more wonderful kisses.

Lady Eliot, however, had deemed it her duty, as chaperon of the party, to sit up for their return. Really, a few words of admonition would not be out of place. . . It was late, and Gilfrid should have known better than to stay out to such an hour alone with Eunice in the woods. She was standing by the window as they came up, having heard the sound of their approaching footsteps.

"My dear Eunice—I began to be afraid that you were lost! Do you know it's after half-past eleven?"

"We lost count of time," said Gilfrid cheerily. "You see, we'd got such tremendously important things to say to each other, Aunt Vera."

He followed Eunice through the window into the now deserted drawing-room. "It must be a secret until we have told Colonel Dampier, but I want you to know that we're engaged to be married!"

"I congratulate you both," said Lady Eliot, in a cold, steady voice; "but you shall tell me all about it to-morrow. I must insist upon Eunice going up to bed. I am sure her feet must be damp, and it is getting quite chilly. I hope you will not suffer for your imprudence, my dear."

Eunice felt chilled almost to silence by the words. Imprudent? Had she been imprudent? She felt dazed. . . Not unhappy, not even excited now, but stupefied. She couldn't believe that she was engaged to Gilfrid. Why—they hardly knew each other!

"Good-night, Lady Eliot. Good-night—Gilfrid." To both of them she held out her hand. Then she went slowly out of the room, almost with a drooping look, as if some strength had gone out of her.

Lady Eliot sat very upright upon a high hard

settee, and Gilfrid, lighting a cigarette, stood by the open window.

"My dear boy, I'm afraid you've been dreadfully precipitate. Is it really quite settled?"

"I suppose so," said Gilfrid, laughing in a boyish, half-embarrassed way. "I asked her to be my wife and she said she would. Not at first, you know. It took me quite a little time to persuade her. I think it was a bit of a surprise to her."

"No doubt," said Lady Eliot dryly. "I hope you made it quite plain that she was never to have anything to do with that disreputable mother of hers?"

"Oh, no, I didn't make any conditions. I was only too thankful that she didn't refuse me off-hand. For you know, my dear aunt, I am not in the least degree worthy of Eunice!"

"You are unnecessarily humble," she said ironically. "You forget your great possessions, and Eunice won't have a penny. . . And a very unpleasant episode in the family. You must not let the glamour of your—infatuation blind you to these very real disadvantages."

"I am not going to let them affect me at all," said Gilfrid, with a quick touch of anger; "if I can only marry Eunice I shan't care who her father was nor what her mother did. I shan't want to make any conditions. It's she, I expect, who'll make all the conditions!"

He looked so brilliantly alive and happy as he spoke that even Lady Eliot renounced the attempt to discourage him.

"Well, good-night, my dear boy. You've made your own choice and I'm sure I hope you will be very happy."

She shook hands with him and went out of the room, wondering whether it would be advisable to speak to Eunice.

CHAPTER XXXVII

EUNICE went home on the following morning. When the car came round to the door she found not only Gilfrid but Geoffrey waiting for her in the hall. Geoffrey, it was explained, was to return to London by the same train as herself, and Gilfrid was only to accompany them as far as the station. It was a bore, he said, but he could not leave his guests without all sorts of explanations which for the present he wasn't permitted to give. He would follow as soon as possible to have the necessary interview with Colonel Dampier.

In reality, he was a little vexed at her immediate departure; he would like to have had a few more days of delicious secret betrothal at Denscombe, with moonlight strolls under the pines. But Eunice was quite firm about the necessity of going back to her father at once.

Now she was in the train sitting opposite to Geoffrey, whose suspicions were already strongly aroused. There had been something a little intimate and possessive about Gilfrid's manner to her as he took leave of her. He looked, too, extraordinarily happy, and his eyes were on fire with a kind of ardent intelligence. Eunice, on the contrary, was very cool and composed, and betrayed no emotion. She was able to realize this morning something of the tremendous importance of the step she had taken, and Lady Eliot had had a few words with her that had considerably damped her spirits. But on the whole she was happy and satisfied, and could look forward to the future with serenity. Everything would be "all right"; she would have a settled, ordered life that appealed to her after the wandering, military existence of her youth. And she liked Gilfrid well enough to contemplate putting her future into his hands without any grave misgiving.

She had seen him under circumstances that threw his young figure into strong relief, as a little prince in his own beautiful home, surrounded by admiring friends and conspiring mothers, and thus his importance had been slightly exaggerated. But when all was said and done he was certainly very rich, though that formed to her perhaps the least part of his attraction. He was frank, manly, high-principled, full of solicitude for her, flatteringly in love and eager for their marriage to take place with as little delay as possible. She felt that she had little to learn about him, and in all this there seemed to be no room for any kind of misgiving. Yet all the time, in the unexplored recesses of her mind, she was conscious of an undefined little pain that seemed ready to leap out and tell her that she should have waited to examine her own heart before becoming engaged so swiftly to Gilfrid Eliot.

Now, with Geoffrey Parmeter sitting there in front of her that curious discomfort asserted itself and would not be denied. Geoffrey's very presence stimulated it, for did he not stand vicariously for that old life upon which she had last night closed the door? And whatever of enchantment, of ecstasy, of thrilling happiness and success might lie before her on the path she had after all deliberately chosen, she was aware—terribly aware—that she had shut the door upon other things of true and satisfying worth. They lay in dim shadow, half-forgotten or at least imperfectly remembered, unilluminated by gold or glitter, but they were there, and assuredly they would now be lost to her. She found herself staring helplessly at Geoffrey till he, suddenly perceiving it, flung down the paper he was reading and exclaimed:

"I say, is anything wrong? You look so awfully white? Can I do anything?"

She forced a smile.

"No, I'm perfectly well. Perhaps if you opened that window—yes, that's better."

The blood came back slowly to her face. With a desperate determination to burn her boats she said:

"Have you guessed anything, Geoffrey?"

He looked at her in frank surprise.

"Guessed anything? Why, what do you mean?" He stopped short and reddened. "Do you mean about you and Eliot?"

"Yes. We are engaged."

He looked at her attentively.

"I thought somehow he was falling in love with you. Mildred put me up to the notion. But somehow I never thought—" He paused, and as Eunice did not try to help him he blurted out: "Somehow I never thought you'd marry *him*."

"Why not? Every one will say I'm making a brilliant marriage. He could have married almost any one and he's chosen poor little Eunice Dampier!" Her tone held a kind of sad irony.

"But you—you never seemed ambitious," said Geoffrey.

"Oh, but you mustn't think I'm doing it for a low motive—like ambition." She was hurt, and showed it. Why couldn't Geoffrey give her at least the credit for caring honestly for the man she was going to marry?

"I beg your pardon—I didn't quite mean that. But it'll take you," and here he hit the truth in a blind, brutal way that showed at least he could have no conception of the accuracy of his aim, "so far away from us all—for all we stood for."

"He was there, too, in the Brighton days," she argued hotly.

"Oh, yes, he was there—as an outsider. He was too big and grand for us even then."

"But you do think he's awfully nice? You do like him, Geoffrey?"

"Yes, I think him a jolly good sort, and he's a fine sportsman. I'd think almost any girl but you the luckiest girl in the world to get him."

"But why not me?" she said, flushed and almost tearful.

"Because you don't seem to fit, somehow."

"That's perfectly absurd. You're only saying that because you knew me as a little girl. I'm quite different now. I'm grown up and I've had experience of the world."

Geoffrey shook his head. "I can't explain," he said. "But somehow it seems all wrong."

"Julian wouldn't have said so. He always understood." It was the first time she had had the courage to introduce Julian's name into the conversation.

"Julian? You can know nothing about him if you say a thing like that. He's always been soft about you."

"Soft about me? What do you mean?" Her dark, troubled eyes pleaded for an explanation. She felt her heart beat with almost sickening force.

"Well, you surely can't have forgotten what an idiot he was about you always!"

"Six years ago. He doesn't know me now—I've not seen him!"

"You are still his ideal," said Geoffrey gravely. "I'm quite certain of that, though he never talks about it. He hardly mentions your name. One can only guess, remembering that for years he loved you as if you were his own sister, only a thousand times more than most brothers love their sisters."

Eunice was very white; she listened to his words, unwilling to believe them, yet convinced of their truth. Geoffrey's energetic assertions were shattering her new-found dreams.

"Then you must tell him my secret," she said with an effort; "I'd rather he weren't kept in ignorance if—if, as you seem to believe, he still thinks kindly of me."

"Very well, I'll tell him," said Geoffrey gravely. Even then he was thinking: "How can I tell him? How *dare* I tell him?"

"You must say that I'm very happy—and that we shall be married soon. Gilfrid doesn't want to wait."

Surely the boats were burning steadily now? . . .

"All right," said Geoffrey with a touch of irony. "Anything else?"

His bitter incredulity stirred her to self-defence.

"Yes—tell him I'm not marrying Gilfrid for motives of ambition, although you've as good as said so!"

There was a manifestation here of the old passionate Eunice. Her eyes were blazing with splendid fire.

"I never said such a thing," declared Geoffrey, imperturbably.

They were silent until the train reached the grey turmoil of Waterloo Junction. Then suddenly, as they were both employed in collecting their things, he felt a hand laid lightly upon his shoulder. "Do forgive me, Geoffrey," she said penitently; "you must think me horrid. And I do so want to be quite happy to-day."

"Of course you do." He looked at her kindly. "I was a bit rough, I suppose. You must forget what I said—and believe I was only thinking of Julian." He took her hand awkwardly.

"But why must you think of Julian?" she asked.

"It was stupid of me," he admitted.

"Say nice things about me to Julian, please," she said.

He saw her safely into a taxi, her luggage piled on the top, and her face, pale but smiling, looking at him through the window.

"It's my fault," he murmured as he drove off to Victoria on his way to Brighton, "I ought to have made him go to see her. I ought to have insisted upon their meeting. I suppose now she'll give up thinking about becoming a Catholic." That link with the past would be severed in common with all the rest. "If they'd only seen each other again this fool thing wouldn't have happened. She can't really care for Eliot."

But did she? She had tried to make him believe that she did. She had evidently wished him to persuade Julian of this fact. And how could he do that, armed with such slender knowledge—such imperfect conviction? He was sorry for Julian, and yet he was angry with him and told himself that if Julian were hurt it was entirely his own fault.

There was something inexplicable and ambiguous about Eunice. It couldn't mean that she was still thinking of this friend—this brother—of her childhood when she had just engaged herself to Gilfrid Eliot? Yet why had she looked so white and troubled when he had reminded her of Julian's ancient devotion?

The Parmeters were at dinner when Geoffrey began to speak of his visit to Denscombe. He had come home in an unusually quiet and subdued mood and had less to say than he generally had on his return.

"Was Eunice there?" said Mrs. Parmeter. "You said you expected she would go."

"Yes, she was there," said Geoffrey.

"Did you have any talks with her? How is she getting on with her instruction?" asked Mrs. Parmeter.

"I imagine she's given up that idea," said Geoffrey dryly; "her visit to Denscombe was a very important event for her."

"Why, what do you mean?" asked his mother.

"I mean that she's engaged to Gilfrid Eliot," he answered.

There was a dead silence, broken only by the loud ticking of the clock. Julian's face was white and set as a stone mask. He did not look up. For the second time Geoffrey had flicked at his house of cards with careless, intruding finger. But this time it was all his life that had fallen upon ruin. His was the extreme of loss, such as the lover feels when he hears of the sudden death of his beloved. Now he would never see her again, upon that he was resolved. He did not want to think of her as she was now; he felt he would prefer to remember her as he had last seen her, with tossed hair, and face all soft with the sea wind, as she had appeared that day on board the Channel steamer. Not as Mrs. Gilfrid Eliot—that was a stranger with whom he had no concern. He would not look, he told himself with inward passion, upon that dead face.

"I'm sure that she had no idea of it when she went down there," continued Geoffrey, speaking more from a desire to break the appalling silence that had fallen upon them than from any wish to give further details of the happenings at Denscombe. "Lady Eliot isn't too pleased, I believe—at least Mildred told me she was trying to stop anything of the kind."

"Poor little Eunice," said Mrs. Parmeter, who often thought of her still as the little child she had befriended.

"No one need ever call her that again," said Geoffrey. "She'll be very rich little Eunice. Denscombe is a charming property, though I am sure

from what she said that didn't weigh with her at all."

"I hope she will be very happy," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"She'll have a great deal to make her so," said Geoffrey.

Julian listened to their conversation like one in a dream. Were they really talking about Eunice? Was it quite true she was going to marry Eliot? Something of the old jealousy he had felt for that bright, handsome, spoiled boy stirred anew in his heart. He remembered that summer when the holidays had been completely ruined for him by his presence. He remembered bitterly that Gilfrid had once called him a freak. There seemed to him now something prophetic in that ancient jealousy of his for Eliot. He had felt in those days with every nerve the elder boy's contempt for his own inactive, unsporting existence. And now Gilfrid was going to marry Eunice. She could never be a Catholic now, and in that impossibility lay a sharper pang than all the rest. He had wanted those spiritual gifts for Eunice; he had never forgotten to pray that she might receive them. And from what Geoffrey had told him in the spring he had believed that she was drawing near to them.

Oh, there had been so many things to hold him back, yet how trivial, how unnecessary they seemed to him now in the face of this disaster. There had been his profound conviction that he ought not yet by any word to try to influence her—he who had always had a certain influence over her in those matters. It mustn't be for any feeling she might have or might revive for him, that she should be led to seek out the truth. And above all while she was still so young and knew so little of the world, he must not take advantage of that old friendship to renew it on the only lines it could ever be renewed.

But always in his heart he had been profoundly convinced of two things—that Eunice would become a Catholic and that in the future she would be his wife.

But Gilfrid had stepped in—he could see him doing it, lightly, carelessly, scarcely realizing what a prize he had won—and had demolished that dual dream. He was going to marry Eunice.

He had reached this point in his thoughts when he heard his mother say:

"Are they going to be married soon?"

And Geoffrey's answer scarcely surprised him, scarcely added anything to the extremity of his suffering:

"Yes, quite soon, I believe. She told me Gilfrid didn't want to wait."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

COLONEL DAMPIER looked across the table at his daughter. Luncheon was nearly over; the servants had left the room, and he was listening attentively to the momentous announcement of her engagement to Gilfrid Eliot. Although he had felt that some such results might come from her visit, since he always dreaded to hear the news that she was going to leave him, when the time came he was taken completely by surprise. He had always known that some day she would certainly marry, and he wouldn't have liked her to miss that happiness, and sometimes it had occurred to him to wonder upon whom her choice would ultimately fall. It was by no means the first offer she had received, since only last spring she had definitely refused to marry Captain Ardley, who had taken

his rejection in a somewhat bitter spirit. Now the time had come, and if she was taking the whole thing rather more calmly than he had expected she would, that did not for him argue any lack of affection for Gilfrid; it meant perhaps that she was conscious of the seriousness of the step thus contemplated, and so was not approaching it with mere careless enthusiasm for its novelty.

The connection was a promising one. He had known Lady Eliot for many years, and, though she had failed Eunice at one of the most crucial moments of her life, he had been able to forgive her, and had resumed the friendship on its old lines when he found himself a near neighbor in London. Through her he could learn all that he desired to know about Gilfrid.

"You do approve, don't you papa?" she said. "Of course, you don't know him yet, but I'm sure you'll like him. And he doesn't want us to be separated in the least—he hopes you'll stay with us as often as you like. You're to have your own rooms at Denscombe, to run down whenever you can. That'll be perfect, won't it?"

"I'm sure I shall like him very much," said Colonel Dampier; "the very fact that he's Alaric Eliot's nephew is greatly in his favor. I feel I shan't be giving you up to people of whom I know very little. But—did you," here he hesitated, "did you mention your mother to him, my dear?"

It was very seldom that Colonel Dampier ever mentioned his wife, and he asked her the question now with a certain timidity.

"Yes, I asked him if he knew about her. And he did—he's a friend of Sir Chandos's eldest son."

Colonel Dampier looked relieved. Gilfrid was evidently aware of the family skeleton, and had asked Eunice to marry him with his eyes open.

"I'm so glad you were frank with him."

"Oh, I felt I couldn't let him get engaged to me until he knew that," said Eunice; "but as a matter of fact it didn't seem to make any difference. And he was so nice about you, papa, so anxious for you to know you wouldn't lose me completely."

The Colonel beamed. He liked to be considered.

"Still, he means to rob me of my little girl," he said, and his voice was very kind.

Eunice bestowed upon her parent a bright, affectionate look.

"He doesn't know what a lot he'll have to make up for. I shall lose so much!"

"You mustn't think of that. You'll gain a great deal, too."

"Yes, he's very rich," she admitted. "You don't think me worldly and ambitious, do you, papa?"

"I?" He looked at her in amazement. "Why, how could I think that? I know you too well to imagine you didn't care for him when you promised so quickly to be his wife."

It took the sting from the remembrance of Geoffrey's blunt words. But even now she did not understand herself for promising so quickly, as her father had expressed it, to be Gilfrid's wife. She had been taken unawares; his love had influenced her powerfully. Now, in a colder, calmer moment, she questioned her own heart.

"It's odd," she said suddenly, "but I had up till now really serious thoughts of becoming a Catholic. I've had it in my head for a long time. I got Geoffrey Parmeter to bring me some books, and I had been studying them carefully. I didn't want to tell you till I was quite sure. But now I must give that up. I've a kind of idea Gilfrid wouldn't like it."

Colonel Dampier looked intensely relieved.

"I can't say that I should have liked it either," he said.

"But you wouldn't have tried to prevent me? You said so once yourself—the only time I talked to you about it."

"No, I shouldn't have prevented you. I've always spoiled you, Eunice, given you all you wanted—to make up, perhaps, for the things you'd lost."

"Then you don't think I put my hand to the plough and then turned back?"

"I don't think you'd got quite to the point of touching the plough. You were contemplating it, so to speak, from a respectful distance!"

They both laughed. It was Eunice's turn to be relieved. Colonel Dampier was not perhaps the best judge of a spiritual difficulty; he was very simple about his own religion, very upright and honorable in his dealings with other men. It had never occurred to him that there had been any serious purpose in his young daughter's "dabblings" in Catholicism.

"Did Parmeter encourage the idea?" he inquired.

"Up to a certain point. But, you see, Geoffrey was never quite like Julian—he never had the same passion for his religion."

"Well, my dear, if you had decided to become a Catholic I should only have had myself to blame for leaving you all those years with the Parmeters." His face broke into a smile. "But I'm glad young Eliot has driven that particular obsession out of your mind. Did you settle at all when the wedding's to be?"

"He wants to be married soon. Before the autumn," said Eunice.

"Well, I must have a talk with him. He mustn't expect to have everything his own way."

Before they left the dining-room he took Eunice

in his arms and kissed her in his fond, indulgent way. Yes, she was very beautiful, this cherished child of his. And she was looking especially beautiful to-day in her new happiness. Was this man really good enough for her? Would he understand her? She could never be moulded to a precise pattern.

"Young Parmeter wasn't in love with you?" he hazarded.

She flushed up to her forehead. "Oh, do you mean Geoffrey?" she said, after a moment's terror, lest he should have divined something that was kept with such jealous secrecy in her own heart. "No, I'm sure he wasn't. We never got on well even as children."

"Ah, yes, it was the other one who was your friend. But he never comes here, does he?"

"No, never," said Eunice.

When her father had gone into his study she went upstairs and wrote a letter to Gilfrid. She glanced once or twice at the clock. Yes, Geoffrey would be nearing Brighton now. Perhaps already Julian knew of her approaching marriage.

But it was much better that he should know as soon as possible.

Presently she went to a shelf and took down the books that Geoffrey had given her. Half regretfully she glanced at them and then put them away in a drawer, which she locked. Now all that part of her life was over and done with. What she had said to her father was true, that Gilfrid would have a lot to make up for; it was true in more ways than one. But could he ever heal that little hurt to her soul which had suddenly become magnified to such immense proportions? Could he ever make up to her for that? *And what shall a man receive in exchange for his soul?* . . . Was some thought of this kind in Geoffrey's mind when he spoke so roughly in the train to-day, almost as if she had out-

raged some ideal he had formed of her? What would Julian think? But she had deliberately shut Julian out of her life forever.

On the subject of her love for Gilfrid she had few questions to ask herself. She was quite sure that she didn't love him as people love in books, in a manner that seemed to render them hideously uncomfortable. She had no wish to experience feelings so violent as to destroy her peace of mind and upset her balance. But she was sensible of a certain emotion when she was with him; she felt to the full the influence of his personality, a thing that seemed to her beautiful and vital and yet in a sense tormenting, promising happiness of a thrilling and exciting rather than of a calm, ordered kind. If anything had for a moment held her back, it was the remembrance of Julian Parmeter, with whom as a child she had experienced a very different sense of complete well-being that enfolded and soothed her. In those old days it had made her feel as if only Julian perfectly understood her. His childish love for her had been all the more wonderful because of, or perhaps in spite of, that deep understanding. He had known all that was bad in her; her imperious, wayward temper; her frequent fits of passion and mutiny; the unkind words she had dealt out to him with even greater frequency than she had done to Geoffrey. Looking back upon her life with the Parmeters she saw now what an upsetting factor she must have been in that regular, tranquil household. That no one had ever been harsh or unkind to her—that no one had ever complained of her—had since taught her more than anything of the measure of their deep devotional spirit, which imbued them all with such sound and practical charity.

Gilfrid was to come up in two days' time, when the last of his guests would have left Denscombe. The respite was welcome to Eunice, who always

preferred to have time to think things well over. And it would give Colonel Dampier a little longer to get thoroughly accustomed to the idea. But the path of the lovers promised to run with exemplary smoothness. There was nothing to delay nor to obstruct the marriage. It could take place as soon as Eunice chose. She wasn't likely, her father thought, to wish for a very long engagement. They had, to use a hackneyed phrase, "nothing to wait for."

On the whole, Colonel Dampier was satisfied. He had always wanted his daughter to marry, but until now he had, curiously enough, never envisaged the change it was likely to produce in his own life. An empty house to come back to—that sounded a little dreary. Only he wouldn't want this great house any more; a bachelor flat in some mansions, preferably near Victoria Street, one that boasted a restaurant, so that he wouldn't have to grapple daily with a cook. . . He had his work and it was increasing; he had hardly time as it was to write his private letters.

Two days later he came back in the evening to find Gilfrid Eliot in the drawing-room with Eunice. The young man's frank, pleasant manner struck him agreeably. His physiognomy was all in his favor. Tall, broad-shouldered, he had a well-poised head on a slim, long neck, very thick hair of a pale brown shade, brown eyes set far apart under much darker brows, that gave character and emphasis to his face. Eunice was looking charming, calm, pale, with a very soft light in her eyes. She looked radiantly dark beside Gilfrid. They were well matched in height; she came nearly up to his chin.

"Gilfrid is going to stay with us for a few days," she said tranquilly, "so you will have lots of time to talk things over." She smiled at the two men,

as if already full of confidence in their mutual friendship, their ability to arrange everything that concerned her own future.

"I'm glad to hear that," said the Colonel, fixing his melancholy eyes upon young Eliot. "We can begin this evening. Eunice must spare you for half an hour after dinner."

The meal passed off without incident. Domestic matters ran smoothly in the Dampier household. Eunice had studied her father's likes and dislikes with careful attention; her first care was to please him. She was more at her ease than either of them; she did most of the talking, and it seemed to be her special intention to bring these two men into a greater intimacy. They must like each other; they must be friends; so much of her happiness would depend upon that. She couldn't shut her father out of that new life that was to be hers; on the contrary, he must be made to feel that he occupied a place in it of unalterable importance. The contrast between them struck her forcibly. There was her father, growing old now, though his face under the thick white hair bore so few signs of age, a man who had worked hard nearly all his life and had risen in his profession by dint of strenuous endeavor, and who was now enjoying the fruits of it. And on the other hand, there was Gilfrid, who had no need to work at all, who had been left heir when still very young to Denscombe and a huge rent-roll, able to satisfy every whim, even this final whim of marrying herself.

In the study after dinner Gilfrid found Colonel Dampier amenable to all his own projects as to the suggested settlements and the early date of the marriage. The settlements he proposed to make were indeed generous beyond all Colonel Dampier's very unworldly dreams, and he for the first time

realized the importance of this brilliant marriage his child was going to make. He had, it is true, missed something of enthusiasm in Eunice's manner when she first told him of her engagement—an absence not only of sentimentality but of any sentiment at all. Perhaps modern girls were like that, and in any case Eunice rarely showed her feelings; she was the last person to wear her heart upon her sleeve. He must be satisfied that she liked Gilfrid well enough not only to marry him but to become engaged to him after a very brief resumption of their old acquaintanceship. Her only sense of regret seemed to center around that odd fact that she must for the future repress those religious questionings of hers. He wasn't on the whole sorry for this. She had been too much alone, was inclined perhaps to introspection; a husband and children would doubtless cure all that. He was sufficiently old-fashioned to hold that matrimony supplied a wholesome and abundant panacea for any lurking feminine vagaries. The trouble with Eunice was that she was so mature for her years; there was nothing of the careless joy of youth about her.

It seemed to him that Gilfrid was voicing his own unspoken thoughts when he said suddenly:

"And there's one thing I hope you won't mind my mentioning."

"That means," said the colonel dryly, "that you are pretty sure I shall mind."

The skeleton in the Dampier cupboard had been too largely advertised in the press of six years ago to terrify him with any recrudescent rattling of bones. He looked kindly at the young man, who still hesitated.

"You want to ask me something perhaps about her mother—about Lady Mirton?"

"Yes," said Eliot flushing.

"Eunice tells me that you know Mirton's sons?"

"Yes, they were at Oxford with me."

"I imagine there's not much love lost," said the colonel.

"None at all. And it's partly on account of my friendship for Dicky Mirton as well as for her own sake that I don't want Eunice and her mother to meet after we are married."

"There's not the slightest reason why they should. Mirton put his foot down, too, after the marriage—forbade any communication with the child. As far as I can see, neither Eunice nor her mother wish to resume any intercourse."

Eliot looked immensely relieved. "I'm delighted to hear it," he said. "I thought I should like to have that point made quite clear, if possible, without hurting Eunice's feelings in any way. You'll understand, I'm sure, why I shouldn't like her, as my wife, to come under Lady Mirton's influence."

"I think you're perfectly right. I'll support you in this with my whole heart. But, as I tell you, I don't anticipate the slightest difficulty."

"Thank you very much."

"Look here, Eliot—I believe in people being quite frank with each other. I should tell Eunice what you wish, if I were you."

"Oh, will that be necessary?"

"Not necessary at all, but I think advisable."

"And there's another thing."

Colonel Dampier raised his eyebrows. "What can that be?" he asked.

"I know that as a child Eunice was left a great deal with the Parmeters—a Roman Catholic family at Brighton. I know them slightly, and Geoffrey was staying with me last week. You've no reason

to suppose that Eunice has any idea of becoming a Roman Catholic?"

"She's had leanings, I believe—many girls have. There's a glamour about the whole thing that I should have thought specially attractive to women if I hadn't known so many hard-headed men succumb to it too. She won't have so much time to worry over religious problems when she's married. And she was such a child when she was in Brighton, the impressions and influences she received there weren't likely to be very lasting ones."

"I'm very glad to hear you say that," said Gilfrid, looking relieved. "I shouldn't have liked it if she had wanted to change. It would have made complications and difficulties. I shouldn't have tried to stop her; but, as I say, I shouldn't have liked it.

"That was just my own feeling," said Colonel Dampier.

Gilfrid was glad he had had the courage to approach the colonel on these two points. He was considerably relieved by the assurances he had received that Lady Mirton was little likely to intrude her disagreeable and dubious personality into their married life. And Eunice's engagement to himself had probably checked any latent leanings in her toward Catholicism. He felt amply reassured on both these knotty points, and he began to feel that Lady Eliot had deliberately made mountains out of innocent molehills. She hadn't, for some inscrutable reason, approved of his projected marriage; and perhaps that was the reason why she had magnified these two difficulties.

He felt he had made a valuable auxiliary for the future in the person of Eunice's father, who seemed to see eye to eye with him on both the points so eloquently presented by Lady Eliot.

CHAPTER XXXIX

EVERYTHING was proceeding with exemplary smoothness as regards trousseau and settlements and all the preparations for the marriage, when the news of the death of Sir Chandos Mirton from heart-disease was announced to an indifferent world in the London papers during the progress of a mid-August heat-wave. By an odd coincidence, the paragraph appeared on the very day on which the Eliot-Dampier engagement was announced as follows:

"A marriage has been arranged and will take place on September 12th between Gilfrid, only son of the late Henry Gilfrid Eliot, of Denscombe Park, Surrey; and Eunice, only child of Colonel Herbert Dampier, C.B., of 200 Onslow Square, S. W."

Even Gilfrid, who was not at all a morbid or superstitious person, discovered a sinister omen in seeing this public avowal of his happiness in juxtaposition to that brief paragraph announcing Sir Chandos's death at his place in Gloucestershire. He was down at Denscombe at the time, for Eunice, exhausted by the heat in London, had pleaded for a little solitude in which to complete her own personal preparations. Gilfrid had at first shown some impatience at the suggestion that he should leave town.

"But, darling, what do you want with all these frocks? Get them afterward."

"It isn't only frocks. It's all kinds of things," said Eunice.

She was having breakfast in bed when the paper was brought up to her. The news of Sir Chandos's death gave her a little shock, and all the time she was dressing, her thoughts were uncomfortably preoccupied with her mother's bereavement. She knew nothing of her, had never even heard whether she

was happy or not, nor if she regretted the step she had taken. But it was easy to imagine that whatever her personal happiness had been—and there was little reason for Eunice to suppose any diminution or lack of devotion on Sir Chandos's part—her life at Daunton could not have been all plain sailing. She had had from the beginning the open hostility and dislike of her husband's three sons to contend with. From the little Gilfrid had told her it seemed that time had rather increased than diminished that avowed hostility. They had adored their own mother and had bitterly resented their father's second marriage to a divorced woman. Eunice was driven to wonder—always with a little secret fear—whether this death would make a very great difference to her mother's circumstances. It was certain that she would have to leave Daunton, for the eldest son, Dicky, would now succeed to the property, and it was extremely improbable that he would permit his stepmother to remain in the house a day longer than was absolutely necessary.

The thought of her mother's future perplexed Eunice, and filled her with a certain nebulous anxiety, as if she were afraid that it might conceivably affect her own. A foreboding, that was not unconnected with Gilfrid's eager demands that she and her mother should have no intercourse in the future, began to harass her. He had by his time made his wishes on the subject quite clear to her, in accordance with the advice offered by Colonel Dampier. It had taken a little courage; he was afraid of obtruding any manifestation of his own will upon her, and when the thing was done it was a relief to find she had been in perfect agreement with him. It was only a continuation of her father's policy, and perhaps she welcomed it for this reason. Her loyalty to her father had always been of too fine a quality

to permit of any compromise where Lady Mirton was concerned. Nor had the voice of authority in this man who was so soon to be her husband been disagreeable to her. She liked Gilfrid more and more every day; she looked forward with eagerness to his visits; there was an increasing sympathy between them, and she was beginning to think with pleasure of that ordered, settled existence at Denscombe which was so soon to be hers. She would never in those days envisage the fact that there was anything missing to that happiness of hers.

Now suddenly the whole position was changed. It was conceivable that Lady Mirton, freed from the authority of Sir Chandos, might take steps to approach her daughter. This danger presented itself not only to Eunice but to her father and Gilfrid. She foresaw some difficulty in completely refusing to see her mother if Lady Mirton proposed a meeting.

Gilfrid might well have known such a contingency was likely to arise, and taken preventive measures against the consequences. Sir Chandos's heart trouble, according to the statements in the paper, was of no very recent date; it was, therefore, quite probable that Dicky Mirton should have informed Gilfrid he was not likely to live very long.

Colonel Dampier had to leave London that same evening for a few days' absence in connection with his work, and Eunice scarcely saw him all day. She would be quite alone for a day or two, and that was rather a relief to her. Gilfrid had said he might look in one afternoon to see her, but several days passed and he did not come. He wrote every day, however, but he did not once allude to Mirton's death.

Eunice was sitting alone in the drawing-room one afternoon a few days later, when she heard a taxi

stop outside. Thinking it might be Gilfrid, she went to the window, but she was only in time to catch a glimpse of a floating black veil that assuredly belonged to a female figure. It was a little early for an ordinary visitor, and Eunice was just wondering who it could be when she heard footsteps on the stairs, the door was opened and Lady Mirton was announced. A large, black-clad figure rustled softly in the room.

The door closed upon mother and daughter. They had not met for six years, not, in fact, since the memorable episode when Norman Parmeter had come to fetch her away after their hurried flight to Bath. The remembrance of that summer night was with Eunice now. During the interval she had emerged from childhood to womanhood; her wedding-day was close at hand. Her real knowledge of her mother belonged to an even remoter period, that obscure epoch before she went to live with the Parmeters. Now, face to face with Lady Mirton, she found her to be changed beyond all recognition. Eunice remembered her as slight, fair-haired, almost girlish-looking. In those days she had thought of her as tall; now she found that she was several inches shorter than herself. She was very stout and her face was no longer slight and pale, but large, puffy, and reddened in color; the fair hair was now dyed a darkish red. Her eyes regarded Eunice with a shrewish expression, in which distrust, suspicion and jealousy were largely commingled. Eunice felt a hideous sense of actual dislike and repulsion penetrating all her being. She shrank from the embrace that Lady Mirton was not at all prepared to forego, and emerged from it with heightened color.

It seemed to her that if her mother had remained with them all those years, life would have been intol-

erable, degrading. And why—why had she returned now?

"Will you sit down?" she said in a cold little voice that did not sound like her own. If the fates were kind, surely Gilfrid would not come to-day. She felt she would have given all she possessed to prevent a meeting between them. She was ashamed, and ashamed of her shame. It discovered to her the existence of a little army of mean and petty feelings that had never before come to the surface of her mind.

"I thought," said Lady Mirton, "that you would be more pleased to see me."

"I was—sorry to hear of your bereavement," said Eunice, timidly.

Lady Mirton leaned back in her chair and closed her eyes—those unquiet, restless grey eyes that could become so relentlessly cruel.

"I dare say you are wondering why I am here. Well, I will tell you. I do not pretend to be sorry that Chandos is dead. We were very unhappy—he was selfish and inconsiderate, and his sons were odious to me. I wanted him to turn them out of the house because of their behavior, but he wouldn't hear of it. And now he has left me with a miserable pittance of a hundred a year. Not a penny more. Dicky gets most of it, because he is the eldest son, but there were good portions for both the younger ones. I am a beggar, Eunice, and I have come to ask for your help!"

"My help?" Eunice looked at her in perplexity, but her heart sank a little.

"Yes, I know you are going to marry a very rich man. I've heard the boys speak of Gilfrid Eliot, and I think you are very fortunate to make such a brilliant marriage. It's really quite providential. You must tell him quite plainly that you can't let

your mother starve on a hundred a year. Don't depend on promises—get it written down in black and white."

A slow paralysis seemed to be creeping over the girl's brain. The indelicacy of the suggestion was the only point that seemed to detach itself quite clearly from a mass of confused, chaotic thought. But it was a sinister thing, too; it flicked at the happiness which only a few minutes ago had been so complete, so unsoiled. She began to realize that with the return of Lady Mirton into her life all tranquillity was at an end. She saw the impossibility of going to Gilfrid with such a request as that upon her lips. And she had very little money of her own. The allowance her father could with difficulty give her would only suffice with care for her own clothes, but it was a tiny sum in comparison to Gilfrid's great wealth, and she had often wished that in this respect things were more equal between them.

"I could not possibly ask him such a thing as that," she said at last in a dull, final tone.

"And why not, pray?" inquired Lady Mirton, raising her voice in anger. "Perhaps, though, you have never told him anything about me at all? Perhaps you are ashamed of my existence?"

"He knows that you are my mother. He knew it before he asked me to marry him," said Eunice.

"Then what is there to prevent you from asking him a simple thing like that?"

"I couldn't—I can't give you any reason," said Eunice.

"I made so sure you would help me. I came when I knew your father was away. I was afraid if he were here he would not let us see each other. Eunice—I am your mother, and you can't let me starve."

"You should not have come here," said Eunice with an effort. "This is my father's house, not mine, and it would have been better to write first to propose a meeting. Then I could have consulted him."

"I knew better than to do that," said Lady Mirton, with a dry little laugh. "If I had left it to you I should never have seen you. Between you all, you would have invented some excuse for keeping me away."

Eunice colored. She knew that in her endeavors to prevent such an interview she would have been strongly supported by her father and Gilfrid.

"You see, it's so impossible for me to help you," she said with a kind of desperation, "that it is of little use for us to see each other. We have been apart too long."

"I have a right to see you. I should have seen you regularly all these years if Chandos had not prevented me. You are my own child—you can't get over the fact." There was a touch of the old undisciplined temper in her voice. "You must speak to Mr. Eliot at once and get him to settle something. You are making a brilliant marriage and I never imagined you would do that." She looked at her with a cold, hard scrutiny. "You were so plain as a little girl I was quite ashamed of you."

Eunice rang the bell and ordered tea. All the time her mother was speaking she lived in dread of Gilfrid's step on the stairs. This was the time he generally appeared if they were to go out together. And if he were to come and find her mother there it would surely be difficult to convince him that she had not planned the interview in deliberate defiance of his wishes.

It was impossible to suppose that Lady Mirton would soon go away. On the contrary, she would remain until the last hope of ever gaining her point

was shattered by Eunice's repeated refusals. Eunice remembered enough of her mother to have a pretty good notion of her obstinacy, her persistency. In the old days, a tussle of their two wills had been of frequent occurrence, and had always resulted in her own sharp and disastrous defeat. But now the positions were changed. She wished she could feel sorry for her; she wished that she could help her and send her away satisfied. She did owe one thing to her, and that was the happy years she had spent at the Parmeters. That, strange to say, had at the beginning been her mother's choice of a home for her. Eunice had never inquired into the motive that had inspired that action, the wisest, perhaps, of Lady Mirton's whole life. On looking back she felt as if they must have reluctantly accepted the responsibility imposed upon them. They had known her well enough before she ever went to them to realize that she would not be an easy child to deal with. But she was aware of all that she owed to them, and she felt obscurely grateful to her mother for having procured for her those happy, serene years.

Outside, the rain which had been falling most of the day had ceased, and there were watery gleams of sunlight dribbling through the trees in the square upon the burned-up grass below. A black cloud to the south seemed to foretell thunder and more rain. The trees and bushes were refreshed and had lost their stained look of dusty greyness.

Tea was brought in and Eunice felt glad of the little interruption. She poured out tea, waited upon her mother, feeling always pre-occupied by the fear that at any moment Gilfrid might happen upon the intimate little scene.

"I have to leave Daunton by the first of September," said Lady Mirton, "and I can't hope that Dick will extend the time by a single day. I believe the

three brothers are all going to live there for the present. What three young men can want with that great house I can't imagine. But I suppose Dick could hardly keep it up alone—he will be half ruined by the death-duties as it is. You see, I have very little time to make any plans, and you must really help me as soon as possible. I have never had to make plans for myself before, everything was always arranged for me. You will find that out too as soon as you are married. You think now you will always have your own way, but a husband is very different from a *fiancé,* I can assure you. You *are* going to help me, aren't you, Eunice? Perhaps I took you a little by surprise at first, but I'm sure when you think it over you will see that what I have proposed is the only thing to do."

"I shall ask papa if he thinks there is anything I can do to help you," said Eunice, reluctantly.

"Nonsense!" said Lady Mirton impatiently, "you know perfectly well that will be quite useless. He would only forbid you to see me again. He is my worst enemy, and always has been. All you have to do is to ask this Mr. Eliot, who is very rich indeed, to give me a proper allowance. He could not possibly feel it, and then he would have the satisfaction of knowing that his wife's mother was not starving to death in some dreadful lodging at the seaside!"

"I can't ask Gilfrid; it is quite impossible," said Eunice.

"Then I shall write to him myself," said Lady Mirton.

"Oh, you mustn't, please!" Her face was white with alarm. "He—he wouldn't like it. And you mustn't expect anything from him."

"And why not?" said Lady Mirton.

She could see that her threat had alarmed Eunice; it was a useful thing to know.

"Why not?" she said again.

Eunice was silent. She was not prepared to tell her that Gilfrid had already made a condition that they were never to see each other.

"You are a very undutiful daughter!" exclaimed Lady Mirton angrily. "I don't believe you care in the least if I starve or not. You'll be living in the lap of luxury yourself, which I suppose is all you care about." She flung the words at Eunice with extraordinary violence. "You are utterly selfish and heartless—you are thinking only of your own comfort, your own happiness. This man is in love with you, and when men are in love you can make them do just exactly what you like. You have only to explain the situation and he is sure to give in. Even if you don't care, you might at least pretend that you do!" She had risen to her feet, and her face, hectic even through the rouge which was liberally daubed upon it, was working with passion. "I'm not going to be snubbed by you. You will have to do as I say or you shall have no peace. I shall write to Mr. Eliot this very night!"

With this turmoil in the room Eunice had not observed the sound of voices and footsteps outside. She was gazing at her mother with large, startled eyes when the door opened and Gilfrid came quickly, eagerly, into the room.

There was a deep silence. He could hardly, however, have failed to hear the last infuriated sentence. He looked from one to the other in silence, and some glimmering of the truth forced its way to his brain.

Eunice rose and gave him her hand.

"Gilfrid, this is my mother, Lady Mirton," she said in a cold, controlled voice.

Gilfrid bowed coolly. His observant, attentive eyes bestowed upon her a quick, scrutinizing glance that was almost pitiless. Eunice was certain that

not one detail of the coarsened face with its dabs of rouge nor of the dyed hair that displayed itself beneath the long veil, could have escaped him. There was something in his expression that frightened her. It seemed to say: "What have I done?—What have I done?" She felt plunged into an abyss of shame and humiliation.

Almost immediately he controlled his features with a visible effort and turning to Eunice said coldly:

"I hope you are not engaged this afternoon? I was relying upon you to come to help me choose wall-papers."

"Yes, presently," said Eunice, glancing fearfully at her mother and scarcely knowing what she said. "Papa is away, you know—I do not expect him back until to-morrow night."

"I am sorry that I shall not see Colonel Dampier," said Gilfrid, walking to the window and looking out. "I should like to start as soon as possible, Eunice, for I'm certain it's going to rain again."

Lady Mirton rose. "Well, I'll say good-by," she said to Eunice, "since you seem to be so busy. You can talk over what I've told you with Mr. Eliot after I'm gone."

She kissed Eunice, and the girl endured the second embrace with even more repugnance than the first. She accompanied her mother out of the room, thankful that she had at last decided to go away.

Perhaps in that glimpse of Gilfrid she had seen that he would not be quite so easy to deal with as she had imagined.

"Gives himself airs, doesn't he?" said Lady Mirton with a coarse laugh. "Got a bit of a temper, I should think. Well, Eunice, you always wanted a touch of the curb, didn't you? Write to me at Daunton and tell me what you've been able to do.

If I don't hear I'll write to him!" She jerked her head toward the drawing-room. "He doesn't look very proud of the connection at present—we must teach him better manners."

She had so deteriorated in appearance and speech that Eunice could scarcely believe she was the same woman. She had utterly lost all attraction, all fascination. She could not have been destitute of those qualities in the old days, for Eunice could remember that she had never been without friends of a kind. Now all that was common in her had come to the surface, and she did not look like a lady. Eunice realized this with a shock. She said good-by to her and returned to the drawing-room with sinking heart.

Gilfrid ran lightly up to her and took her in his arms, as if realizing that the moment had been trying for her too.

"Darling," he said with reproach in his voice, "what did she want? I thought you weren't going to see her again."

He had felt intensely repelled by the personality of Lady Mirton. She had been so much worse than he had ever expected. He had not been prepared for this rather disreputable-looking woman with the large, puffy, rouged face, the swollen lips, the dyed red hair. That this should be Eunice's mother! He had hoped never to see her. Now that he had done so he told himself she looked a "regular bad lot," not fit to approach his beloved, queenly, little Eunice.

Eunice freed herself gently. Her nerves were so on edge she could hardly endure Gilfrid's touch. "I couldn't refuse to see her," she said, "and indeed I hadn't any choice. She came unexpectedly and was shown up here. And, after all, she is my mother."

"What did she want?" he inquired.

"She wants my help. You see, she's been left very badly off."

"But she's got some sort of annuity, I suppose?"

"They didn't get on well. He only left her a hundred a year."

"You can't possibly help her, Eunice," he said, with decision.

"No," agreed Eunice.

She shook her head. "He will do nothing. I'm sure of that."

She sat down. Gilfrid came a step nearer.

"What is the matter?" he said more kindly, "what is worrying you?"

"I feel I ought to do something to help her. She hasn't any one. And she seems to want me."

"She can't possibly have you, then," said Gilfrid in a light, affectionate tone. "I've got first claim now. She's too late."

Eunice looked at him strangely. "I— am sorry for her. And she's my mother. It is so terrible to dislike one's own mother."

"She could hardly expect you to cherish an undying affection for her, when she deserted you," said Gilfrid with cool irony.

"I'm sure it's wrong to feel as I felt just now when she kissed me," said Eunice musingly.

"My dearest, we're only human," he said. He was immensely relieved to find she had thus aroused her daughter's violent antipathy. It was the best thing that could have happened. "Now that I've seen her myself, I feel more than ever how wise we were to decide that we would never receive her."

"Wise?" She looked up at him. "It's easy to be wise, I think. But is it *right* for a daughter to refuse to have anything to do with her mother, who may even be in want?"

"I think I am the best judge of what is right in this matter," said Gilfrid. "I've seen more of the world than you have, Eunice. And your father agrees with me. I have his support."

"But things are changed. She's poor and lonely—and deserted. She's been very unhappy—Sir Chandos wasn't kind to her, nor were his sons. Oh, I'm not blaming them—it isn't that. Only I feel she's been punished."

Gilfrid looked a little impatient. He was a man who was very much accustomed to having his own way.

"My dearest Eunice, I'd rather not discuss the merits and the demerits of the case with you. It was a shocking story, and I'm inclined to think she thoroughly deserved all she's got. At any rate, she hasn't the shadow of a claim on you, the child she first ill-treated—yes, I know that, too; Lady Eliot told me—and then abandoned." He spoke with rising passion. "She has no right to come here at all. I hope you made it clear that she wasn't to come back? You must think of your father—of all you owe to him!"

"I do think of him," said Eunice, a little sadly.

"Did you tell her not to come again?"

She shook her head.

"You must write to her, then, or better still get your father or a lawyer to do so. Oh, Eunice, how glad I shall be when we're married and I shall have the right to protect you from everything odious and disagreeable!"

"But I shall always know that she's alone and poor and unhappy. Even you can't save me from that knowledge."

Gilfrid made a little gesture of impatience.

"My dearest, there are thousands of poor, lonely, and unhappy women in the world."

"But this one is my mother," said Eunice, in a withdrawn voice.

"Oh, my dear," he said quickly, "that is just the enormous pity of it. But let's try to forget it now. Put on your hat and come out with me."

She slowly went out of the room and climbed the stairs to her own bedroom. The whole world seemed incredibly changed; it had lost all security, all permanence. She felt suddenly astray and the hands she had trusted to guide her had failed her a little. . . She began to ask herself what Julian would have said—what Julian would have done.

Gilfrid was thinking of her comfort, her happiness; he wanted her to be quite free from all sordid little cares. He wanted to detach her from that disgraceful episode of the past in which her mother had played so dismal a part. It was for her sake, and she tried to see that he was right. But Julian would have thought of something else—that is to say, if he still had that old, strong sense of duty. He would always examine a course of action, no matter how clearly its expediency might be indicated, in order to see if it were right or wrong. He had a spiritual standard and Gilfrid had a worldly one. She checked her thoughts at this point; they savored of disloyalty. It was absurd to think of Julian when she had not even seen him since his boyhood.

She was very pale when she went back to the drawing-room, and the black, close-fitting hat she wore accentuated her pallor. Gilfrid, aware of the threatened rift within the lute and that his efforts to make her take a practical, normal view of the situation had not altogether prevailed, now went up to her and drawing her close to him kissed her. The touch of his lips weakened her. It was so much easier to agree, to submit. And surely since she had

promised to marry him it was her duty to do as he wished.

"Oh, Gilfrid, I am sorry," she said, clinging to him a little.

"But, darling, you've nothing to be sorry for. After all, you couldn't help her coming."

"Oh, not about that. But because I didn't quite agree with you just now."

"Oh, never mind," he said. "And I don't want to be hard on your mother—you mustn't think that—but I do feel it's better you should not see each other. She came to arouse your pity, and you are so tender-hearted you couldn't help giving her what she asked. I'm going to save you from yourself and her." His tone was deeply affectionate, but it held that iron ring of determination which sometimes in him had dismayed her a little. "You do understand; don't you, darling?"

"Yes," said Eunice meekly.

"Nothing must ever come between us," he said, "I love you too much." His voice was full of love. He was relieved to find that he loved her more than ever, although he had seen Lady Mirton face to face. Somehow he had always feared that if he saw her in the flesh it must inevitably diminish his love for her daughter.

"So that's all quite settled," he assured her cheerfully.

CHAPTER XL

GILFRID went back to his rooms that evening with the conviction that he had met and grappled with and even ultimately solved the problem of Lady Mirton. It strengthened him to feel that Colonel

Dampier would approve whole-heartedly of his conduct when he came to learn about the unpleasant little episode, enacted during his own absence from town.

Eunice had naturally, he reflected, been moved by the knowledge of her mother's loneliness and comparative poverty; she was so young and tender-hearted and full of generous impulses that it was impossible they should not affect her. Gilfrid would not have had her otherwise, but he felt that she had need of intimate guidance. She had been left too much to herself, and from this had supervened inevitably a certain independence of action and conduct. Colonel Dampier was too busy to discover all that went on in her mind. He left too many decisions to her. She should have had a wise, loving mother to train her.

But to Eunice, alas, the problem was very far from being solved. It had only been temporarily shelved while she discussed wall-papers with Gilfrid. When she was alone again it assumed immense proportions, excluding all thought of anything else, and no details incidental to her approaching marriage could drive it from her mind. Nor, it must be said, did Lady Mirton intend that this should happen. She followed up her visit by long, imploring letters, entreating Eunice's help. "If you were not going to be married so soon I should beg you to come and live with me—even if only for a few months. I dread being alone. I am afraid of the future. You do not know how cruel the world can be to a lonely poor woman. You must see me again; you are all I have in the world. Don't let other claims and ties divide us when we have just found each other again. I was hurt by your indifference and I spoke angrily to you, but you must not think for that reason that you are not very dear to me. Don't believe it

when they tell you that you owe me nothing, but remember I am your mother. . ."

Such sentences as these could not but affect Eunice profoundly, they aroused the voice of conscience, making her ask herself again and again where her duty lay. She did not answer the letters, but Lady Mirton did not require answers. She believed in the continual dropping, and Eunice learned to dread the sight of those black-edged envelopes.

Colonel Dampier returned a few days later, just in time for dinner. He found Eunice in the drawing-room. She had not told him of her mother's visit, but he had received an accurate and detailed account of it from Gilfrid, with a plea for assistance and support. The news had given Colonel Dampier a shock. He had never imagined that Lady Mirton would dare to approach her daughter after these years of separation. That it had been done in his absence showed it to have been premeditated. Not that there was surely any chance of Eunice's ever falling under her mother's influence. He was glad to think that his own relations with his daughter had been too close and deep and harmonious for that. They had lived together for many years in an atmosphere that had been wholly free from dissension or petty bickering. This would surely militate against the success of any advance made by the other side. And Gilfrid was there to help him with all the tremendous aid of his devoted love. It was odd that Gilfrid should have been acutely apprehensive of this very danger, which had seemed to himself so remote.

"My dear child," he said, "I'm so sorry to hear from Gilfrid that you have been disturbed by a visit from Lady Mirton while I was away. If I had thought it possible that you could have this annoy-

ance just now I should have tried not to leave you alone."

"How did you hear, papa?" she asked.

"Gilfrid wrote. He seemed very much disturbed about it."

"Yes, he was," agreed Eunice.

For the first time in her life, perhaps, she found it difficult to be quite frank with her father. She knew that if she were to disclose all the results of her meditations upon the subject, he would inevitably be hurt. She was aware of a divided duty, and in the essence of it there seemed to be a subtle disloyalty to him.

"It was a surprise to me," she went on, in a low tone. "I mean, I didn't know, of course, that she was coming. She's very unhappy—she's alone and poor. I found her terribly altered. And she wants my help, my sympathy. She wants—if I only knew how to give it—a little of my love."

"She forfeited all right to that six years ago," said the colonel bitterly.

He was aware of a change in Eunice. Lady Mirton had evidently worked on her feelings—Gilfrid had given him a hint of something of the kind—she had made appeals, entreaties of a sentimental kind, calculated to arouse pity in a young girl.

"She had no business to come," he continued sternly; "I shall have to give orders that she is never to be admitted again."

"Yes. If we have to meet again it will be better for me to go to her," said Eunice.

"But, Eunice, dear, I can't allow that. I can't allow you to see her at all. Gilfrid and I are perfectly agreed on the point. You can't really wish to see her, and if I forbid it you can make that your excuse for not going."

Eunice looked up with a curious, remote expression in her eyes.

"I don't feel as if it could be dismissed as easily as that," she said. "My mother keeps on writing to me. She is in a very miserable, almost desperate, state. If anything happened to her I should feel responsible."

"Eunice, I don't often assert my authority," said Colonel Dampier; "you know I've let you do pretty much as you liked always, and I believe some people have blamed me for it. But in this case I know better than you. I can't have you either seeing your mother or writing to her. It would serve no useful purpose, and there is a grave danger that it might bring about a rupture between you and Gilfrid. You've won the love of a good man; you mustn't risk losing it for any quixotic notions of this sort. Perhaps you haven't looked at the matter in this light?"

"Oh, yes," said Eunice. "I've tried to look at it from every point of view. And I feel that if I really thought it was my duty to go to her—to help her—even to stay with her—I should perhaps have to break off my engagement to Gilfrid."

She spoke so simply, almost as if she were unconscious of the full disastrous meaning of the words.

"But, my dear child, you have made a very solemn promise to Gilfrid. No one advised you or forced you into it. And you can't go back on it without a very serious and legitimate reason."

"But if this seemed to me a serious and legitimate reason?" she said, in her cool unemotional way.

"You care for Gilfrid, don't you?" cried Colonel Dampier, with a touch of anger.

"Should I have promised to marry him if I hadn't cared?"

"But you can speak so calmly of ending your en-

gagement!" He looked at her with a long, critical scrutiny. Had she really something of her mother's nature—her caprice—her inability to care long for any one thing? It was horrible to look at her in this way, trying to discover in her any traits resembling those of the woman who had coldly murdered his own happiness, ruined his honor, made deliberate sacrifice of him.

"You can really contemplate giving Gilfrid up?" he said, as she did not speak. "Now—so near your wedding day—and for the sake of the most worthless woman in the world?" There was a deep reproach in his voice that seemed to suggest actual disillusionment; it struck at her very heart. "I have not said anything about myself, Eunice. I have not reminded you of anything you may owe to me!"

His stern, sad eyes touched her as the severity of his words could never do. She came up to him fearlessly.

"I owe everything to you, papa. I shall never forget that. All the happiness almost that I have ever had. If I seem to sacrifice you and Gilfrid you must never think I am doing it for my own pleasure—or without knowledge."

He bent his head and kissed her. "Forgive me, my darling. Only, when you've thought it over you'll find, perhaps, that others have stronger claims upon your love and your duty than Lady Mirton. You mustn't break Eliot's heart—he is very devoted to you."

They went down to dinner. All through that meal they spoke of ordinary things, but they were both preoccupied. When Eunice rose to leave the room she went round the table and kissed her father.

"I'm going to say good-night, papa."

She was gone almost before he could speak. Per-

haps she felt as he did, that further discussion at this point would only be superfluous and painful. But he had—as in duty bound—put his own case and Gilfrid's quite clearly before her. In his sorrow and indignation he had let fall hard words, but Eunice would forgive them; she would understand that they were not meant for her, they were wrung from him by the intolerable position into which Lady Mirton had thrust them all by her selfish, ill-advised action. Only it had been a sharp surprise to him that Eunice should have been forced to consider her mother's point of view at all. It was so at variance with her fine sense of loyalty. No wonder Gilfrid had been upset and alarmed, so that in his anxiety he had written off to Colonel Dampier at once. It had puzzled him to find by that letter how anxious Gilfrid was. Now he understood, and he realized that Eunice must certainly have shown him something of her obdurate uncertainty, her inability to admit at once the rectitude of their decision. He hadn't succeeded in persuading her that her first duty was to obey her father. Where it would lead to, Heaven alone knew . . . Colonel Dampier had been reconciled to the thought of parting with Eunice, because he felt that her marriage would prove not only a brilliant but a very happy one. He liked Gilfrid so much that he could surrender his daughter to him without a qualm. All that he had been able to ascertain of him had only confirmed his view that he was worthy of her—was high-principled, honorable, intelligent. He had not dwelt so much upon the worldly aspect of the marriage, but he could not be blind to it. And now they were face to face with a menace that imperiled his child's future happiness.

Eunice went up to her room and sent away her maid as soon as possible. She wanted to be alone.

The night was warm, and, putting on a thin, loose wrapper, she lay down on a sofa near the open window. It was a close, still August night, and the stars were very brilliant, unusually so for London. The sky was cloudless above the confused silhouettes of clustered roofs. A faint stir of distant traffic was conveyed not unmusically to her ear.

She was unhappy, and the remembrance of her father's words stabbed her. The whole world seemed to be in a strange state of confusion and pain. She had wounded her father and Gilfrid, these two people who supremely loved her. They didn't seem to understand how deeply her mother's unhappy situation affected her. They asked her to stand aside and behave as if Lady Mirton didn't exist. They appealed to her love, her loyalty, her honor, and all the time she was tormented by the conviction that they were both wrong. Something —her conscience, perhaps—assured her of this. She knew that Gilfrid would never allow their marriage to be deferred in order that she might go for a few weeks to be with her mother. And Lady Mirton needed her. Eunice rose at last and moved restlessly up and down the room . . .

Suddenly an idea occurred to her. She would go down to Brighton to-morrow and see Mrs. Parmeter. It needed perhaps a woman's judgment to settle this thing aright. So far, she had not thought about consulting Julian; now she felt that if she could only see him he would be able to straighten out matters for her. When she had come to this decision the clouds seemed to lift a little. It was true that she had not seen Mrs. Parmeter and Julian for many years, but she had never quite lost touch with them. She wanted to taste again that unforgotten atmosphere of her old home.

On the following morning she came down to an early breakfast with her hat on.

"Papa—I'm going down to Brighton to see the Parmeters. You know I've never been and they have so often asked me. You don't mind, do you?"

"No, my dear—I've often thought you ought to go." It did not occur to him to connect this sudden decision with the problem of her mother. "You won't be late?"

"No—there's a train at six if I don't catch an earlier one. That'll bring me back in time for dinner."

She felt relieved that he neither questioned her nor made any reference to yesterday's happenings.

"Remember me to them all," he said. "I imagine they will want to hear about your engagement. Is Geoffrey at home now?"

"I'm not sure," she said. "But it's Mrs. Parmeter I want to see."

He noticed that she ate very little and swallowed her coffee hastily. Then she went up to him and kissed him, saying:

"I must go or I shall miss my train."

He watched her as she gathered up her gloves and little bag and went out of the room.

CHAPTER XLI

THEY came face to face with each other on the windy Front, and in that moment of swift yet dubious recognition it would have been hard to tell with whom the first advantage lay. Because they were neither of them quite sure—although at the same time so profoundly and emotionally convinced—they hesitated to put their belief to the final and daring test. Julian would have probably passed her

by and then spent days and nights in futile regret, because he was so unlike Geoffrey, who always seized opportunity by the wings with his powerful hands. But Eunice, nothing daunted, ran the risk of making a mistake and stopped in front of him, saying eagerly:

"I'm sure you are Julian Parmeter. Don't please disappoint me by saying you are not!"

She held up her small flushed face, and the shining eyes took him back the best part of a decade, blotting out the interval with a fine indifference to all the momentous things it held. For nothing to him, now as then, mattered very much (on the human plane, which is often such an awkward resting-place for us mortals) except his own people and Eunice. And Eunice passionately mattered! His answer was to grasp her hand in his, and they stood there facing each other, children again, amid the idling August crowds of aimless people, some of whom even paused to watch with naïve curiosity the little scene.

"Of course I'm Julian. And of course you're Eunice! I really knew you, only I wasn't sure . . . Oh, Eunice—how perfectly splendid!" He wanted to take her hand again, to assure himself that she was really there and not a beautiful ghost masquerading as Eunice the beloved. Were his feet really planted on the solid asphalt? Suddenly he was sensible of the eyes watching them. "We can't stay here. Where shall we go? Of course you must come to lunch—but it's early." He looked about him in the old vague way.

"The pier—" suggested Eunice. "It'll be windy, but I don't mind that. And I know you don't. I remember the song you used to say that the wind sang to you—in the pine-trees and on the sea." Her face was all soft and glowing.

"Oh, you haven't forgotten, then?" he said, still feeling as if he were in some strange, fantastic dream.

He must be alone with her, before he could take her back to see his mother. He must hear something of what those years of separation had hidden from his knowledge. She must lift the curtain. His eyes were aflame as if with some new fire, his pale face was eager and animated under the dark thatch of hair. He was still so much, so very much, the boy she remembered.

"Have *you* forgotten?" she parried.

"Oh, I'm still as incapable of forgetting as ever," he acknowledged with a smile that lit up his somber countenance and made him really look like the Julian she used to know.

"And now I don't envy you any more for your splendid memory," she said; "I shall pity you. It so often hurts to remember."

And again it seemed to him she was the child Eunice—that adorable, wonderful child—seeking sympathy from the queer, shy boy who had cared for her with such dogged devotion. That fact had come to her with wiser years, and she wondered sometimes if time had taught him, too, to realize something of the grown-up quality of that past sentiment. Only, it mustn't be reconstituted! . . . Not on his side and certainly not on hers. It would be so fatally easy, she felt, looking at him now, to make him profoundly miserable as she had made him a thousand times in the old nursery days. But there was this knowledge to teach her mercy—she could never offend him—had never offended him past his beautiful and bountiful forgiveness. That was where the tragedy had lain for him. She walked now in very subdued fashion by his side toward the west pier, her face a little grave from the serious,

comforting thoughts the sight of him had awakened.

It was the wind, perhaps, with its tang of salt, the strong, keen fresh air after the heat of London, that made her feel so wonderfully alive, her pulses racing, her eyes aflame with soft light.

They paid their twopences and passed through the revolving barriers on to the pier.

The wind was blowing up for a storm, and every moment the sea was growing rougher. It was not fierce nor tragic in its violence to-day, full of deep menace and warning as it so often is on the South Coast; but it was in a gay, hoydenish mood, sparkling in the sunshine. Its colors were beautiful—indigo, emerald, and a deep peacock blue, crowned by tossing crests of foam. Eunice walked steadily, her slight form scarcely swaying. Julian stole quick, furtive looks at her. She was charmingly dressed in a very simple dark-blue serge dress and a straw hat with a green wing. Everything about her was as dainty as ever. She harmonized so well with the colors of the sea and with the blue and grey and silver of the sky. Her dark hair was well under control, scarcely a curl escaped from its place. It was wonderful how he was able now to reconstruct the past and see themselves two children, again walking across the boarded surface of the pier, drinking in the great gusts of salt air, and playing at hide-and-seek to the disgust and annoyance of elderly persons who were reading novels and newspapers in sheltered corners.

Ahead of him, of course, there were bad moments. She would tell him—she must tell him—all there was to tell of her engagement to Gilfrid Eliot. As if it mattered! They had all these glorious, wind-swept, sea-encircled hours before them. *Who knows but the world may end to-night?* He felt as reckless of the future as Browning's immor-

tal lover. These beautiful magic hours together. . . . Who ever called Brighton a banal place? It was the very home of romance!

They found an unoccupied seat at the very end of the pier, close to the steps, most of which were nearly under water to-day. They could see the green waves moving vertiginously beneath the pier, deep, and with a treacherous false calm. They sat facing the Channel, the strong wind blowing in their faces. But whatever song it had sung in the past to Julian, it was singing a new and strange and very thrilling one to-day.

"You're not cold?" he said. It seemed natural to move a little closer to her, as if to shield her from the full brunt of the gale.

"No, I'm simply loving it. You're sure it doesn't bore you?"

"Bore me!" He mocked at the suggestion.

She thought to herself: "How happy he looks. He never used to look so happy." Aloud she said: "I'm going to begin to talk—to tell you things—when we've got used to this—this—" She paused.

"Happiness?" he filled in the gap, amazed at his own temerity.

"Should you really call it that?" She bent dark, grave eyes upon him.

"I think so," he answered.

"But I've got a lot to tell you—to ask you. Odd, worrying things, Julian. I came down to Brighton chiefly to ask your advice."

"Did you? You were coming to see me? But of course you were."

"Yes, I was on my way to your house. If you had been away I should have asked Mrs. Parmeter —to advise me."

"Let's hear what it is," he said.

"My mother's husband is dead," she said suddenly.

"Oh, is that all? But I knew it—we saw it in the paper."

"But it isn't all, Ju. It's only the little beginning. She has been unhappy for a long time—Sir Chandos wasn't kind to her, and his three sons always hated her. And she's been left very badly off and now she seems to want me to help her."

"You haven't seen her, surely?" he said. He had always pictured Lady Mirton as finally removed from her daughter's ken and sphere. It had often been a relief to him to feel that Eunice had not been at grips with that kind of influence.

"Yes, she came a few days ago. I was alone, then Gilfrid came in. He was angry, I think. You see, he had told me before that I must never have anything to do with her when I was married. Perhaps he was afraid of something of the kind. But now it isn't easy for me to agree to that condition."

"You mean—you want to see her?" But when he had said the words he felt how impossible it would be for Eunice to learn to care for her mother now.

"Oh, you don't understand. She's terribly altered, Ju—she's dreadful to look at, all dyed and painted and very fat. And I felt I hated her—that I didn't want her near me. But that doesn't alter the fact that I'm her child and that I ought at least to try to help her. Only they won't let me."

"I think, then, you've no choice," said Julian. He was beginning to realize Gilfrid, his dominating will, his decisions from which there was apparently no appeal.

"*No* choice? When I must choose as soon as possible between the two?" she cried with a touch of impatience.

"Between the two?" He felt extraordinarily

helpless, not daring to put the true explanation upon her words.

"Between Gilfrid—and my mother," she said.

It was the first time she had expressed the fact to any one, and as she spoke she turned away a little so that he should not see her face.

He was too stupefied almost to speak. All he could get out was a blunt:

"You mean—it'll come to this—you'll have to give *him* up?"

"Of course. That is, if he persists in making this condition. I've got to find out what's right—what's my duty. It's there I thought you'd be able to help me." Although she was very grave, there was nothing tragic about her, and what struck him most of all was the complete absence of any kind of emotion in her manner of discussing the critical situation in which she found herself. "I want your advice, Julian. You used to be so good at giving it. And I did take it—very often—though I hated you at the time!"

They both laughed.

"I mustn't risk making you hate me now," he said with a smile.

"I don't think you'd be able to do that," she said very quietly, looking straight before her at the boisterous, tumbling waves heaving under that unsettled, beautiful sky.

His heart beat fiercely as he listened to the words. Oh, she hadn't forgotten, and he had been a fool not to go and see her long ago! He had let the golden hours slip by till another had stepped in and carried off the prize he did not know how to hold.

"I don't see how I can advise you," he said emphatically. "It is a question for your own heart. I don't see myself how Lady Mirton can expect you to make such tremendous sacrifices."

"She wants care and kindness—to make up to her for all she's suffered. I feel that she has been punished. I don't know if it would be right to marry when my marriage would mean deserting her."

"She found no difficulty, if you remember, in deserting *you!*" he told her with a touch of bitterness.

"You shouldn't say that—it isn't like you, Ju."

"I'm sorry. But I remember too well all she made you suffer."

"All the more reason why I shouldn't hesitate."

"And your promise to Eliot?" he felt compelled to remind her.

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you seem to put aside his claim so lightly."

"And you think I'm doing wrong in putting it aside?"

She turned to him as she spoke, the old lightning-flash in her eyes that were dark and stormy now as the sea.

Julian fell back sullenly on a reiterated: "Don't ask me. I simply can't advise you."

"Oh, and I counted on you so to clear up the difficulty!" she cried impatiently. "You used to settle all my difficulties for me!"

"But, my dear Eunice—your difficulties of six years ago!"

"They seemed just as difficult to me."

"You didn't," and his face broke into one of his rare, appealing smiles, "always accept my miserable solutions, did you?"

"You'd find me different now. If you'd only try to help——"

"It isn't that I won't. It is—if you'll try to believe me—that I can't."

"You think I ought to set my mother aside and marry Gilfrid?"

"I never said so."

"No, but you implied it. You're just like papa—you'd rather anything than that I should go to my mother."

Julian was silent, aware of how infinitely he would prefer for her the latter less irrevocable alternative. But it was not for him, who would have everything, perhaps, to gain by Gilfrid's loss, to say so. He was suddenly aware amid the painful confusion of his own thoughts how impossible—nay, how dishonorable—it would be if he were to tell her what was in his heart.

Out there on the pier it was growing perceptibly colder. There was no sun now, for great purple wracks of storm-cloud had traveled up from the southwest and obscured it. The wind had increased in violence, and a change had come over the sea. It had lost its gay, rough, hoydenish aspect, and was thundering with fury against the beach. A wave more adventurous than the rest broke upon the pier, and flung a shower of stinging spray in their faces. Julian sprang up immediately.

"We must go. You'll get wet through."

He linked his arm in hers, supporting her, for the wind smote them with such violence she could hardly keep her feet.

On their way back to the road he found courage to say:

"Why don't you put off your marriage and try living with Lady Mirton for a few weeks? Then if it didn't answer——"

She shook her head. "It would mean a definite break with Gilfrid. He has made up his mind that I'm not to have anything to do with her. I must either give in, or else break off my engagement."

How she reminded him of the old Eunice—the restive cuckoo in their nest.

They left the pier, walking toward Brunswick Terrace in the teeth of a strong southwesterly gale. The crowd on the Front had thinned perceptibly, and a few big drops of rain were beginning to disperse the remaining stragglers.

Julian let himself into the house with his latch-key, and led the way up to the drawing-room, where his mother was sitting.

"Eunice is here, mother," he said.

Eunice ran forward into those welcoming arms.

"Dear Mrs. Parmeter—I feel as if I'd come home—" she said. She was all flushed and smiling.

"I'm so glad to see you, Eunice dear. You must stay to luncheon. I wonder if I should have known you?"

"Julian knew me—and I knew him," said Eunice.

Julian stood there watching the little scene with shining satisfied eyes. He had a strange longing to go up to her and tell her that now she had come he could never, never let her go again. She was part of his life, part of his home; she had her own place there, and like a lovely prodigal child she could always claim her inalienable right to return and remain as long as she liked, forever, indeed, if she so chose. He knew that the house had never been the same to him since the day when he had come back from school to find her gone.

She was looking radiant now; that cold, chilled aspect she had had toward the end of their stay on the pier had left her, and she was less colorless, while her eyes were excitedly on fire. He was glad to see that she knew no strangeness with his mother; she was friendly, tender, at her ease, as if she had indeed been her own daughter.

Mrs. Parmeter said presently: "Geoffrey used to tell us about you. He always enjoyed going to see you when he was in town."

"Yes, I think he liked coming. Where is Geoff?"

"He's staying with friends. He'll be back tomorrow—he will be sorry to miss you."

"I'm sorry to have missed him too. But it was really you—and Julian—whom I wanted to see."

Now she began to explain matters to Mrs. Parmeter. At the end she said almost resentfully:

"And Ju refuses to advise me!"

Mrs. Parmeter, with all her quick intuition where Julian was concerned, saw how impossible it would have been for him to advise her. She had seldom seen him look as he did now, beautiful and alive with a kind of tremulous animation, as if he had been thawed by some exquisite human touch. It was as if the sudden coming of Eunice had dissolved all the hard places in his heart.

"I don't think any one could advise you, dear. But it isn't reasonable to ask the young to make a very great sacrifice of love and happiness." She looked earnestly at Eunice as she spoke.

"You mustn't emphasize the sacrifice," said Eunice, in so low a tone that the words never reached Julian, who had moved a little apart from them.

"She can't care for him," thought Mrs. Parmeter. There was no one to tell her how recently Eunice had acquired this knowledge for herself. An hour ago on Brighton Pier? But the links that held her were forged long ago in the Borghese Gardens in Rome, when Julian had put his book into his pocket and slipped off his seat to join her and Geoffrey.

Mrs. Parmeter said quickly: "Then if there's any doubt, go to your mother. At least that isn't irrevocable." She was thinking of Julian, her words were actually inspired by a wish to help him, to speak the words which he was bound almost in honor not to utter. She was certain from the look in his somber eyes that this meeting, so apparently

simple, was yet imbued with a deep meaning for him, had been for him a passionate experience, reviving perhaps all his old childish adoration for the girl who in her smiting beauty had come back into his life.

"If I do that it'll mean so much else," she said softly.

But Mrs. Parmeter had no clue to these mysterious words.

In the evening Julian took her to the station to see her off to London. It was raining still, and the wind was blowing in fierce, spasmodic gusts. The sea was running high; they could hear it thundering on the beach.

On the way he said to her, almost coldly:

"Well, do you think it's helped you at all coming here to-day?"

"It would have helped me more if you had told me what was my duty," she answered.

"You are the only judge," he said in a controlled voice. "I am the last man to advise you."

"I think it will end in my going to my mother," she said at last.

He was surprised out of all reticence.

"You're really serious in this idea of giving up your marriage?"

"Yes," she said, in a low, strangled tone.

There was silence. Suddenly she turned to him.

"Shall I tell you something I've never told to a soul before? Can you keep a secret? But of course —you always could."

"Tell me," he said.

"Almost from the first day—even when I was feeling really happy—I felt that something wasn't all right. You see, I liked Gilfrid very much—enough to assure myself that I loved him. He *made*

me feel like that—he loved me so much. No one had ever loved me like that before. It was only when I was alone that I felt as if I oughtn't to have let it happen. It was too great a change from all I had known. Not only that he was very rich, and papa and I are only just comfortably off—but because that life of his had no connection with all the things that had helped to make me. More than that, I saw it was capable of separating me from them forever."

"What things, Eunice, what things?" he said in a voice that vibrated with an emotion he could now no longer conceal.

"The greatest of them all was the Catholic Church. I felt as if I had refused something that was offered to me, and that instead I had taken something almost—worthless. You see, I had always thought that some day when I was old enough to choose I should become a Catholic. And last spring Geoffrey gave me some books. I read them and they reminded me of our old talks in the schoolroom. I began to think that God had let me spend all those years here when I was a child in order that I might learn to be a Catholic. And Gilfrid—though I did like him, did care for him—seemed to take me further and further away."

He was silent. It was impossible to answer her. Her low, unemotional tone conveyed to him an impression of sincerity that illuminated the whole situation. She had always had doubts. But she would have gone on with this marriage in spite of them had not Lady Mirton intervened.

They reached the station and he saw her into the train. As she bent her head out of the window she said to him in a low tone:

"Good-by, Julian, pray for me.

He smiled up at her.

"Always—always—all my life," he said, and then turned and walked abruptly away.

CHAPTER XLII

WHEN Julian reached the house that evening after taking Eunice to the station he found that Geoffrey had returned unexpectedly. He often did that when perhaps the party proved to be not to his liking or when the weather was wet in the country. He was apt to get bored and restless when deprived of the games for which he had purposely paid the visit. Julian had always felt a pleasurable thrill on those former occasions when this had happened, but to-night—he did not quite know why—the news of Geoffrey's return jarred a little upon him. Perhaps he had wanted to spend the evening in quiet work; perhaps he had hoped to talk about Eunice's wonderful visit to his mother alone. But in any case he felt that Geoffrey had unintentionally disturbed his plans.

Geoffrey had arrived very soon after they had started for the station, and he was astonished when he heard that Eunice had lunched with them. Mrs. Parmeter did not tell him about Julian's meeting with her on the Front; it did not seem necessary to go into details. She was always very careful not to tell Geoffrey anything about his brother that might hurt or annoy Julian.

She was astonished because Geoffrey received the news with a frown, as if it had affected him disagreeably. Suddenly he burst out with sudden anger:

"Why did she come? Why can't she keep away? Why doesn't she leave him alone?"

He seemed to be pitying his brother as if some *Belle Dame sans merci* "had him in thrall." Geof-

frey so rarely showed anger or spoke in this vehement way that Mrs. Parmeter was distressed.

"Leave him alone? Why, what do you mean, Geoff? She *has* left him alone all these years."

"Yes. And now when it's too late—as far as he's concerned—she comes back to unsettle him. Why did she come to-day?"

"It is a long story," said Mrs. Parmeter, "but now that Sir Chandos is dead, Lady Mirton is left alone and very badly off. She wants Eunice to help her—perhaps to live with her. Of course, Mr. Eliot won't hear of it, and Colonel Dampier is against it too. I think she came to talk over the matter with us."

"She had far better have stayed away." Geoffrey's fair face was clouded. He felt as deeply irritated with Eunice as he had done in the old days when they were children and Julian's devotion had manifested itself disproportionately. And he was angry, too, with Julian.

He was in his room when he heard Julian come in and mount up the last flight to the attic that had once been Mr. Parmeter's study. When his mother was not working there he preferred to use it now instead of the old school-room, which was too full of memories of Eunice. He had switched on the light and had taken out some fresh sheets of paper when the door opened and Geoffrey came into the room. He had decided that the moment had come for him to speak to Julian seriously about Eunice, and at the same time to try to rouse him from that curious apathetic attitude toward life. He had been worse than ever since he had heard the news of Eunice's approaching marriage, and had shut himself up more than usual in this room, which had seen two generations of poets wrestling with the torments of creative energy.

Julian's face was very pale and his eyes were burning with a steady, somber fire that made them look enormous under the level black brows. His hair was slightly disarranged by the wind, and one dark lock strayed over his forehead. And his face wore a rapt look not so much of happiness as of a deep interior joy. That look irritated Geoffrey, who burst out:

"Mother tells me Eunice has been here." There was anger in his voice and Julian looked up quickly, amazed. It was very unlike Geoffrey to interrupt him when he was working up here, and his entrance this evening was less welcome than usual, because Julian desired to be alone with his thoughts, which circled like flocks of happy birds about Eunice.

"Yes," he said quietly. And instantly his face froze and became pale and masklike. Not even Geoffrey should ever know what Eunice's coming had meant to him.

He thought he must have made a mistake—that his ears had not heard aright—when Geoffrey spoke again.

"I have come to talk to you about her!"

"Yes?" said Julian. He laid down his pen and pushed the sheets of paper from him. All the time in his thoughts he was tracing the one word "Eunice" on the paper before him. It was the loveliest word to write.

"To beg you," continued Geoffrey rudely, "not to go on making an ass of yourself about this girl, who never has cared and never will care twopence about you!"

Julian did not speak. He was still so astonished at the suddenness of the attack that he could not yet believe in its actuality. It did not seem real, just as for the first moment an unexpected declaration of love or sudden expression of unsuspected enmity never seems quite real.

"I don't want to quarrel with you, Ju," continued Geoffrey, more softly. "I know you will say it isn't any business of mine. But I want you to leave your world of shadows and come out into the real world, where the sun shines and the winds sweep through, and play a man's part among men! You shut yourself up in a dream world, where a false picture of Eunice reigns as queen. It's an imaginary vision—she isn't in the least like what you picture her to be, any more than Petrarch's lady was like Laura. You are wasting all your best years—the years of your splendid youth—pursuing a phantom that you are pleased to call Eunice. She's not a bit like that really—you can take my word for it. She's a very modern girl full of charm, utterly spoiled, *rather* pretty in a fanciful kind of way, and she knows which side her bread's buttered on. She's going to marry Gilfrid, not in the least because she cares for him, but because he's out and out the richest and most eligible of all the young men who hang around her. She's a successful, brilliant woman, and she's no more like the little girl who used to get us into scrapes than you are!"

"Why did you come up here to tell me this?" said Julian. His whole being seemed to be permeated with a slow, dull, red-hot anger.

"I want to save you from your own dreams. Because you don't talk about it you think we don't know what's going on in your mind. It's not too late for you to set about doing a man's work in the world. I'm ashamed when I think of you here, morbidly mourning or rejoicing over a girl you've hardly seen since you were fifteen. I tell you she wants nothing that you can give her, though no doubt you can feed her insatiable vanity as well as, if not better than, any one else. She'll like keeping you groveling at her feet."

It seemed to him that he must at all costs rouse Julian from that apathy of his. It was impossible that he should remain insensible under such a hurricane of abuse and contempt.

"Don't you suppose we know what makes you so queer and surly? It is because you're not living a sane, normal life. You are dreaming, and you forget that you're no longer a boy—you've the responsibilities of a man. If you don't realize this you'll drop out of the fight—you'll be worth nothing!"

Julian sat looking at Geoffrey in that stupefied way, almost as if he were hypnotized. Yes, a great deal of it was, of course, quite true. This dream of his was more real than anything else. He lived in the creator's world; its imaginative ecstasies and fervors thrilled him, and in the midst of its enchanting visions there moved a figure whom he called Eunice. She came into his work, into prose and verse alike. She made it live. She gave it all the poor value that it possessed. And Geoffrey had come to try to drive that elusive figure away. . . .

"I should never have said a word if you had gone to see her last spring, but you were content never to go near her for all these months. It wasn't a flesh-and-blood woman you wanted at all—I could have forgiven you that—but it was this silly shadow you were letting eat up your youth!"

But she was there, looking at him out of the shadows in the gathering gloom of the summer night. Her pale face, her dark hair, the details of her dress, were all drawn with a certain sharpness of outline. She was not more truly present than she had always been before that wonderful coming of hers. That had changed her outward aspect a little, giving it a new precision; but now the former aspect and the present one had merged into each other . . . and Geoffrey must not be allowed to chase her away. . . .

"You must see that you are throwing your life away. One can't exactly say you are going to the dogs, but there's a hopeless, rotten slackness about you that must tell on you in the end."

But Julian did not speak, and his silence became to Geoffrey unbearable; it was like going on hitting a person who never uttered a sound, and you could not tell whether he was hurt or not. Only that pale face and blazing, burning eyes confronted him.

He turned abruptly at last and went out of the room.

CHAPTER XLIII

"DEAR child, how late you are! I hope you're not wet—it's a vile night. You must be starving. I've told them to have dinner ready."

Eunice was struck afresh by her father's thoughtfulness, his unfailing solicitude. In spite of the strenuous work that filled so many hours of his day, he still found time in which to think of her, as if she were—as indeed she was—the principal end and object of his existence. She went up to him and kissed him almost with remorse at the thought that her decision, if carried out, would surely cause him suffering.

"Thanks so much—but I'm not really hungry. And it was lovely at Brighton. I saw Mrs. Parmeter—and Julian. Geoffrey wasn't there."

Her face had lost its look of puzzled anxiety, it was wonderfully softened, and her eyes glowed with a steady, subdued light. Her cheeks were still flushed from the flogging of the sea wind.

He looked at her with a curious tenderness. What a lovely young bride she was going to make! Gilfrid Eliot was lucky to win her. . . . At that

moment Eunice felt poignantly how dear she was to him. It seemed to her that she had never done anything to deserve this love; she saw herself careless and selfish, occupied with her own affairs, her own petty interests. Of course, she had tried to be a good daughter; it wasn't hard when he was so abundantly satisfied with such meager efforts.

They went into the dining-room, but Eunice ate little dinner. Beneath her outward calm she was conscious of a strange excitement. She felt a little fey. The visit to Brighton had straightened out the crooked path. No doubt there were evil moments ahead in which she would have to repair the wrong she had done to Gilfrid. There was smarting humiliation in the thought. She had mistaken her own heart; she had made herself believe that Julian had forgotten her.

Not that he cared for her now. Just a pale, shadowy reflection of the old devotion clung to him, making him tender toward her. If she could have seen him sometimes she could perhaps have taught him to love her. But now she was going away—she would never see him again. She would pass out of his life—out of all their lives.

She would not tell Colonel Dampier to-night. He had been so kind to her always that she shrank from hurting him. If he had been brutal or unkind or fussy, like so many fathers, she could the better have excused her action. But she could only remember always at his hands that beautiful, never-failing kindness.

Toward the end of dinner a telegram was brought to Eunice. It contained but a few words: *"Come to-morrow without fail. D. Mirton,"* and giving an address in West Kensington. Eunice scribbled a reply, *"Will come at 3.30. Eunice,"* and gave it to the waiting servant. This done, she turned to her father.

"It was from my mother," she said. "She wants me to go to see her to-morrow. You won't mind?"

"You know that I mind," he answered; "but I am not going to interfere with you, Eunice. When you are married, though, I think you will have to obey Gilfrid in this matter. He feels even more strongly about it than I do."

Although his voice was kind, it held something of sternness.

She said desperately:

"Something must be settled before I'm married. And it's better that I should go there than that she should come here, and run the risk of meeting Gilfrid again."

"Do you know," he said, "you are running a great risk of losing Gilfrid altogether?"

Eunice did not answer. Evidently the telegram had disturbed her. It seemed to come to her with something of the inexorability of fate. Something that was irresistible, changing her whole life.

"I am tired, I think I will go to bed," she said, almost as soon as dinner was over.

As he kissed her good-night he said:

"I hope you invited the Parmeters to come to your wedding?"

"I—I don't think I said anything about it," she confessed. "But of course—I am sure—Mrs. Parmeter will come if I ask her."

"And Julian?" he persisted. "Julian used to be such a friend of yours. One mustn't forget old friends, Eunice."

She looked at him gravely. Ah, if he only knew how impossible it had been to forget Julian, perhaps he would forgive her the more easily for all the pain she was going to bring upon him.

"Julian is such a recluse," she said lightly. "I don't suppose he's ever been to a wedding in his life.

But I am sure Geoffrey will represent the family quite adequately."

On the following afternoon Eunice took a taxi to the address her mother had given her. The house was one of a row, and very typical of certain unlovely districts of London. It was high and narrow, with two front windows on each story except on the ground floor, where the place of one was occupied by the front door. She rang the bell and dismissed the cab, and then waited about five minutes before a slatternly servant opened the door. A smell of stale cooking pervaded the house, mingled with a slight odor of escaping gas. The stairs were narrow and the carpet was worn through in places. The very fact that her mother should be reduced to such sordid surroundings gave Eunice the precise measure of her misfortunes. And she was not the woman to make the best of things. The girl was strongly reminded of the miserable weeks she had spent in lodgings near Victoria Station with her parents as a child.

It was evident, too, that Lady Mirton must be quite friendless, that she had no one who would take her in even for a few weeks. She had never made friends with women, alleging that their society bored her. She called them "cats" or "serpents" or "frumps," and never tried to propitiate them. There had been, it is true, the constant relays of young men with whom she had flirted until the inevitable estrangement supervened. But they had ceased after her second marriage. Sir Chandos was a domestic tyrant and permitted no relaxation of the kind. After his death she found herself completely alone and friendless.

Eunice discovered her now unoccupied and lying on the sofa. The table was littered with a collection

of miscellaneous articles, just as the one in those other lodgings had been. But prominent among the things to-day was a large, half-emptied brandy-bottle. There was a faint but disagreeable odor of spirits in the room. Eunice did not know why, but the sight of the bottle with the three stars glittering on its label seemed full of sinister import.

Lady Mirton raised her head slowly. She looked a little sleepy.

"So you've come, Eunice," she said. "I never thought they'd let you."

Eunice had always remembered her mother as neat in person, well if showily dressed. Now she had completely gone to pieces. Her hair was disheveled; her dress, though obviously quite new, needed brushing. There was something more than ever repellent about her to-day as she lay there, a bulky, obese figure in those untidy surroundings. Eunice shrank from her. She had never quite realized what living with her mother would mean, what sacrifices of comfort and orderliness it would necessarily entail. A strong revulsion of feeling came over her and her determination relaxed a little. She would go back to her father and tell him that he and Gilfrid were right. In contrast to the dreadful little scene before her the ordered beauty of Denscombe rose up before her eyes with a passionate appeal. Everything was waiting for her there, as well as a love which she had been tempted to treat lightly and set aside. She could not throw it away. All her youth cried out to forbid the sacrifice. She suddenly became aware that her mother was speaking in a sharp, querulous tone.

"Why don't you sit down? Why do you stand there staring? I suppose you think the room's untidy, but my maid left me to-day. I couldn't keep

her; besides, she was becoming a nuisance and wanted to be paid."

Eunice sat down near the window. It was closed, but it was the least stuffy place in the little room.

"Well, what have you done? What do you mean to do?"

"Is it really true that you wish me to come to live with you?" asked Eunice at last.

"I don't see how I'm to live alone. But of course it's useless to expect Mr. Eliot to put off the wedding on my account."

"No," said Eunice, "if I come to you it will mean I must break with him."

"Break off your engagement? Well, that would indeed be killing the goose with the golden eggs!" said Lady Mirton with a coarse laugh.

"There is no other way," said Eunice.

"You could help me much more if you had a rich husband," Lady Mirton reminded her.

"No, you are mistaken. I shouldn't be able to help you at all. Gilfrid says when we are married I am never to see you."

Lady Mirton's intelligence was not particularly bright this afternoon, a fact for which the brandy was largely responsible. But she could not quite fail to grasp the meaning of her daughter's words, and she believed that she had to deal with a weak little fool. If she persuaded Eunice to come to her she would not only separate her from Herbert Dampier—by which action Lady Mirton wished to inflict a salutary punishment upon him—but she would also be the means of robbing his adored child of her happiness.

"Of course, if you really have to choose between us I shall go to the wall as usual," she said.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Eunice; "you see,

it may be my duty to come to you. That's what I've got to find out."

"I never imagined you didn't care about Mr. Eliot," said Lady Mirton. "You meant to marry him for his money, then?"

Eunice was silent. It is possible that Gilfrid and all that he stood for her had never seemed so dear to her as they did at that moment, when she was trying to strengthen her determination to make a sacrifice of them.

"You are never likely to get such a chance as that again," said her mother.

"If I come to you," said Eunice, "I think I could persuade papa to give me the same allowance he was going to if I married. He has made up his mind to leave Onslow Square and take a small flat. But with what you have, it would be enough to live on if we were very economical. We shall be poor, of course."

"I don't see why you should make this sacrifice for me," said Lady Mirton, "and I expect when it comes to the point Mr. Eliot will prefer to pension me off."

"I couldn't let him do that," said Eunice, with decision. "Besides, even then you would be alone." She glanced involuntarily at the brandy-bottle.

"You're afraid I shall drink myself to death," said Lady Mirton, with that harsh, grating laugh which jarred Eunice's nerves so terribly. "Well, it's more than probable. All the same, I'd far rather you married him. When you are once married you can insist upon his giving me the money. Then we should neither of us be the loser."

To Eunice her attitude was inconceivable, and it forced her to realize what it would mean to live in daily contact with such a mind. It would be degrading, and in time perhaps it might little by little

change her own fastidious outlook. She was, after all, this woman's daughter. It was sad to think that any human being should so sink in the scale. All her surface refinement had been worn away; she had lost more than her honor.

"I have already explained to you that that would be impossible for me," said Eunice.

"You are absurd," said Lady Mirton; "you can know nothing of the world. Most families have relations that they pay to keep out of their sight. It is a very common compromise, and if this man is really in love with you he will look at it as I do. Oh, you needn't be afraid! A good allowance paid regularly and he'll never hear a word from me. You can tell him that!"

Eunice rose restlessly.

"We won't discuss that," she said in a final tone. "I must go now and in a few days I will tell you what has been settled."

"You'll be a fool if you break off your engagement," said Lady Mirton.

"I must talk to papa and—Gilfrid," said Eunice; "nothing can be arranged till I have seen them." She came toward her mother. "You do want me?" she said.

"Yes. I can't live as I am with no one to do anything for me. You can see for yourself how wretchedly uncomfortable it is here. And the landlady is a most impertinent woman."

"With what we have," said Eunice, "we could take a cottage in the country."

"A *what?*" said Lady Mirton, aghast.

"A cottage—in some quiet place. It's all we should be able to afford. But we could manage that and make it quite comfortable and pretty," said Eunice, hopefully.

"I hate being buried alive," said her mother; "it's

far nicer living in a town. You can't think how bored I was at Daunton in the winter. I'd much rather live in London."

"Oh, we couldn't possibly afford London," said Eunice hastily; "it would be out of the question."

"We can settle that afterward. You know I'm not taking this scheme of yours in the least seriously. You've still got Mr. Eliot to reckon with. Are you really going now, Eunice?"

"Yes, but I shall write or come very soon."

"You mustn't desert me, Eunice," and now Lady Mirton began to whimper; "you're all I've got in the world. You're my only child. If they persuade you to give me up I shall be quite alone." She began to cry weakly. "Give me a kiss, Eunice. What a cold-hearted girl you must be—you don't seem to care for any one!"

Eunice bent her head and kissed her on the forehead. She was thankful a few minutes later to find herself outside in the street, with the light and air of an August evening pouring into her face. Cold-hearted? She had the feeling that her heart was broken—that it couldn't hold any more pain. . . .

CHAPTER XLIV

GILFRID was back in London. He had called at Onslow Square on the afternoon of Eunice's visit to her mother and had been disappointed not to see her. But he left word that he would return after dinner, about nine o'clock. Eunice received this message when she returned. They had not seen each other for several days.

She was alone in the drawing-room when he came. They had had dinner rather earlier than usual, for

Colonel Dampier also had an appointment that evening. She felt a little nervous, a little apprehensive, about the approaching interview. She was not even quite sure of her own courage.

"You got my message?" said Gilfrid. "I told them to say I should come."

"Yes, I expected you," said Eunice.

"We have hardly seen each other lately." There was a note of reproach in his voice. "I suppose I mustn't complain, but you did give up a whole day to the Parmeters, didn't you? In another month let us hope we shall be always together."

Eunice was silent. She was afraid to speak, afraid to tell him of the dilemma in which she was placed. She felt that he would not make it easy for her. His allusion to the Parmeters had astonished her. She had no idea how jealous he was of that old influence.

"I was going to ask you," she said timidly, "if you would mind very much waiting—a few months."

"Waiting? What for?"

"For our marriage to take place."

"What do you mean? Of course I should mind more than anything else in the world! What put such a capricious idea as that into your head?" His tone, half angry and half jocular, was by no means propitiatory.

"It is on account of my mother," said Eunice, with an effort. "She is passing through a very bad time and I don't dare leave her alone. She wants my help and I feel that I ought to give it to her." She raised her eyes, very dark and serious-looking, to his astonished, aggrieved face.

"Do you mean you wish to go to live with your mother?" he asked in an incredulous voice. "From my very slight acquaintance with Lady Mirton it does not seem possible! But it is interesting to

know that you can consider her claims before mine for even five minutes!"

"She wants me very much," said Eunice. "She is quite alone—she has no one to do anything for her."

"Your father will never allow it. He is as much opposed to your having anything to do with her as I am. She is not at all a fit person for you to associate with!" he said almost with violence.

"Yes, I am sorry to go against papa," she admitted.

"And do I count for nothing?" he demanded.

"You count for a great deal. But I must not think of my own happiness or comfort."

She thought of the stuffy little airless room; the odor of spirits; the half-emptied brandy-bottle lending an added demoralization to the scene; and the haggard, painted, querulous woman sitting there in the midst of that sordid environment demanding money to keep her quiet.

"I feel it's my duty," she went on. "I can't leave her in that desperate, desolate state. It wouldn't be kind—or right."

"So you prefer to let her come between us? You wish to make her the excuse for postponing our marriage indefinitely? Do you suppose she'll be less able to look after herself in six months'—in a year's —time?" Gilfrid had turned very white; he seemed to see Eunice slipping from him, beyond the reach of his love, of his care. And he loved her at that moment more passionately than ever before. Yet was it possible to believe still, in the face of this so monstrous determination of hers, that she had ever really cared for him at all?

"I can not think of any other plan," she said.

"Why can't we take a house somewhere for her and pay a companion to be with her? Won't she

be satisfied with anything less than this appalling sacrifice of us both? I'll give you carte blanche to make all the arrangements—anything to please her."

It would have accorded perfectly with Lady Mirton's own views on the subject, but she could not possibly tell him that.

"It's very kind of you, Gilfrid; but there are reasons why I am sure I ought to go to her, at least for a time."

He burst out angrily: "She's no right to accept it. She has no right to anything you can offer her! She has forfeited all right to be considered by you at all! Your father ought to prevent you from making such a hideous mess of your life. And your promise to me? What of that, Eunice? It is hardly more than six weeks ago since you made it! Darling—" he took her hand and his voice softened suddenly—"I can't let you do it! You don't know what it means—to join your life to hers—to go about the world as Lady Mirton's daughter. Eunice, give up this mad idea. Let us be married as soon as possible. Let me go to see her and make some arrangement for her——"

"Oh no, no, I couldn't let you," she said, aware how readily Lady Mirton would agree to any proposition that should secure her own comfortable independence. "I shouldn't be happy about her—if she were quite alone."

He had a last card to play, but even now he hesitated to use it.

"You could not bear such a life for a single day. Perhaps I know more about her than you do."

"What do you know?" she faltered.

"I know, setting aside all other things, that she has a certain failing which makes it impossible for her to be a fitting companion for you."

Eunice's heart sank. So it was true, this terrible thing which that afternoon she had dimly and reluctantly suspected. And with Lady Mirton it was perhaps no new departure, since Gilfrid was already aware of it. It was not only the temporary result of her grief and desolation; it was something that might even have ruined the peace of Daunton for years past. Gilfrid must have learned of it through Dicky Mirton. Eunice's heart turned sick and cold within her as she realized that her mother was a prey to this degrading vice.

Gilfrid's mind had wandered off to other things; he was hardly aware of her silence that followed his own impetuous words. He was thinking it would have been bad enough to have had Lady Mirton as a mother-in-law, even while she had still been living at Daunton under the shelter of her husband's name. But to have her living alone in mean fashion, disreputable and degraded, would be a thousand times worse. He told himself that in this fact lay the final proof, if any were needed, of his love for Eunice. It was only right that he should, however, insist upon his wife's dissociating herself completely from her mother. It was the least he could ask, and surely she ought to be willing to comply. He had always meant to marry some one with a perfectly clean and honorable family record. And now to thwart all his schemes this deplorable figure of the *vieille coquette* had arisen, threatening to destroy not only their peace but their very marriage.

"I am sorry," Eunice said at last in a cold little voice that sounded faint and far-off, as if she were speaking in a dream. "But that seems to make it even more necessary that I should go to her. And if I am doing wrong—as you seem to think—I shall be the one to suffer."

"Do not let us discuss it any more," he said. "I can't give you up to her for even six months—no, not for six days! You mustn't put me on one side for Lady Mirton, who has no claim on you at all. You can't be allowed to make the sacrifice she is asking of you."

"Then that means we shall have to say good-by to each other, Gilfrid. There is no other way out."

He was thunderstruck at her words.

"No, no," he said. "I'm not going to let you go. I shall keep you to your promise. You will thank me afterward. You're not to trample on our love like this!"

"Gilfrid, don't make it so hard for me."

She had turned abruptly away from him, and he could hear the sound of her sobbing.

"You mean by this that you have never loved me?" he said angrily; "you are making this the excuse for breaking off our engagement?"

They stood facing each other, and she shrank a little before the angry look in his eyes. His temper for the moment had mastered him.

"You wish to end it?" he said, moving a step nearer to her.

"If that is the only way in which I can go to my mother now, I must say yes."

There was a long pause. Gilfrid realized that all his entreaties had availed nothing.

"I understand," he said bitterly, "that you have ceased to care for me, if indeed you ever cared for me at all." His flaming eyes swept the slight, shrinking form in front of him. He flung at her that ultimate reproach, which had risen to his lips and would not be gainsaid: *"I might have known that Lady Mirton's daughter would not be true to her word."*

CHAPTER XLV

WITH the tears scalding and blistering her eyes, Eunice went up to her own room. She felt as if she had deliberately murdered love, the splendid love full of the first ardor of youth, that Gilfrid had given her. She was certain that he had gone away forever. She had trampled on their love, as he had told her, killing it so that henceforward there could only be bitterness, perhaps hatred, between them. And she had been very happy. In spite of those transitory scruples of conscience her engagement had brought her nothing but an almost perfect happiness, shared by her father. Gilfrid saw her now as faithless and disloyal, the daughter of Lady Mirton and as false as her mother; he could never trust her again. Who, indeed, could ever trust her again? It was as Lady Mirton's daughter that she would appear henceforth to the world, her lot bound up in that depraved, ignominious life that belonged to her mother. And thus, little by little, the measure of her own sacrifice became apparent to her. She would not in that hour think of Julian. He was a vague, shadowy figure standing afar off; he did not love her, though he kept the memory of her in his heart with a certain tenderness. He had never sought her out; perhaps she would never see him again. Even his old power of advising her, of seeing clearly across her difficulties, had left him. She was no longer the wilful, passionate little girl he had loved with a brother's tenderness.

She was still sitting there when there was a light tap at the door and Colonel Dampier came into the room. She could see by his face that he knew. Perhaps he had deferred his engagement that evening to listen to Gilfrid's pitiful story. He looked grave, a little stern. She rose and went toward him.

"My dear child," he said anxiously; "surely Gilfrid is making a dreadful mistake. He tells me that you have broken off your engagement to him."

"Yes, it's quite true, papa; it's the only way that sets me free to go to my mother." Her voice was quite cold and controlled; she might have been discussing the affairs of a third person.

"You must let me put matters right between you. I am sure you both care for each other very much. The poor boy seemed perfectly heartbroken. I met him in the hall just as I was going out. I persuaded him to tell me."

"You can't do anything, papa. It is all quite over between us. I have settled to go to my mother. She needs me—if anything happened to her, I should feel responsible."

She felt then, more than ever before, her duty toward this soul who had sought help of her—an immortal soul that but for her help might seek its own destruction. She was looking at the matter with that old teaching of Julian's in her heart. It seemed to her the only thing in the world, of immense and primary importance. Everything—her own happiness, her marriage, Gilfrid, her father, Julian—was slipping away from her into the shadows of the world she was leaving. In the future there would only be Lady Mirton. The dreadful desolation of it all seemed to approach her heart already, chilling it.

"This is folly, Eunice. You could never stay there a week! And then you will come back to find that you've forfeited all your happiness for a woman who isn't worth the least part of it!" His eyes were fixed upon her face. He was thinking how suddenly frail she looked, almost drooping, as if the scene with Gilfrid had weakened and exhausted her. She aroused his pity almost as much as his resentment.

"Let me beg you, my darling child, to give up this mad notion. Don't throw away the love you have won. It's a precious gift, Eunice; it doesn't come to us all, and to very few of us does it come more than once." He had so pictured her a happy wife, perhaps a happy mother, and in all the world he felt he could not have found a son-in-law more dear to his heart than Gilfrid Eliot.

"Your mother isn't worth it—you'll find that out when perhaps it's too late."

"Papa, I must try. I'm sure that she needs me—that I can help her."

"She'll only want you as long as her humor lasts. Then she'll turn you away. Eunice, my dear, don't do it, don't do it!"

He felt as Gilfrid had felt, utterly powerless before this indomitable obstinacy of hers. Well, let her try it! She could always return home if the experiment failed, as it was bound to fail. It might be that that intimate bond between herself and Gilfrid would never be renewed. His hurt had gone too deep; love and pride were alike wounded; he felt keenly the humiliating injury she had imposed upon him. She could never perhaps repair that wrong.

"You do not mean to go yet?" he said, staring at a half-opened trunk that stood on the floor and into which she had already placed some of her possessions. "You mustn't do anything in a hurry."

"I am going to-morrow," said Eunice. She put her arms round his neck. "Papa, you must forgive me. I must seem so false and hateful to both you and Gilfrid."

"Never hateful to me," said the colonel, gathering her close to him. "Always my own little girl. My dear, quixotic, wrong-headed, wilful little girl."

He felt her tears falling on his face. So for the

second time Lady Mirton had brought ruin upon his life, pitilessly withering and blighting all his fair and beautiful hopes. Once she had struck at him through his honor, now she struck through his love for his child.

"You must come to see me whenever you can—whenever you like," he told her.

"Yes," she answered, "but perhaps I shall ask you not to tell any one where I am. I think it would be best for a time to keep it quite secret."

He said gently: "That shall be as you wish, my dear."

Oh, he had planted and tended his vineyard, and built a wall about it and guarded it with assiduous care; yet even so the enemy had broken in, trampling upon it, devastating it. . . .

That was the last night she was destined to spend under his roof for many months to come. Even then he found it difficult to believe that there would be any permanence in the arrangement between mother and daughter. He still believed that Eunice would come hurrying home, unable to bear the position she had chosen for herself. And if what Gilfrid had told him were true, surely there was actually danger in letting her go to this woman, who had shown her in the past so little kindness, so much cruel harshness.

CHAPTER XLVI

WHEN Julian Parmeter read in the morning paper that Eunice Dampier's marriage to Gilfrid Eliot would not take place he knew that she must have chosen to go to her mother. Even while she was still wavering and he had remained

dumb by her side, unable to counsel her, he had felt that this would be her choice. He did not write to her, for he knew that she would certainly pass through at first a time of very bitter unhappiness. In her own way she must certainly have loved Gilfrid; as his wife she would perhaps have been extremely happy in the manner of numberless women who have missed the best without realizing it and who would certainly not exchange their lot for any other.

He thought a great deal about Eunice in those first days of autumn. He let his imprisoned thoughts escape now to the joyous contemplation of her, repressing them no more, as he had so resolutely done when she was the promised wife of another man. He had soon made up his little quarrel with Geoffrey, who had murmured an apology for his too plain speaking, which Julian gladly accepted. It hurt him, as it had always done, to be at variance with his brother.

All through the autumn he went on carefully and diligently with his work, and before Christmas had finished part of a new novel. He had left Oxford without taking his degree, which was a source of disappointment to his mother; but he intended to go in seriously for literary work, and wished for a greater freedom and leisure in which to accomplish this. Besides, it had now been settled that Geoffrey was to go with his regiment to India early in the year, and he did not wish to leave his mother quite alone. The prospect of this parting was a pain to them all.

The first news of the Dampiers came—as was to be expected—through Geoffrey, who spent a few days in London after Christmas. He had not seen Colonel Dampier, but he had dined with the Eliots, and had heard through them that Eunice had van-

ished, and that no one quite knew where she was. Her father had given up the house in Onslow Square and was living in a tiny flat in Westminster. When he came home Geoffrey repeated Lady Eliot's words to his mother and Julian: "No one knows in the least where Eunice is, except that she's with that dreadful mother of hers. But by all accounts it won't be for long—she'll drink herself to death one of these days."

It was the first that Mrs. Parmeter and Julian had heard of this aspect of the tragedy, and it caused Julian especially a sickening little thrill of horror to think that Eunice should be exposed to this added calamity.

Geoffrey proceeded with a touch of indignation: "Colonel Dampier ought never to have allowed it! He should have insisted upon her marrying Eliot. They were devoted to each other, and it was up to him to frustrate Lady Mirton's vicious determination to get hold of her daughter."

Mrs. Parmeter felt vaguely guilty, remembering her own advice to Eunice. And after all it had not been of any use. Julian had shown no desire to step into the place left empty by Gilfrid. Yet she had been convinced of the flaw in that engagement; she was not prepared to accept Geoffrey's declaration of their mutual devotion. There had been something wanting, and she had wished to save Eunice from a more disastrous and permanent unhappiness.

"I suppose she felt that it was her duty," she murmured.

Geoffrey had seen Gilfrid, changed and bitter beyond belief. He had been told of Colonel Dampier's forlorn, lonely aspect. And to him Eunice was doubly guilty. He felt an angry impatience

with the woman who had not been able to discern between gold and dross.

"And it *was* perhaps her duty," said Julian suddenly, raising his eyes and looking at Geoffrey.

Geoffrey met the look and smiled ironically.

"You still think she's so perfect?"

Julian did not answer. But in his thoughts—in his heart—what a fair and beautiful perfection was hers!

"For if you do, I don't!" said Geoffrey. "I agree with Lady Eliot that she is false and faithless. They hit the nail on the head when they said you couldn't expect anything else from Lady Mirton's daughter!"

A white look of anger came into Julian's face; for a moment his eyes flashed fire. But his self-control was an iron quality, trained and steeled through years of self-discipline. He only wondered a little at his brother's fierce indignation. He was a friend of Gilfrid's, but not a very intimate one. Since the engagement had been broken off he had stayed once or twice at Denscombe for the week-end, and had met Dicky Mirton there, a young man with whom he had not much in common but who had assured him of his joy that Gilfrid was no longer going to marry "that woman's daughter."

Indeed, Gilfrid did not lack sympathizers who were ready to tell him, had he allowed it, that he was well out of the tangle. He could have read this dubious congratulation in many faces, but it only increased the savageness of his pain. It could not console him, for he still obstinately loved Eunice; but it did serve to strengthen those teasing little doubts which, from the first, prudence had whispered in his ear. That his love had always been able to surmount such sordid obstacles had assured him of its strength and vitality. But now that he knew people were saying, "like mother, like daughter,"

he began to feel ashamed of something vehement and imprudent in that passionate love that would have swept all those obstacles aside.

But Geoffrey's words had made Julian suddenly anxious about Eunice. He seemed to visualize her present life, spent wholly, perhaps, in the task of trying to reclaim her mother from those final depths of degradation. He felt that she must be ill-equipped for such painful, harrowing work. Till then he had pictured her bringing a love and sunshine into that unhappy life to which it must long have been a stranger. Now he saw the scene filled with tragic menace.

So far he had taken no steps to see her, feeling that she would certainly later on write either to him or to his mother. Now it seemed imperative that he should make some move. He must know more of her. A new look of resolution came into his face. It had not occurred to him that Eunice might be in a position to need a man's help. He forgave Geoffrey for his angry sarcasm, because after all he had brought this new knowledge to him.

Geoffrey sailed for India early in the new year, and a few days after his departure Julian went to London to see Colonel Dampier. He said nothing to his mother, but she guessed that it was in connection with Eunice that he had gone.

Although he was now in his twenty-third year, Julian looked younger. He was of medium height, but his figure was so slight and boyish and his pale clean-shaven face so youthful that he looked barely twenty. He had none of the personal beauty of Geoffrey, but he had an interesting face and his eyes often arrested people's attention. One saw a likeness in him to both his parents, whereas Geoffrey did not resemble either of them.

Julian found Colonel Dampier alone in his flat

one wintry January evening. They had not met for so many years that he had to tell the colonel who he was.

"And I've come to ask you for news of Eunice," he said simply; "you see, we have heard nothing of her for so long. We hoped that she would write."

"She very seldom writes," said Colonel Dampier, who since his daughter's departure looked much older. "I'm afraid I can't tell you a great deal about her. She used to come here sometimes in the early days, but now they have gone abroad."

"Abroad?" Julian was startled. He had not expected somehow to hear that she had left England. "Where is she?" he asked.

"Ah, that's just what I'm afraid I mustn't tell you," said Colonel Dampier. "She asked me to keep it—as far as possible—a secret."

Julian could hardly realize the measure of his own disappointment. She was abroad—she did not wish her whereabouts to be known—she had vanished to some unknown place whither perhaps he could never trace her.

"You're not anxious about her? You think she's all right?" he asked.

"She writes—when she does write—cheerfully enough. But she tells me very little. I gather, though, that she means to stick to it from some mistaken sense of duty. God knows I'd give the world to have her back with me—I miss her more than it's possible to say. If I knew she were happy I could bear it, but I know that her present life can only be a long martyrdom for her."

He had been secretly astonished to see Julian. If it had been Geoffrey . . . He had always suspected Geoffrey of being a little in love with Eunice. He shouldn't have minded that except for the religious difference, supposing that Eliot had not come

forward. That had knocked a good many suppositions on the head. This slight, delicate-looking boy with the pale face and burning eyes wasn't the man that Geoffrey was.

"You're not living in London?" he asked.

"No, I still live at Brighton with my mother."

"Got work there?"

"Yes, my own work. I write."

"Ah, like your father," said Colonel Dampier, who had something of the active man's contempt for sedentary occupations. "But it's an idle sort of life for a young man like yourself. Why didn't you try the army like your brother?"

"I'm afraid I shouldn't have been of much use," said Julian, smiling. "Geoffrey's gone to India now—he sailed last week. My mother is glad to keep one of us with her." He went on speaking, but all the time he was longing to hear more of Eunice. "Don't you think," he broke out suddenly, "that you might make an exception and tell me where Eunice is? I can't believe she'd mind my knowing. We are such old friends, though we haven't seen much of each other since we were children."

"I can ask her if you like, but candidly I believe she'd rather make no exceptions. You see, it's a pretty tough job she's undertaken; and I dare say she feels that the fewer who know about it the better. My only fear is that she may break down and never tell me. I'm not happy about her, Parmeter, and that's the truth."

He wondered why Gilfrid had never come to him on a similar errand, with such a request on his lips. It would have been difficult—nay, impossible—for him to refuse Gilfrid. There had been something a little ambiguous to him about his complete disappearance. Young men didn't always take their dismissals so completely for granted. It had been a

disappointment to him that Gilfrid had never sought him out.

Julian did not stay very long. He felt that his mission had been a failure. It was not an easy matter to discover Eunice's whereabouts, since she was obviously determined to remain hidden, even, as it would seem, from himself. She had evidently made no exception in his favor when she had requested her father to keep her address a secret. But there was still an odd strain of obstinacy in Julian, and it came into his mind that he would go and seek for her. In Italy, perhaps, in some great city where she could remain hidden. Living thus under the soiled aegis of Lady Mirton, she would shrink from people. Perhaps he might find her in Rome or Florence, where living was not dear and there was sunshine.

Two days later he astonished Mrs. Parmeter by saying:

"Mother, I wish you'd come to Italy this spring. Why shouldn't we start quite soon?"

"But darling Ju, what put such an idea into your head?" she asked.

Julian laughed.

"This cold, wet weather, for one thing. I should enjoy a little southern sunshine and so would you."

"But you said the other day you wouldn't stir till your book was finished."

"Oh, my book can wait," he assured her.

"But won't you really tell me why?" she said.

"Ah, don't ask me. I've got an ulterior reason, of course. But isn't it better that you shouldn't know?"

"Something to do with Eunice," was her reflection, something that could never, of course, be uttered aloud. But always she was inclined to trace anything mysterious or inexplicable in his conduct

to that source. She had learned to do that long ago, and it seemed to her almost wonderful that he should cling with so pathetic a lack of encouragement to his early, ineffaceable ideal. It was the result of his poet's nature, but surely never had love-affair thriven upon such meager sustenance.

All he had told her of his interview with Colonel Dampier was that he hadn't been able to give him Eunice's address. She didn't wish it to be known. Had he now discovered some clue that made him determine to undertake this sudden expedition? Did he mean to seek her? That pale, boyish, sphinx-like face gave her no answer to these questions.

"Of course we will go to Italy," she said briskly, "and perhaps a change of scene will be good for the book, too. I think sometimes you stay too much at home." She had a firm faith in all experiences, agreeable or the reverse, being transmutable into "copy." Julian would be able to "use" his journey, even if nothing else came of it. There was always for the writer this secondary consolation!

She was more than ever surprised to find that he had made exact plans for the trip, settling everything except the actual date of their departure from Brighton. They were to go first to Florence, she discovered. Did he think the City of Flowers would be rich in clues? He had never seen it since he was a small boy, when they had spent a few days there on their way back from Rome, and even his excellent memory could only produce a hazy vision of the grouping of the ruby-colored Duomo with Giotto's lily-tower standing in eternal loveliness beside it. But he was apparently waiting for a letter before he could fix upon the date of their leaving England. It came—although she did not know it—about a week later, and was from Colonel Dampier,

saying he was very sorry but Eunice refused to give him the desired permission to tell her whereabouts to Julian. It was a disappointment, but somehow he had expected it. In this hour of trial she did not want curious onlookers. There was something of shame mixed up in her desire for complete seclusion even from old friends, even from himself.

There was nothing to wait for and Mrs. Parmeter and Julian left England about the middle of January. They arrived a few days later in Florence, and Julian took a small furnished apartment in an old palace, high up and overlooking the Arno and full of sun. They met many friends among both residents and visitors, and Julian appeared in a new light and was quite sociable. He lunched and dined out with wonderful frequency, and, as far as his mother could see, had put all literary work aside. She was now secretly convinced that he had come abroad in search of Eunice, and was perpetually on the lookout for clues by which he might discover her. Hence his readiness to meet people, even strangers. They had been in Florence for two tranquil months when she received her "marching orders." He came in one day with bright face and shining eyes and said:

"Mother, shall you mind if we give this up and go on to Rome next week?"

To tell the truth, she was disappointed. She loved Florence and she would have liked to linger there a little longer, to see the spring come once more to those scenes in all her lavish beauty. The soft brilliant green of the Val d'Arno, the red and yellow roses garlanding ancient walls and loggias, the honey-scented blossoms of wistaria, the pale clusters of Banksian roses, the gay anemones flaming on the hillside where the olive-trees twinkled in the sun . . . It seemed tantalizing to leave it in those first days of

March, when its glories were beginning to show themselves in a thousand exquisite tentative ways.

"But of course we will go next week," she said, smiling at his eagerness. "I shall love to see Rome again."

Julian appeared quite satisfied, and they left Florence early one morning, arriving at Rome in the afternoon. Again she found he had planned everything with a thoughtful view to her comfort. A hotel would be best for them in Rome, he said, and he had taken rooms in one in the higher quarter near the Borghese Gardens.

Even Mrs. Parmeter felt a certain degree of excitement. Julian would surely never have given up Florence and moved so suddenly to Rome unless he had been in possession of a very strong clue. Perhaps, indeed, he had certain knowledge. . . With her old power of reading his thoughts she saw clearly that to find Eunice was the objective toward which he was passionately struggling; all the moves of his present pilgrimage were directed to that end. He made her think of a young Crusader who has bound up some deep spiritual purpose with his quest.

In all ways Rome gave abundantly to Julian. He had such happy memories of it that for the first few weeks he abandoned himself to sight-seeing as if to verify them all. More than ever the city seemed to him like some mighty palimpsest, upon which nearly all the great periods of history have written their imperishable record. He sat for hours on the Pincio, sometimes alone and sometimes with his mother, gazing across the clustered roofs, the creamy-white and honey-colored buildings, the towers and domes, toward the mighty dome of St. Peter's drawn in delicate tones of mauve and silver grey against the strong blue of the spring sky. Or

he would climb Monte Mario and look back upon the splendid city lying outspread below him, with the grey sea of the Campagna flowing, as it were, in waves to the feet of the distant mountains.

There was hardly a corner of Rome that did not seem intensely and poignantly familiar to him, and it was all inseparably associated in his mind with the thought of Eunice. In the Borghese Gardens, where the Judas-trees were flaunting their brilliant purple boughs, and especially in the shady charming Giardino del Lago, he could almost see that fleet childish form running to and fro under the high avenue of branching ilex-trees, a patch of pallor in the gloom. The very scent of the spring flowers confirmed all his old memories. He knew exactly the spot where later on he would drink in the fragrance of the blossoming acacias and the voluptuous, heavy odor of the magnolias. He could see himself sitting apart with a book close to the lake with the little temple embowered in spring verdure at the far end. He could almost hear her crisp voice saying: "Who is that boy? He wasn't here yesterday," and Geoffrey answering with childish lisp, "It's my twin-brother, Julian." He could visualize her so perfectly; her little face flushed with exercise, the shining eyes, the dark, thick tangle of almost black curls blowing back from her forehead; he could see her advancing toward his mother in the shadowy gloom of the old Roman palace holding up a bouquet of spring flowers when it had seemed to his childish imagination that she resembled a figure offering sacrifices on an ancient Roman sarcophagus. Often even as a child he had made these classic comparisons because of the sculpture with which his mind had been early saturated in Rome, and from a habit he had of comparing things that were often widely different in order to discover what points

they had in common. Often he saw people momentarily poised as statues are poised, rather in an attitude of arrested movement than in one of absolute passivity. And often still when he looked at the wonderful grouping of an ancient marble frieze or panel it was with the secret wish to discern some figure that had a resemblance to Eunice Dampier.

Now, when he saw the wonders of Rome once more, he found that although the years had blurred the remembrance of them for him, destroying perhaps their first sharp precision of outline and detail, they did not come to him in the least as novelties; they held a definite place, albeit dimmed and confused, in the storehouse of his memory. He thought if he ever had children of his own he would wish to give them the rich and varied experience of beautiful things and places which he had himself had in the years when memory is perhaps most retentive. It was something upon which one could build the later exact knowledge of art and beauty, just as one's early faith was the foundation-stone of all one's future and spiritual experiences. He felt that it was impossible to be too generous or too careful about those first formative influences, when the child's mind receives impressions just as soft wax does or as a highly sensitized photographic plate. Children differed, as he and Geoffrey had done, and be believed that his brother remembered nothing of Rome except the mere fact that he had once lived there. But at least all should have an equal chance.

When he said something of this to Mrs. Parmeter she was struck by the way he had built up his life, so to speak brick upon brick, its various stages linked together by the steady growth in spirituality that gave him so much detachment from a world whose beauties he loved. Had he chosen to be a monk in a strictly enclosed Order, that serene de-

tachment of his would have served him well, and there, in constant contemplation within the precincts of his cell, the spiritual side of him, always so strong and deep, would have seen a broad, rich development. But he had not chosen that way of beautiful, bitter perfection, although sometimes in his early manhood she had believed that he would. Now he was a man, seeking with a kind of selfless passion the woman he loved, fearing that she might be unhappy, that she might need the help for which she was too proud to ask, or even that she might be perilously placed. But Mrs. Parmeter did not question him on this point, and sometimes she wondered whether he realized and now took for granted that intuitive knowledge she had of what was passing in his mind.

Rome clutched him spiritually, almost with violence, reviving the old devout attitude, fanning, as it were, to passion that deep mysticism of his. He was out early at Mass on those cold spring mornings and often it was late when he returned for the first cup of coffee. It was Lent, and he frequently went on foot to the church where was that day's Lenten station. Sometimes it would be in a distant basilica outside the old walls. But he would come back faintly flushed from the exercise and with a strange light in his eyes, as if the spiritual experience had been close and intimate and uplifting, with fruits of almost inconceivable joy.

CHAPTER XLVII

JULIAN went early one morning to the Church of Santa Maria Maggiore, and as he entered the great Liberian basilica the pale shafts of sunshine touched with fragile illumination the subdued rich

gold of the ancient mosaics. In those chill marble spaces flanked by the twin rows of "moonlight-colored" columns there was a faint, pervasive odor of incense. He saw the jewel-like marbles of the Borghese chapel, so rich in all its coloring and decoration. Something in the pallid aspect of the vast nave, in the delicate whiteness of the pillars that supported the gold-and-white ceiling, made him think of those legendary snows dedicated to Our Lady in remembrance of that ancient miracle. He went forward and entered the chapel of the Presepio. In the far corner there was a girl kneeling with bowed head and hidden face. He knelt down not far from her, as there was a seat unoccupied. It was not till after the commencement of Mass and he was standing up for the Gospel that he turned his head and saw suddenly that it was Eunice. She did not see him; her eyes were fixed upon the priest. The blood rushed to his face and his heart gave a great throb, and a few minutes passed before he was able to regain his customary recollectedness. Habit was strong in him and triumphed now; he did not look at her again. But he was aware of her nearness—not only physically but for the first time perhaps spiritually also, so that somewhere in the sealed background of his thoughts there was a great bar of light. . .

When he went up to the altar-rail to receive holy communion he felt rather than saw that Eunice was kneeling not far from him. He had an extraordinary sense then of the nearness of his soul to her soul, a something that hitherto had always been wanting and which now flooded his heart with a new joy. Julian felt as if this moment were sanctifying both his love and his quest. That they should have been restored to each other now in answer to all his prayers and in this sacred spot and at this holiest

moment of their Catholic life, seemed to show him that God had crowned the hope and purpose of his heart. He felt as if he were surrounded by an ambient golden light that floated over himself and Eunice. Yet he knew afterward that no real distraction had made his mind swerve from his deep mystical preoccupation. He was as a man transported and uplifted into some ultimate and intimate sanctuary, where the soul can rest in an immeasurable peace and from which all thoughts of earth are abruptly banished.

He went back to his seat and knelt down, his face hidden in his hands. He made a resolve that he would not shorten by the fraction of a second the time he was in the habit of devoting to his thanksgiving. If during that time Eunice should rise and go away, he would understand that God had willed it to happen thus. He did not know whether she had seen him, or whether, having seen him, she had recognized him. He made this resolution as a practical sign that he placed himself utterly under the discipline of the divine will.

And yet, with what eloquence of thanksgiving did he pray that morning—a prayer rather affective than impetrative, full of a wordless gratitude, because he knew now that during the months of their separation Eunice had become a Catholic. Perhaps this grace had been vouchsafed to her as a reward for her great sacrifice. But he knew that far back the seeds of it had been sown during that life of hers with them at Brighton. She had not been able when the time came to turn her back definitely upon those early formative influences. They had held her with slight but strong chains.

A clock struck outside. He must be going. Already it was getting late. But Eunice had not moved, she was still kneeling there, her face hidden

in those pale folded hands, a devout, motionless figure whom he dared not disturb. He took out his rosary, and began to recite the five sorrowful mysteries, because it was always easiest for him to meditate upon the Passion. The successive scenes were so imprinted upon his mind by a process of constant and detailed meditation that he sometimes felt as if he had seen them happening and that he evoked a memorized rather than an imagined picture. He had just finished and was kneeling down to say the *Salve Regina* when he felt a slight stir near him, and Eunice rose to her feet. She went away and he followed her more slowly. They were both outside on the steps when he came up to her. Their eyes met and he could not tell by any expression of surprise in her face whether she had been unaware all the time of his proximity. It seemed to him that they might have arranged a meeting here, in this place, at this hour.

They passed down the steps in silence, going toward that abrupt hill that first climbs and then descends to climb once more to the Trinità dei Monti. It was a beautiful fresh morning, with something of mountain crispness in the rarefied air. The whole city looked as if it lay bathed in a cup of golden light filled to the brim and illuminating the pale houses and ancient palaces, the beautiful domes and towers, with an effect that was ethereal and almost magical. Julian did not speak. Eunice looked very grave; her expression was a little sad and anxious, as if she had a good deal to bear. He thought her of a surpassing beauty; and he knew that his heart could not hold any more love; as it was, he felt that it must almost break from the force of that love.

All his impressions of ner as a child and as a girl were gathered up into one beautiful and harmonious

whole, and the Eunice of his dreams was merged into this flesh-and-blood figure who stood beside him. He had no need to ask whether she loved him. It seemed borne in upon him with an almost fantastic energy of imagination that she must have been aware all the time of the prominent and ceaseless part she had played in his dreams, sleeping and waking, so that in reality he had never acutely suffered from the long separation from her. Did she not guess how often she had come, tantalizingly elusive, fragile, wonderful in her beauty?

"Why wouldn't you let me know where you were?" he asked. Those were the only words he could think of, and yet it was not in the least what he wished or intended to say.

"I couldn't bear that any one should know, even you." She looked at him. "Have you been long in Rome?"

"This is April. We have been here for six weeks," he said.

"Six weeks," she repeated.

"And you? When did you come?"

"In the autumn, as soon as I decided it was no use trying to live in England."

"I wonder that I have never seen you before."

"I never go anywhere. I leave my mother as little as possible."

He looked at her now with a tenderness that seemed to melt up and break for her the hardness, the difficulty, of her way.

"And so you have become a Catholic," he said quietly, and for the first time his voice was not quite steady. "Was that after you came to Rome?"

"Yes, I was received at a convent. The nuns were very kind to me. They seemed surprised that I knew so much. But you used to teach me, and I found I had forgotten so little. I had prayed for

some time past that if there was anything unselfish or worthy of reward in what I had done I might receive the gift of faith in return. I was received at Christmas—I made my first communion at Midnight Mass."

"So we were together," she heard him say almost more to himself than to her. He remembered how he had gone with his mother and Geoffrey to Midnight Mass in the church at Brighton and how his prayers for Eunice had been perhaps the most fervent he had ever offered for her.

"Yes, I thought—I hoped—it might be so," she said.

Presently he said: "Where do you live? We must see each other again very soon."

"Yes," she said.

"I am here with my mother. Perhaps you would rather come to see us?"

"No, I seldom go anywhere." Her face was perplexed. She had the feeling that there was no need for any secrecy or reserve between herself and Julian. Even the daily tragedy of her life could be unfolded before him without shame or humiliation. The old intimacy held them still with strong but invisible bonds. She had no exact knowledge of his feeling for her, as yet he had given it no utterance, but everything in his voice and look assured her that it had undergone no change.

"Then you would let me come?" he said hesitatingly.

"Yes. You—you wouldn't mind?"

"No," he answered. "I could only mind one thing—that you should shut me out."

"I can't shut you out," she said quietly. She had the old sense of being unutterably soothed by his presence, as if all jarring sounds and harsh voices were hushed; as if the world had become a beautiful,

smooth, silent place where nothing could hurt or terrify you.

She gave him the address. He knew the street—it was not far from the church they had just left.

"Perhaps one evening about six?" she said.

"This evening," he said; "do not let us wait beyond this evening. I have so much to say to you."

And yet as he spoke he knew that all he had to say to her could be summed up in three words, the most wonderful words in the world.

"I must go," she said.

"I will walk with you," said Julian. He kept close to her side as they descended the steps. Even at that comparatively early hour the sun had real warmth in it. His mind that seemed so full of Eunice was yet able to register little impressions on their way to her abode; he remembered especially a dark-eyed boy driving one of the primitive wooden carts, full of wine-barrels, in from the Campagna, his face shadowed by a blue umbrella-like tent that was opened above his head. The cart was drawn by a mule so gaily caparisoned with a quantity of scarlet woolen tassels that he looked almost like an animal decorated for some ancient sacrificial rite. Then a peach-tree shaking out soft pink and silver blossoms against the blue spring sky caught his attention; then an aged woman, tanned and incredibly wrinkled but rigidly upright, passed by carrying an enormous and heavy basket on her head. Outside a café a group of men were sitting drinking their early coffee and munching great slices of bread. He could hear the sustained animation of their talk, amiably, vociferously argumentative. A boy ran by, bare-legged and head uncovered, selling the morning newspapers. A fountain flung up showers of silver spray that glistened brilliantly like diamonds. There was a warm scent of burning wood mingling with

the odor of flowers. The air, invigorating as new wine, poured in from the sea and the mountains. It made Julian feel strangely energetic and alive.

Eunice stopped before an open door that led into a long passage, whose far end was lost in darkness.

"This is the house," she said, "and we are on the third floor. It is rather a climb. There is no name, but you will know it, Julian, because there is a green door."

She touched his hand lightly and then slipped away into the arched passage that seemed to lead into a mysterious world of cool dim shadows. He felt as if, somehow, it had all happened before, exactly like that, and as if he had always known she would take leave of him with just those words: *"You will know it, Julian, because there is a green door."*

He walked home on air. . . .

CHAPTER XLVIII

At first he did not tell his mother. Even to tell any one so dear as she was would, he felt, inevitably rob his romance of something of its fresh bloom. This evening, perhaps, before he started forth on his pilgrimage to the Esquiline hill, he would reveal it.

After he had left Eunice he went back reluctantly to the hotel, had his morning coffee in the little *salotto,* and then sallied forth again with his mother to look at some pictures. She was not able to do any fatiguing sight-seeing, for as she grew older she was less robust in health, but often she liked Julian to suggest some easy plan that would agreeably occupy an hour or two in the morning. On their

way home she would stop at a confectioner's to buy cakes for their tea, Julian standing by and helping her to choose them. Then they returned to the hotel for lunch and afterward she went to her room to rest a little while Julian sat writing in the *salotto*. In the afternoon they very frequently went out to tea, for they had many friends in Rome; but to-day they had no engagement of the kind. They had tea together and afterward Julian said:

"I am going out. I have an engagement at six."

His heart beat as he said the words. All of a sudden he wanted her to know, as if she must bless his errand. But she did not say, "Where are you going?" She was never curious about his engagements; she wanted him to feel as free is if she were not there. Inquisitive, worrying mothers made their children's lives a burden.

"You don't ask me where I'm going," he said.

Without his telling her she knew from the moment he said those words.

"Dear Julian, I am so glad," she said.

He stooped to kiss her, and felt how wonderful was the sympathy between them and with what delicacy she had kept it alive.

"You must pray for me—for us," said Julian softly, and then he went out of the room.

It was a dark spring evening, windy, with hurrying clouds that looked like eager pilgrims traveling rapidly toward some splendid goal. A few drops of chilly rain were falling, but Julian felt only the young vigor of spring in wind and rain. He walked quickly down the hill past the church of the Cappuccini to the Piazza Barberini, where the huge bulky form of Bernini's Triton was soused by the ceaseless spray of the fountain. The wind was so strong that it blew the spray across the piazza, darkening the cobblestones with its moisture. He turned

to the left and climbed up the steep street of the Quattro Fontane, and when he reached the summit of the hill he could see in the rapidly gathering gloom the twin towers and domes of Santa Maria Maggiore on the opposite hill. He went so quickly that it was not very long before he found himself standing in the arched passage that this morning had swallowed up Eunice from his sight. He hurried up the stairs and was almost breathless by the time he reached the green door. The landing was illuminated by a globe of feeble electric light, a mere thread of orange wire. He rang the bell and it was Eunice herself who opened the door. She was looking very pale, almost exhausted. He grasped her hand and felt that it was very cold, like that of a person who had been sitting still for a long time. She trod softly as she led the way down a tiny narrow passage, and he instinctively followed her example, so that they made very little sound.

"Mamma is asleep," she said, as they stood almost in darkness beside a closed door. "She is not very well to-day——" She gave Julian an appealing look, as if imploring him not to seek the cause of Lady Mirton's illness.

They went into a small *salotto*. A wood fire was burning in an open stove, and gave a certain air of comfort to the room, which was shabbily and meagerly furnished, and evidently served both as dining-room and sitting-room. A cupboard and a chest of drawers occupied the available space against the walls. There was a square table in the middle of the room upon which were books and papers. A sofa was drawn up near the fire, and there were one or two high chairs of antique pattern covered with faded red damask. Eunice's books, arranged on a couple of shelves, gave the place a certain homelike, occupied appearance.

She went across the room and quietly closed a door communicating with another room beyond.

"Will you sit here?" she said, and pointed to a chair near the fire.

She sat on the sofa and the firelight illuminated her face so that it looked luminously pale against the darkness of her hair, which she wore very plainly, its thick folds clinging close to her head. It gave her a distinguished individual look at a time when most women wore their hair arranged in an exaggerated Pompadour fashion.

Julian bent over and touched her hand.

"Dear Eunice, I have only one thing to say to you," he said. "I can tell you now because you are free. I love you."

She was very still and at first she did not look up, but he felt that she was being swayed by some deep and secret emotion. For years he had known that he should come to her with those words on his lips or else that he would never utter them to living woman. And now here, high up in this old Roman house, he was saying them to her.

"Do you love me, Eunice? Will you marry me?"

His heart seemed to stop beating while he waited for her reply.

She said at last: "You know I can't possibly marry while mamma is alive."

"No, I suppose not," he said.

"My first duty is to her."

"Couldn't you let me share that duty?" he asked.

"You don't know what you're saying, Julian," she said.

He was startled at the look, almost of terror, that had come into her eyes. She looked like a badly frightened child.

"But isn't that . . . all the more reason why you should have my help?" he said.

"I am not going to sacrifice you," she said.

"You haven't told me yet that you love me," he reminded her.

"But of course—you must know—" she said. "I've never really loved any one but you."

He got off his chair and came and knelt by her side so that his head was almost on a level with hers. He drew her close to him and his lips touched hers. They had not kissed each other since they were children. But they had the feeling now that they had never been separated.

She thought of Gilfrid's beautiful, tormenting presence that always, even when she was happiest with him, had made her unconsciously suffer. She had always known that if she married him she would have to make great sacrifice of certain very precious things, though all the world would have laughed at the idea. Now she was enfolded in a peace so great it was like a visible, tangible thing. They were perfectly happy. She had known that he was coming to tell her that he loved her, and even if they could not be married for years and years they would still love each other to the end. It was wonderful to be loved by Julian, and even the commonplace little room became rich and holy with love.

"You ought to have come back to me long ago," she said at last.

For in that case there would have been no mistakes, no hurried, reckless acceptance of the "half-gods."

"I had so little to offer you. I felt it would be wrong of me to take advantage of that old childish friendship until you had had a greater experience of life."

"And if I had married in the meantime? I so nearly married."

"I didn't realize until that day you came to Brighton that you weren't happy," he told her.

"You were going to stand aside?" she said.

"Believe me, Eunice, I wanted your happiness more than my own. It has always been like that with me. If you remember anything you must remember that."

Silence deepened after that in the little room. It was wonderful to sit there contemplating each other and their new-found happiness; they felt no need of words. The firelight played on both their faces and showed Julian's curiously set with deep burning eyes.

Suddenly a sound from the next room disturbed them. It was as if something heavy had fallen on the floor. Eunice sprang up and ran toward the door but, before she could reach it, it was opened from the other side and a figure lurched unsteadily into the room.

Julian had not seen Lady Mirton for many years, not indeed since the time when she was Mrs. Herbert Dampier, and he was certain that he should not have recognized her now if he had met her in the street. She had grown very stout and ungainly in figure; her face was heavy and coarsened and discolored, and the eyes—those haunting, grey, unquiet eyes—seemed to have dwindled in size, so that they peered cunningly from the mass of flesh. She was very untidy, wearing a loose woolen wrapper that exaggerated the bulkiness of her form, and her dyed hair was disheveled. The moral *dégringolade* had been accompanied, as is so often the case, by a physical one.

"Why, Eunice, who have you got here?" she cried in a loud, thick voice. "And why are you sitting in the dark?"

Eunice switched on the electric light.

"Mamma, it's Julian Parmeter," she said. She turned to Julian, who had advanced, holding out his hand to Lady Mirton, and whispered: "Oh, won't you go away? You see—how it is——"

"I am staying in Rome with my mother," said Julian, dropping Lady Mirton's hand; "it has been a great pleasure to see Eunice again. But now I am afraid it is time for me to go."

Lady Mirton sank down heavily upon the sofa and closed her eyes drowsily.

"Come again," she muttered thickly; "come whenever you like. Do Eunice good. I'm sure she must miss Mr. Eliot, though she doesn't say so."

Julian moved toward the door and Eunice followed him into the passage.

"I am sorry," she whispered; "I thought she was asleep. I left her asleep. She was all right then—she must have hidden it—I don't know how she gets it."

He was able to realize the hideous, degrading little tragedy that shadowed her young life. He longed to take her away into an innocent, untainted atmosphere.

"Oh, my darling," he said in a tone of anguish, putting out his arms and drawing her to him.

"You mustn't pity me," she said, smiling, and throwing back her head; "no one must pity me now."

"You must let me take you away or you must let me share this duty with you," he said. "Let me make it mine also, Eunice."

"Yours?" . . .

"I mean we could be married, and then I should have the right to help you. To help you, if possible, to *save* her."

"I must go back to her. Good-by, dear Julian."

She put up her face and he kissed her.

"Dear, dear Eunice," he said.

He went down the long twilit flights of stone steps and through the arched passage back into the street. The many voices of Rome were murmuring about him. The sky was quite clear now, the rain had ceased, there was a bright moon and some stars were shining.

"She must never be left alone like that," he said to himself; "it isn't safe for her."

When he had gone, Eunice persuaded her mother to go back to bed. Although she did not want to be disturbed, preferring to sleep where she was on the sofa, she at last agreed, and returned to her own room, assisted by Eunice, who, having no maid, waited on her hand and foot. Lady Mirton was already asleep when she left her, and she had apparently forgotten all about Julian's coming, since during the process of undressing she never once mentioned him.

Later Eunice went back to her seat by the fire. It had died down and she put on some fresh logs and then blew them into thin tongues of flame with a small pair of bellows, so that the room became cosy and warmed again. She was thinking of Julian and wishing that she had not been obliged to send him away quite so soon. She could not help contrasting his attitude with Gilfrid's. She had seen Gilfrid's face change when he saw Lady Mirton for the first time, with a sudden change that frightened her. His expression of horror seemed to reveal what was passing in his mind: "What have I done? I have been carried away by love. I ought never to have asked this woman's daughter to marry me." Eunice had been dreadfully conscious of what was passing in his mind. But when her mother came into the room this evening she had known that she could look without fear at Julian's face. This moment would be for him—as it had been for Gilfrid—the supreme

test of his avowed devotion, yet she had had no fear of its effect upon him, knowing that it could only consolidate and strengthen a sentiment that could never lessen while life was in him. All his thoughts had been for her. He had only begged for a share in the bitter burden, almost humbly, as if he were a suppliant for some favor at her hands. He had never urged her to leave this self-imposed task to others or to surrender its heavy obligations. Yet he had seen a far worse side of Lady Mirton than Gilfrid had ever done. He had seen her heavy and sodden with drink, scarcely able to articulate, barely conscious of what was going on around her. If anything could have driven him away or diminished that lifelong devotion of his, it must surely have been this horrible and degrading little episode. But he had thought only of her, of how he could help her; he had even without her telling him detected that secret, most intimate hope of hers, that of eventually saving and reclaiming her mother's soul.

Since she had become a Catholic, Eunice had felt no doubts as to her duty to her mother. It was a twofold one, touching spiritual as well as temporal needs. And in a sense she was learning to bear the trial supernaturally, as a cross to be taken up and renewed daily. But of late her courage had failed a little. Lady Mirton had grown worse, and she was sometimes more than Eunice had been able to manage alone, although on their slender income it was impossible to pay for an attendant to help her. Would it be possible to acquiesce in Julian's suggestion? Would it be right to sacrifice him—his youth—his peace? . . .

As she sat there, staring into the fire, it seemed to her that she could still feel his presence, his nearness.

CHAPTER XLIX

JULIAN and his mother dined together and afterward they went upstairs to the little yellow and white *salotto,* whose windows overlooked Rome. Because the night was chilly a wood fire had been lighted, and gave forth a pleasant, aromatic odor. The room looked gay this evening, for Mrs. Parmeter had arranged some large bunches of pink carnations in the Tuscan bowls.

She sat down and began to look at the English papers which had arrived that day. Julian stood with his back to the fire. Quite suddenly he said:

"I am going to marry Eunice."

She thought he had said the words less to inform her of the news than as an endeavor to assure himself of this astonishing truth.

"Are you? I am so glad, dear Julian. She has always seemed so much my own daughter." Mrs. Parmeter spoke in a very quiet voice. She was so glad for his sake, and yet she did not know how to tell him of her joy.

"We must be married very soon," said Julian. "As soon as it is possible after Easter."

"Yes," she said, "there is nothing to wait for. You can afford to marry. And you have known each other—cared for each other—so long."

"She has become a Catholic," said Julian, suddenly remembering that his mother was unaware of the fact.

Then he began to speak of Lady Mirton and of the episode of the afternoon.

"But will she leave her mother?" asked Mrs. Parmeter, beginning to realize that after all there might be difficulties.

"Oh, no, I should never ask her to do that. But I want to be allowed to take my share—to help her.

It's too heavy a burden for her alone, though she's wonderfully courageous."

"You two would make your home with Lady Mirton?"

"Yes," he said, "it's the only thing to do. If I can get Eunice to consent."

He relapsed into silence. Eunice's bright and brave look haunted him. There was in her work the very essence of sacrifice, undertaken for a definite spiritual end. Why had Gilfrid let her go? His old dull enmity toward Eliot stirred anew in his heart. Had he never known what a beautiful prize he had won? Had he been blind to its worth, dazzled only by that physical exterior? And what love had there been on her side? Some day she would perhaps explain that ambiguous episode to him.

He was there standing before the green door and waiting for admittance at the same hour on the following day. Eunice told him that Lady Mirton was in bed, she had not yet recovered from the effects of yesterday. It was not likely that this evening they would be interrupted. Julian began eagerly to speak of their marriage. It must take place immediately after Low Sunday, which would give them plenty of time to procure all the necessary documents from England. In the meantime he would look about for an apartment; he had heard of one in an old palace with lovely views over the city and the Alban hills. There was no need for them to go away from Rome if Eunice preferred to live there.

"I think I would rather stay here for the present," she said. "It's easier to give myself wholly to the task of looking after her. In England I have papa to think of, too, and that makes everything more complicated. I have written to him—I hope he will be pleased."

"I must write to him, too," said Julian. He had a feeling that Colonel Dampier would have preferred Geoffrey as a son-in-law; he had more sympathy with the active than with the contemplative nature.

His eagerness to have the right to help her touched her afresh. He was so utterly free from the egoism that had characterized Gilfrid, and she could see that he was hardly thinking of himself at all; he made her feel that she was the one thing that mattered. He was not to be frightened away; more than that, he could enter fully into the spirit of her sacrifice and see that it was necessary and inevitable. He would never think her action quixotic; to him it was simply the thing she had to do. One couldn't leave Lady Mirton to drag out her miserable and degraded existence alone and never lift a finger to help her, comforting oneself with the assurance that sooner or later she would drink herself to death. Eunice had been given a suretyship, and in her willing and zealous compliance her spiritual development had been rapid, as indeed it must always be when the divine will is implicitly obeyed along the path of self-sacrifice and self-immolation. That mystical co-operation had given a new depth to her character, had helped her even to bear the fierce physical strain.

"I think we had better tell mamma as soon as possible," said Eunice. "I want her to know. But I think you will have to tell her."

Julian agreed to this. He thought Lady Mirton could have no valid objection to the plan; it would be all to her advantage as far as exterior things were concerned. She would have more comforts, and she would have a maid as well as Eunice to attend to her.

The following day when he called he found Lady

Mirton sitting with her daughter, and after a few minutes Eunice withdrew, saying:

"Julian has something to tell you, mamma."

When Eunice had gone out of the room he said without further preliminary:

"Eunice wishes me to tell you that we are engaged to be married."

Lady Mirton looked at him with her cunning little grey eyes.

"She's always getting engaged," she said; "it's very unsettling."

Julian winced. "We intend to be married very soon," he said, "as soon after Easter as possible. In fact, in about three weeks' time."

"Does that mean she's going to leave me?"

Her voice was eager, as if she hoped for a speedy emancipation from the tyrannical surveillance of her daughter. And young Parmeter was a rich man, perhaps he would be more complaisant than Gilfrid Eliot had been and give her a proper allowance to live apart from them.

"Oh, no," said Julian, "we shall all live together, I hope."

Her face fell.

"I can manage very well alone," she said, "and you two will be far happier by yourselves without me. Eunice gets on my nerves. She means well, but she's too dictatorial. You'd far better take her back to England. If I have enough to live on that's all I care about. She wouldn't let Gilfrid Eliot arrange things like that, but you're an old friend. I am sure if you would suggest it that she would agree!"

"But I am not going to suggest it," said Julian; "that isn't our idea at all. And I should never consent to it even if Eunice did propose it. She has her duty to you." His tone was haughty and final.

"But I don't want her with me at all," whimpered Lady Mirton; "we aren't at all congenial to each other. We never were, even when she was a little girl. She's—too like her father!" she ended viciously.

"Well, I am afraid we shall have to ask you to make your home with us," said Julian, "even if the plan isn't quite to your liking."

"I'm little better than a prisoner here. I can't even go out without a—a keeper. Eunice doesn't allow me any liberty at all. She's worse than Chandos ever was—he used to go away sometimes."

Julian was silent for a moment, then said coldly: "Your health is not good, Lady Mirton. You need constant care."

"I suppose Eunice has been telling you lies about me!" she said angrily.

"No, I am judging simply by what I've seen."

"It's a great pity she didn't marry Gilfrid Eliot. Such a rich man and an only son and all that lovely property. I told her she'd never have such a chance again. And she was devoted to him, though I suppose she has told you she wasn't!"

He was annoyed with himself because her intemperate words had power to hurt him.

"It would have been a brilliant marriage for her. And she's an expensive person——"

"In any case, she's going to marry me," said Julian, patiently.

"Soon?"

"I told you. In about three weeks."

"I think you are very foolish," said Lady Mirton. Suddenly she began to cry. "It'll be dreadful with two of you against me."

"You must not think that. We shall not be against you. On the contrary, we shall do all we can to make you happy and comfortable."

"But you'll uphold Eunice in all her tyranny. You don't know how unkind she is. I suppose she thinks I wasn't kind to her when she was a child and now she's paying me back."

"You must never think that," he said sternly. "Eunice has been devoting herself all these past months to the care of you. And of course I shall uphold her when she is in the right."

"You have upset me very much. Will you go into the next room, please, and bring me some brandy?"

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind," said Julian.

His tone of authority had its effect upon her. She gave him a quick, cunning look.

"I suppose Eunice has been telling you that I drink? She's always slandered and traduced me. She's been a wicked daughter to me."

"I'm afraid it isn't a secret," said Julian quietly.

"Chandos's sons started the report. It's a vile slander, and Eunice knows it is!" She began to cry again. "I'm a miserable woman, and I haven't a friend in the world. Even my own daughter is against me."

"Lady Mirton," said Julian, "I have something to say to you. Will you listen?" He stood up in front of her and something in his tone made her raise her eyes to his face. He looked stern and purposeful, and there was something quietly resolute in his expression that kept her silent and attentive.

"I am going to help Eunice to save you," he said. "So far you have resisted all attempts to help you."

"To save me—to help me? What do you mean? You talk like the Salvation Army!"

But his words produced within her a sense of discomfort, of nervous apprehension.

"Do you never think of the time when you must

die? We Catholics pray every day that the hour of death may find us ready, *with burning lamps in our hands,"* said Julian.

"I wish you wouldn't come here and talk about death. I'm not at all likely to die. I'm only forty-five—that's quite young. You could never call forty-five old!"

"No age is exempt," said Julian. "I am only asking you to think sometimes of that hour—that day."

"Why, what difference can it make?"

"After death we are told there is the judgment," said Julian.

"Oh, I don't believe in hell and all that nonsense!"

He came a little nearer.

"Won't you help us?" he said. "Won't you try to give up this degrading habit? Believe me, it would not be difficult if you would only pray for strength. And the reward—the blessed freedom from the chains of it!" His eyes were shining.

Lady Mirton stirred restlessly beneath the gaze of those burning eyes. "Please go away and send Eunice to me," she said querulously. "I am tired—I can't talk to you any more." She leaned back in the chair and closed her eyes. "You're worse than that priest who came to see Eunice the other day. He said the same kind of things. You go and make love to Eunice and don't worry about my soul!"

Julian left the room and went in search of Eunice.

CHAPTER L

THERE was a sudden spell of bitterly cold weather in April just before Easter, and one day, on calling at their apartment, Julian was told by the Italian woman who opened the door to him that both Lady Mirton and her daughter were suffering

from influenza. She further assured him that he could not see either of them, and, greatly disturbed, he returned to the hotel. He was afraid to ask his mother to come to their assistance, fearing infection for her, but Mrs. Parmeter refused to listen to his arguments, and putting on her hat and coat prepared to sally forth at once.

"But I don't think you ought to go," said Julian, as they walked quickly down the Via Veneto.

"My dear, I'm not made of sugar. And if you will insist upon giving me a charming daughter like Eunice!"

His face cleared. "But I don't want to have you ill on my hands," he said.

They reached the house and were admitted. Julian waited in the little *salotto* while his mother went to Eunice's room, which was small and dark and quite sunless, with a dreary outlook over a courtyard. She found her lying flushed and feverish on the bed in a darkened room. Her eyes were swollen and painful and she could scarcely lift her head from the pillow.

"Do please go to mamma, Mrs. Parmeter. I feel so worried about her—this woman doesn't know anything and she's sure to give her all she asks for."

Half nervously Mrs. Parmeter went back to the *salotto* and after saying a word to Julian she opened the door into Lady Mirton's room. She found her sitting up in bed wearing a soiled flannel wrapper of indeterminate hue. Her dyed hair was all awry and contributed in a singular manner to her demoralized aspect.

The Italian woman who had come in to cook for them since their illness had naturally not ventured to disobey Lady Mirton when sent out for a bottle of brandy, and now in the absence of her daughter she was enjoying its contents unrestrictedly. She was

very excited, welcomed Mrs. Parmeter at first with a boisterous cordiality, and then began to weep over Eunice's malady.

When Mrs. Parmeter saw the hopeless confusion of the room her heart sank a little. It was very close and stuffy, for the window had been kept shut all day, and a sickly odor of stale spirits permeated the atmosphere. She thought of Julian, and for the first time perhaps she realized how strong his love for Eunice must be, since he was resolved to marry her and share with her the task of combating this sordid, tragic vice.

Lady Mirton very soon sank into a stupor that rapidly became a heavy slumber; her stertorous breathing was the only sound that was audible now in the little room. Mrs. Parmeter quietly set about restoring order, though this was no easy matter. She opened the window to allow the fresh, cold, spring air to pour into the room. In a little while her task was done and she returned to Eunice.

"I think you had better let me send a nun to nurse you both," she said; "you can't manage alone, and your mother needs great care."

"Oh, is she bad again?" said Eunice.

"Yes, but she's asleep now and quite quiet. I think she will sleep for some time."

Eunice broke down and began to cry. She was very weak, and all her high courage had for the moment left her.

"You really must have help," said Mrs. Parmeter.

"Yes, but won't it cost a great deal? I have so little left."

"Oh, I'll see to that. It shan't cost you anything at all. I must take care of you now for Julian's sake."

Julian was sent in search of a nun and about two hours later he came back to say that one would arrive very soon. Shortly afterward a nun belonging to an English nursing Order appeared, a young woman with a pale round face and very quiet grey eyes, a compressed mouth, and that controlled expression which professed Religious so often acquire.

Lady Mirton was raving all that night. She was like a demented woman. Neither Mrs. Parmeter nor Julian dared leave the house, but kept an all-night vigil in the little *salotto,* not knowing from moment to moment whether their help would be required. Early in the morning Julian went out to fetch the doctor and brought back some coffee for them all from a neighboring restaurant. It was not till the doctor had examined Lady Mirton that they even suspected that there was any danger. Surely she must often have weathered such storms before. But he told them that pneumonia had set in, and in her case there could be very little hope of recovery.

The day wore on. Sometimes Lady Mirton was delirious, torturing her hearers with her cries. Mrs. Parmeter was thankful that Eunice was still too ill to be able to leave her bed. But late in the afternoon a period of quiet intervened, and Lady Mirton fell into a profound sleep. She had been lying like that for some hours when she suddenly opened her eyes and said:

"Is Julian Parmeter there? Tell him to come."

Julian was sitting in the *salotto.* He had been spending those long hours of waiting in intermittent but fervent prayer. He was obliged to remain close at hand in case anything was needed. His mother went in and out of the two bedrooms; she was tireless in her ministrations.

She came now to fetch Julian.

"She is asking for you," she said.

As in a dream he went into Lady Mirton's room, now swept and garnished and restored to perfect order. What could she have to say to him? He approached the bed.

"I am here, Lady Mirton," he said gently.

She made a gesture of dismissal and the nun left the room. Julian came a little nearer.

"You wish to speak to me?" he said in a clear gentle voice.

"You were right the other day," she said in a hoarse tone. "I'm going to die."

"Perhaps you'll get better," he said quietly, laying his hand on hers; "perhaps God will spare you."

"To be a burden?" she said. "I'm only a burden. I've made a fearful mess of things. What do you suppose happens to people like me?" She raised restless, unquiet eyes to his face, and scrutinized him searchingly. "I asked that nun just now. She wanted to send for a priest. She thought, I suppose, that I was a Catholic too. I told her I wasn't one. What could a priest do for me now?"

"If you were a Catholic," he said, "he would hear your confession—give you absolution—and then perhaps you would receive the last sacraments."

"And what would be the use of that?" she asked almost in derision. But her eyes—as he came almost reluctantly to realize—were full of fear.

"I could not pretend to measure the use," he said. It was with an effort now he forced himself to speak. "Lady Mirton—you know what it says. God does not wish for the death of a sinner, and we are all sinners in His sight. He calls us all to Him through His Son—through His holy Church. He gives us all the means—not once, but a thousand times—to seek His pardon, to respond, to co-operate. If you will let me fetch a priest now he will tell you all this far better than I can."

"I am afraid—I am afraid," murmured the dying woman.

Julian slipped away and sent the nun back to her. Then he went out and hurriedly fetched Father Anthony, a Franciscan friar whom he knew slightly. Julian brought him back in a cab, this elderly man with a grey, austere face and penetrating eyes. He took him without delay into the sick-room.

"Lady Mirton, I have brought Father Anthony to see you."

She opened her eyes.

"I'm a coward. Julian's frightened me. I used never to be afraid of death. It's absurd to think of dying when I'm only forty-five!"

"Pax huic domui." Father Anthony's voice struck across the silence that followed her words. Julian answered: *"Et omnibus habitantibus in ea."*

He went into the little sitting-room and found himself alone there. He knelt down and began to pray, his face hidden in his hands. So much depended on the next half hour—the eternal destiny, perhaps, of an immortal soul. Julian had a very special devotion to the dying; always from his boyhood he had daily prayed for the purification in the Precious Blood of all souls who were that day to die. And it was never too late, thank God, to turn to Him for pardon. One could make a dying appeal, as the good thief Ditmas did upon the cross, with a heart full of faith and sorrow and love, knowing that it was never too late to seek the succor of those outstretched, everlasting, welcoming Arms. . . .

He knew that Lady Mirton was a woman who had sinned very deeply, and until now perhaps she had never known a second's real contrition. She had abandoned husband and child, she had been sinking more deeply every year into habits that led to the degradation of both soul and body. She had

been selfish, deceitful, violent; cruel to husband and child. . . . Now the end was rapidly approaching; she was intuitively aware that death was not far off, and the thought had produced within her a sudden terror. Would that terror lead her now to repentance—to contrition?

It was for this that Julian Parmeter prayed. . . .

Looking back he seemed to see the divine plan in all the common little things of life, and especially regulating all that concerned himself and Eunice. She was to come to them as a child, by some curious chance caprice of that woman who now lay dying in the next room, and she was to learn while still very young her first lessons in Catholic faith and practice. And though only a tiny seed had been sown, and although it had long lain in darkness and unfruitfulness, it had in the end matured and grown up into a living plant. They had given her things during those years at Brighton that she could not quite forget in all that busy, brilliant London life of hers that had so nearly ended for her in a marriage of perilous ambition. For she had never loved Gilfrid, as Julian could see now, in spite of that tormenting personal attraction they had had for each other. Julian found it hard sometimes to forgive Gilfrid the part he had played and his implacable attitude toward Lady Mirton. He might have hurt Eunice so much; it wasn't his fault that he had failed to hurt her at all. But the episode had no doubt sharply stimulated her to a review of her own life, its duties, its obligations, its spiritual needs. At least once in every lifetime the soul by God's grace sees itself clearly as in a mirror, in its stark actual relation to the eternal truth. And Eunice had been wonderful—as he saw now—in her instant response, her submission, even to the last ounce of self-sacrifice that had been demanded of her. Her youth—

the natural pleasures and joys of youth—a marriage that had promised so well and brilliantly—all these things had been poured out as libations. And, given her early training, it was natural that this spiritual renascence of hers should lead her—precipitately as it must have seemed to many—to the doors of the Catholic Church. That was where the training of her childhood could still profoundly influence her. And, because a conversion is seldom permitted to be solitary and sterile, she was going to accomplish, in some wonderful, unexplained way and acting as a poor little human instrument, the ultimate conversion of Lady Mirton. Julian saw it all as a completed pattern, inevitable and harmonious. A weak, erring soul, that had been a complete failure in all its natural and human relations, was turning now with feeble, uncertain gesture toward the throne of grace. It was coming with fear and trembling. Not with the immense, illimitable love of the saints, who at last approached a goal sought with lifelong devotion. Lady Mirton was tortured by the fear that scourges to repentance. It was only in the very face of death that she seemed to become aware of the heavy burden of sin, and of the awful prospect of bearing that burden unshriven into a future unknown, eternal world. Hers was the cry of the drowning amid the rush of dark icy waters. . . .

But Eunice's work could not fail. He tried to assure himself of this. Her beautiful self-sacrifice, with its long months of obscure, valiant immolation, its conscious rejection of all pleasant paths that she might undertake a hard and bitter task, could not have been made in vain. It couldn't be that she had ultimately failed . . . God always gave royally of spiritual things . . .

The purple dusk crept swiftly over Rome. A star or two peeped out in the high darkening sky.

And suddenly he was aroused by Father Anthony opening the door and coming into the room. His grey, austere face was singularly pallid in the gloom.

"Can you fetch Miss Dampier? Her mother is asking for her."

Julian went in search of his mother.

"She is asking for Eunice. Do you think it would be safe for her to come?"

"I am sure she will want to come," said Mrs. Parmeter.

Julian returned to the *salotto*. Father Anthony was still standing there. He went up to him.

"Miss Dampier is coming," he said; "you know she has been ill herself. She has not yet left her room." He waited a moment. "I want to tell you," he went on, "that we are engaged to be married. We have known each other since we were children."

"I am glad to hear she is going to marry a Catholic," said the priest. "I have heard a good deal about her from some nuns, and I know she has lived through very difficult days here."

Julian assented. "But I suppose it will soon be over. The doctor does not think Lady Mirton can live very long."

The door opened and Eunice came into the room. She was very pale and still showed the effects of her illness.

"I have received your mother into the Church," said Father Anthony simply. "She wishes to see you. I am going away now. When I return I shall anoint her and give her the last sacraments. Will you go to her? Her mind is perfectly clear."

He was more accustomed than Julian was to the strange and moving spectacle of a death-bed conversion. Such a thing, when it came, strong like a primal force of nature, was almost always in his

experience the answer to long prayer, the prayer perhaps of some very devout person. Like a deluge the floods of grace poured into the soul, opening up dark ways to receive light everlasting. One could almost see the poor, weak, erring soul brought in all its weakness and sinfulness into sudden and splendid communion with things divine. The priest's own faith was perfectly simple; his whole life was dedicated to his ecclesiastical work, and it was this quality in him that perhaps made him seem even to strangers so completely detached. For him there were no adequate spiritual remedies except those offered by the Catholic Church, of which he was a most loyal and zealous son. There were the sacraments duly appointed that held all the means of salvation for suffering, struggling humanity. He was aware that thousands denied their efficacy, mocked at them, derided them. And perhaps no incident provoked so much sceptical ridicule as an eleventh-hour repentance and conversion. But he lived in a Catholic country, his time was spent almost exclusively among his co-religionists, and the scepticism and derision of non-Catholics or anti-clericals affected him scarcely at all. *They that commit sin and iniquity are enemies to their own soul.* And it was his task so often to come and help to win back to its glorious share in the Redemption the soul that was approaching the abyss of everlasting darkness. For no figure among all the men of flesh and blood who moved about him was one half so real to Father Anthony as the figure of the Man-God who had accomplished the Redemption nearly two thousand years ago upon the cross of Calvary. People were thus less bodies to him than souls—souls to be guided and directed, sometimes into paths of surprising mystical holiness—souls to be won back and renewed in the sharp waters of penance—souls to be

saved, snatched even as a brand from the burning. . . .

Eunice crept into her mother's room. She saw her lying there changed in appearance, exhausted, the grey shadows of approaching death upon her face. But she was calm and quite conscious, and clasped a crucifix in her hands. The girl bent down and kissed her.

"Dear Eunice—I am going to die. But I'm not afraid now. And you will be happy with Julian."

"I'm glad—so very glad—that you have become a Catholic. It is what Julian and I have been praying for."

A faint surprise was visible upon that immobile face.

"I saw that Julian cared for my soul," she murmured. "He said he wanted to save me. Are you sure—it's so easy as this? I have gone through all my life scarcely thinking of—Our Blessed Lord at all—not caring whether I had offended Him or not. And now at the last—just because I'm afraid—I turn to Him—and ask for forgiveness. Can He forgive me, Eunice? After all, it was you I sinned against almost more than any one."

Eunice bent down and whispered: "You have had absolution—you have on the wedding-garment. You mustn't be afraid any more. It's enough to turn to Him with one moment's thought of love and contrition, even if we are not able to say any words."

Something in this speech seemed once more to reassure Lady Mirton. For some little time she lay there in silence. When she next opened her eyes she said:

"You'll go back to England? Perhaps you will be married there. You mustn't put it off on account of mourning. I shouldn't like that. You've been very good to me, Eunice dear; and I'm afraid I

wasn't always very kind. Still, it's coming to an end, and I think I am glad."

Presently Eunice rose and fetched Mrs. Parmeter and Julian. They remained there, not speaking, until Father Anthony returned. Lady Mirton was barely conscious when she received the last sacraments; she seemed scarcely aware of what was going on. She sank at last into a quiet slumber while Eunice sat motionless by her side and Father Anthony's voice, reciting the prayers for the dying, filled the little room.

About midnight Lady Mirton died. . . .

THE END

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