

must suffer from the awful loneliness of a life like mine when I had no one near me in the sense in which Diavolo has always been near, a life that is full of acquaintances as a cake is full of currants, no two of which ever touch each other."

The Tenor's habitual quiescence seemed to have deserted him. He changed his position incessantly, and did so now again; it was the only sign he made of being disturbed at all; and as he moved he brushed his hand back over his hair, but did not speak.

"I kept my disguise a long time before I used it," she began again, another morsel of incident and motive recurring to her. "I don't think I had any very distinct notion of what I should do with it when I got it. The pleasure of getting it had been everything for the moment, and having succeeded in that and tried the dress, I hid it away carefully and scarcely ever thought of it—never dreamt of wearing it certainly until one night—it was quite an impulse at last. That night, you know, the first time we met—it was such a beautiful night! I was by myself and had nothing to do as usual, and it tempted me sorely. I thought I should like to see the market-place by moonlight, and then all at once I thought I *would* see it by moonlight. That was my first weighty reason for changing my dress. But having once assumed the character, I began to love it; it came naturally; and the freedom from restraint—I mean the restraint of our tight uncomfortable clothing—was delicious. I tell you I was a genuine boy. I moved like a boy, I felt like a boy; I was my own brother in very truth. Mentally and morally, I was exactly what you thought me, and there was little fear of your finding me out, although I used to like to play with the position and run the risk."

"It was marvellous," the Tenor said.

"Not at all," she answered, "not a bit more marvellous in real life than it would have been upon the stage—a mere exercise of the actor's faculty under the most favourable circumstances; and not a bit more marvellous than to create a character as an author does in a book; the process is analogous. But the same thing has been done before. George Sand, for instance: don't you remember how often she went about dressed as a man, went to the theatres and was introduced to people, and was never found out by strangers? And there was that woman who was a doctor in the army for so long—until she was quite old. James Barry, she called herself; and none of her brother-officers, not even her own particular chum in the regiment she first belonged to, had any suspicion of her sex; and it was not discovered until after her death, when she had been an Inspector General of the Army Medical Department for many years. And there have been women in the ranks too, and at sea. It was really not extraordinary that an unobservant and unsuspecting creature like yourself should have been deceived."

This recalled the patronising manner of the Boy at times, and the Tenor smiled.

"The meeting with you was an accident, of course," Angelica proceeded with her disjointed narrative; "but I thought I would turn it to account. I was, as you used to say, devoured by curiosity, and my mind is always tentative. I wanted to hear how men talk to each other. I didn't believe in goodness in a man, and I wanted to see badness from the man's point of view. I expected to find you corrupt in some particular, to see your hoofs and your horns sooner or later, and I tried to make you show them; but that, of course, you never did, and I

soon realised my mistake. I had a standing quarrel with your sex, however, and at first it pleased me to deceive you simply because you were a man. That was only at the very first, for, as soon as I began to appreciate your worth, I felt ashamed of myself. Don't you see, Israfil, you have been raising me all along? It has been a very gradual process, though, but still I *did* wish to undeceive you. I would have done so at once if you had not been so far above me. If you had spoken to me when I gave you that chance—in the cathedral after the service, don't you remember?—it would have been stepping down from your pedestal; we should have been on the same level then, and I need not have dreaded your righteous indignation. But as it was, you maintained your high position, and I was afraid—and I could not give you up. It was delightful to look at myself—an ideal self—from afar off with your eyes; it made me feel as if I could be all you thought me; it made me wish to be so; and it also made me more sorry than anything to have you think so highly of me when I did not deserve it. All these were signs of awakening which I recognised myself—and I did try over and over again to undeceive you about my character, but you never would listen to me. I wish—I wish you had!"

"Do you love me, then?" the Tenor asked her, and was startled himself as soon as he had spoken by the immediate effect of the question upon her. It was evident that she had received a terrible shock. She changed colour and countenance, and swayed for a moment as if she were about to faint, and he sprang up to catch her in his arms; but she recovered herself sufficiently to check the impulse. "No, no," she exclaimed hoarsely,— "stop! stop! you don't know—My God! how could I have put myself in such a position?—I mean—let me tell you"—She shut her eyes and waited, the Tenor looking at her in pained surprise. He sank again on to the seat from which he had risen, and waited also, wondering. Presently she opened her eyes and looked at him: "The charm—the charm," she faltered, "has all been in the delight of associating with a man intimately who did not know I was a woman. I have enjoyed the benefit of free intercourse with your masculine mind undiluted by your masculine prejudices and proclivities with regard to my sex. Had you known that I was a woman—even you—the pleasure of your companionship would have been spoilt for me, so unwholesomely is the imagination of a man affected by ideas of sex. The fault is in your training; you are all of you educated deliberately to think of women chiefly as the opposite sex. Your manner to me has been quite different from that of any other man I ever knew. Some have fawned on me, degrading me with the supposition that I exist for the benefit of man alone, and that it will gratify me above all else to know that I please him; and some few, such as yourself, have embarrassed me by putting me on a pedestal, which is, I can assure you, an exceedingly cramped and uncomfortable position. There is no room to move on a pedestal. Now, with you alone of all men, not excepting Diavolo, I almost think I have been on an equal footing; and it has been to me like the free use of his limbs to a prisoner after long confinement with chains." The expression which the Tenor's abrupt question had called into her countenance passed off as she spoke, and with it the impression it had made upon the Tenor. He mistook the remarks she had just been making

for a natural girlish evasion of the subject, and he did not return to it, partly because he felt it to be an inopportune time, but also because he was pretty sure of her feeling for him, and thought that he would have ample leisure by and by, the leisure of a lifetime, to press the question. There were other explanations to be asked for, too, which it seemed advisable to him to get over at once and have done with.

"But how have you managed to get out night after night," he asked, "without being missed?"

"Not night after night," she answered. "If you remember, there were often long intervals. But I have told you, I was constantly alone. The house is large, none of the servants sleep near my room, and my husband"—

"Your—*what?*" the Tenor demanded, turning round on his chair to face her, every vestige of colour gone from his countenance, yet not convinced. "What did you say?" he repeated, aghast.

"My—husband," she faltered. "Mr. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe."

Hitherto he had uttered no reproach, but she knew that this reticence was due to self-respect rather than to any lingering remnant of deference, and now when she saw his face ablaze she was prepared for an outburst of wrath. All he said, however, was, speaking with quiet dignity, "You need not have allowed that part of the deception to go on. You should have told me that at once; why did you not?"

For the first time Angelica lost her presence of mind. "I—I forgot," she stammered.

The Tenor threw back his sunny head and laughed bitterly.

"It is a curious fact," Angelica remarked upon reflection, and as if speaking to herself, "but I really had forgotten."

The Tenor looked at the fire, and in the little pause that ensued Angelica suddenly lost her temper.

"If you are deceived in me you have deceived yourself," she burst out, "for I have tried my utmost to undeceive you. You go and fall in love with a girl you have never spoken to in your life, you endow her gratuitously with all the virtues you admire, without asking if she cares to possess them; and when you find she is not the peerless perfection you require her to be, you blame her! Oh! isn't that like a man? You all say the same thing: 'It wasn't me!'"

"What will your husband say?" the Tenor ejaculated in an undertone.

"Well, you see, the bargain was when I asked him to marry me"—

"When you *what?*" said the Tenor.

"Asked him to marry me," Angelica calmly repeated. "The bargain was that he should let me do as I liked, there being a tacit understanding between us, of course, that I should do nothing morally wrong. I could not under any circumstances do anything morally wrong—not, I confess, because I am particularly high-minded, but because I cannot imagine where the charm and pleasure of the morally wrong comes in. The best pleasures in life are in art, not in animalism; and all the benefit of your acquaintance, I repeat, has consisted in the fact that you were unaware of my sex. I knew that directly you became aware of it another element would be introduced into our friendship which would entirely spoil it so far as I am concerned."

It is a noteworthy fact, as showing how hopelessly involved man's moral perceptions are with

his prejudices and faith in custom even when reprehensible, that the Tenor was if anything more shocked by Angelica's outspoken objection to grossness than he would have been by a declaration of passion on her part. The latter lapse is not unprecedented, and therefore might have been excused as natural; but the unusual nature of the declaration she had made put it into the category to which all things out of order are relegated to be taken exception to, irrespective of their ethical value. But he said nothing, only he turned from her once more, and gazed sorrowfully into the fire.

Angelica looked at him with a dissatisfied frown on her face. "I wish you would speak," she said to him under her breath; and then she began again herself with her accustomed volubility: "Oh yes, I married. That was what was expected of me. Now, my brother when he grew up was asked with the most earnest solicitude what he would like to be or to do; everything was made easy for him to enter upon any career he might choose; but nobody thought of giving *me* a chance. It was taken for granted that I should be content to marry, and only to marry; and when I expressed my objection to being so limited, nobody believed I was in earnest. So here I am. And I won't deny," she confessed, with her habitual candour, "that it did occur to me that I might have cared for you as a lover had I not been married. But of course the thought did not disturb me. It was merely a passing glimpse of a might-have-been. When one has a husband one must be loyal to him, even in thought, whatever terms we are on."

The Tenor rose abruptly and walked to the farther end of the room, and stood there for a little leaning against the window-frame with his back to her looking out at the cathedral. He felt sick and faint, and found the fire and the smell of the roses overpowering. But presently he recovered, and then he returned to her. His face was set now, white and passionless, as it had been while he waited to rescue her from the river, and when he spoke there was no tone in his voice; it was as if he were repeating some dry fact by rote.

"There is no excuse for you, then," he said; and she perceived with surprise that until he knew she was married he had tried to believe that there was. "You were playing with me, cheating me, mocking me all the time."

Angelica looked at him in dismay. "Israfil! Israfil!" she pleaded, springing to her feet and clasping his arm with both hands, her better nature thoroughly aroused. "Oh, Israfil! forgive me!" She almost shook him in her vehemence, then flung him from her, and pressed her hands to her eyes for an instant. "Mocking you? Oh no!" she protested. "Believe me—believe me if you can. I respected you almost from the first; I revered you at last. I used to tease you about myself to begin with, I repeat, because it did not occur to me that you could care seriously for a girl to whom you had never spoken. Then I began to perceive my mistake. Then I felt anxious to get you to go away and return, and be properly introduced to us."

"And so you schemed"—

"I arranged a future for you that is worthy of you. Oh, Israfil, I have some conscience. I am not so bad as you think me. Even if I had not dared to tell you to-night, I should have sent you a full explanation as soon as you had gone. I thought when once you were engaged upon a new career, you would forget—all this."

"I am surprised to hear that you did not expect me to enjoy the joke at my own expense—the trick you have played me."

Angelica changed countenance; it was exactly what she had expected.

"Don't speak bitterly to me," she exclaimed. "It is not natural for you to do so. Oh! I should know—I know only too well—all your good qualities. My heart has been wrung a hundred times—by the thought—of all—I have—lost—by my folly." She raised her hands with a despairing gesture. "Don't imagine that you suffer—alone—or more than I do. There is hope for you; there is none for me. But one thing has been a comfort. I knew you only cared for an ideal creature, not at all like me. I was not afraid you would break your heart for a phantom that had never existed. And for me as I am, I knew you could have no regard. I see"—she broke off—"I see all the contradictions that are involved in what I have said and am saying, and yet I mean it all. In separate sections of my consciousness each separate clause exists at this moment, however contradictory, and there is no reconciling them; but there they are. I can't understand it myself, and I don't want you to try. All I ask you is to believe me—to forgive me."

There was an interval of silence after this, and then the Tenor spoke again.

"It is nearly morning," he said. "I will see you safely home."

The Boy had been allowed to come and go as he liked, but with her it was different; and the altered position made itself again apparent in this new-found need for an escort. It was evident, too, from the way the Tenor had allowed the subject to drop, tacitly agreeing to the assertion, "For me as I am I knew you could have no regard," that he considered there was nothing more to be

said; but Angelica retained her childish habit of talking everything out, and this did not satisfy her, it was such a lame conclusion.

She got up now, however, to accompany him. "My hair!" she exclaimed, recollecting. "What am I to do with my hair? I suppose my wig is lost." Then she burst out passionately, "Oh, why did you save my life?" and wrung her hands—"or why aren't you different now you know? Can't you say something to restore my self-respect? Won't you forgive me?"

The Tenor's face contracted as with a spasm of pain. He had much to forgive, and he may be pardoned if he showed no eagerness; but he spoke at last. "I do forgive you," he said. Then all at once his great tender heart swelled with pity. "Poor misguided girl!" he faltered, with a broken voice; "may God in heaven forgive you, and help you, and keep you safe, and make you good and true and pure now and always."

She sank down at that, and clasped his feet, and burst into a paroxysm of tears, which were as a fervent *Amen* to the Tenor's prayer.

"Come!" he said, raising her. "Come, before it is too late. You must do something with your hair."

But she could not plait it, her hands trembled so, and he was obliged to help her. He got her a hat to roll it up under.

"The light is uncertain," he said, "and it is raining now. Even if we do meet anyone, I don't think they would notice—especially if I can find an umbrella for you."

He hunted one up from somewhere, and then he hurried her away, ferried her across the river, and left her at the lodge gate safely, his last words being, "You will do some good in the world—you will be a good woman yet, I know—I know you will."

BOOK V

MRS. KILROY OF ILVERTHORPE

Face to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her :
God and she and I only, there I sat down to draw her Soul through
The clefts of confession—"Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angel of recollection shall do it at last!"

"My cup is blood-red

With my sin," she said,

"And I pour it out to the bitter lees.

As if the angel of judgment stood over me strong at last

Or as thou wert as these."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

Howbeit all is not lost,
The warm noon ends in frost
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells die from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed :
Yet through the silence shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And "Come up hither," recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go?

"I go!

Broken hearts triumph so."

Ibid.

CHAPTER I

HALF an hour after the Tenor parted from Angelica, she was sleeping soundly, not because she was indolent but because she was exhausted; and when that is the case sleep is the blessed privilege of youth and strength, let what will have preceded it. She lay there in her luxurious bed, with one hand under her head, her thick dark hair—just as the Tenor had braided it—in contrast to the broad white pillow; her smooth face, on which no emotion of any kind had written a line as yet, placid as a little child's; to all appearance an ideal of innocence and beauty. And while she slept the rain stopped, the misty morning broke, the clouds had cleared away, and the sun shone forth, welcomed by a buzz of insects and chirrup of birds, the uprising of countless summer scents, and the opening of rainbow flowers. It was one of those radiant days, harmonising best with tranquil or joyous moods, when, if we are disconsolate, nature seems to mock our misery, and callous earth rejoices, forgetful of storms, making us wonder with a deeper discontent why we too cannot forget.

Angelica slept a heavy, dreamless sleep, and when she did awake late in the morning, it was not gradually, with that pleasant dreamy languor which precedes mental activity in happy times, but with a sudden start that aroused her to full consciousness in a moment, and the recollection of all that had occurred the night before. Black circles round her eyes bore witness to the danger, fatigue, and emotion of her late experiences; she had a sharp pain in her head, too, and she was

unaccustomed to physical pain; but she felt it less than the dull ache she had at her heart, and a general sense of things gone wrong that oppressed her, but which she strove with stubborn determination to stifle.

Her maid was busy in the dressing-room, the door of which was open, and she called her.

"Elizabeth!"

"Yes, ma'am," and the maid appeared, smiling.

She was a good-looking woman of thirty or thereabouts. She had come to Angelica when the latter got out of her nurse's hands, and remained with her ever since, Angelica being one of those mistresses who win the hearts of their servants by recognising the human nature in them, and appreciating the kindness there is in devotion rather than accepting it as a necessary part of the obligation to earn wages.

"Bring me a cup of coffee, Elizabeth."

"Yes, ma'am," the maid rejoined. "It shall be ready for you as soon as you have had your bath."

"But I want it now," said Angelica, springing out of bed energetically, and holding first one slim foot and then the other out to be shod.

There was a twinkle in the maid's eye as she answered, "Please, ma'am, you made me promise never to give it to you, however much you might wish it, until you had had your bath. You said you'd be sure to ask for it, and I was to refuse, because hot coffee was bad for you just before a cold bath, and you really enjoyed it more afterward, only you hadn't the strength of mind to wait."

"Quite so," said Angelica. "You're a treasure,

Elizabeth, really. But did I say you were to begin to-day?"

"No, ma'am; not to-day in particular. But the last time I brought it to you early you scolded me after you had taken it, and said if ever I let myself be persuaded again, you'd dismiss me on the spot. And you warned me that you'd be artful and get it out of me somehow if I didn't take care."

"So I did," said Angelica.

She had been brought up with a pretty smart shock the night before, and was suffering from the physical effects of the same that morning; the mental were still in abeyance. She felt a strange lassitude for one thing, and was strongly inclined to indulge it by being indolent. She breakfasted in her own room, but could not eat, neither could she read. She turned her letters over; then tried a book; then going back to her letters again, she picked one out which she had overlooked before. It was from her husband, and as she read it she changed countenance somewhat, but it would be impossible to say what the change betokened, whether pleasure or the reverse.

"Elizabeth," she said, speaking evenly as usual, "your master is coming back to-day. He will be here for lunch."

The sickening sense of loss and pain which had assailed her when she awoke that morning did not diminish as the day wore on, nor did her thoughts grow less importunate; but she steadily refused to entertain any of them, or to let her mental discomfort interfere with her occupations. After reading her husband's letter she finished dressing, had a long interview with her housekeeper, went round the premises as was her daily habit, to see that all was in order, and then retired to her morning-room, and set to work methodically to write orders, see to accounts, and answer letters. It was a busy day with her, and she had only just finished when Mr. Kilroy arrived. She went to meet him pleasantly, held up her cheek to be kissed, and said she was glad he was in time for lunch. There was no sign of the joy or effusion with which young wives usually receive their husbands after an absence, but the greeting was eminently friendly. Angelica had always had a strong liking for Mr. Kilroy, and, as she told him, marriage had not affected this in any way. She had made a friend of him while she was still in the schoolroom, and confided to him many things which she would not have mentioned to anyone else, not even excepting Diavolo; and she continued to do so still. She was sure of his sympathy, sure of his devotion, and she respected him as sincerely as she trusted him. In fact, had there been any outlet for her superfluous mental energy, any satisfactory purpose to which the motive power of it might have been applied, she would have made Mr. Kilroy an excellent wife. She was not in love with him, but she probably liked him all the better on that account, for she must have been disappointed in him sooner or later had she ever discovered in him those marvellous fascinations which passion projects from itself on to the personality of the most commonplace person. As it was, however, she had always left him out of her day-dreams altogether. She quite believed that pleasure is the end of life, but then her ideal of pleasure was nice in the extreme. Nothing so vulgar and violent as passion entered into it; and nothing so transient, so enervating, corroding, and damaging both to the intellectual powers and the capacity for permanent enjoyment; and nothing so re-

pulsive either in its details, its self-centred egotistical exaltation, and the self-abasement which arrives with that final sense of satiety which she perceived to be inevitable. That part of her nature had never been roused into active life, partly because it was not naturally strong, but also because the more refined and delicately sensuous appreciation of beauty in life, which is so much a characteristic of capable women nowadays, dominated such animalism as she was equal to, and made all coarser pleasures repugnant. It had been suggested to her that she might, with her position and wealth, form a salon and lay herself out to attract, but she said, "No, thank you. One sees in the history of French salons the effect of irresponsible power on the women who formed them. I am bad enough naturally, without applying for a licence to become worse, by making myself so agreeable that everybody will excuse me if I do. And as to being a great beauty and nothing else, one might as well be a great cow; the comfort would be the same and the anxiety less, the amount of attention received not depending on a clear complexion or an increase of figure, and therefore necessitating no limit in the enjoyment of such good things as come with the varying seasons, the winter wurzel and summer state of being in clover."

It was to Mr. Kilroy that these remarks were made one day when she wanted a target to talk at, for her appreciation of her husband did not amount to any adequate comprehension of the extent to which he understood her. The truth was, however, that he understood her better than anybody else did, the complete latitude he gave to her to do as she liked being evidence of the fact, if only she could have interpreted it; but she had failed to do so, his quiet undemonstrative manner having sufficed to deceive her superficial observation of him as effectually as the treacherous smoothness of her own placid face when in repose, upon the unruffled surface of which there was neither mark nor sign to indicate the current of changeful moods, ambitious projects, and poetical fancies, which coursed impetuously within, might excusably have imposed upon him. He was twenty years older than Angelica, and looked it, but more by reason of his grave demeanour than from any actual mark of age, for his life had been well ordered and as free from care as it had been from corruption. Mr. Kilroy was not a talkative man, and what he did say was neither original nor brilliant, yet he was generally trusted, and his advice oftener asked and followed than that of people whose reputations were at least as good, and whose abilities were infinitely better; the explanation of which was probably to be found in the good feeling which he brought to the consideration of all subjects. Some people whose brains would be at fault if they were asked to judge, are enabled by qualities of heart to feel their way to the most praiseworthy conclusions. Mr. Kilroy was one of those people, well-born and of ample means, whom society recognises as its own, but without enthusiasm, the sterling qualities which make them such an addition to its ranks being less appreciated than the wealth and position which they contribute to its resources; still, in his case it was customary for women to describe him as "a thoroughly nice man," while "an exceedingly good fellow" was the corresponding masculine verdict.

He was in Parliament now, and was consequently obliged to be in London continually; but latterly Angelica had refused to accompany him.

She loved their place near Morningquest, and she had begun to appreciate the ancient city with its kindly, benighted, unchristian ways, its picturesqueness, and all that was odd and old-world about it. There, too, she was somebody, but in crowded London she lost all sense of her own identity; though, to do her justice, she disliked it less for that than for itself, for its hot rooms, society gossip, vapid men and spiteful women. Mr. Kilroy could rarely persuade her to accompany him, and never induce her to stay. Having her with him was just the one thing that he was a little persistent about, and her wilfulness in this respect had been a real trouble to him. He had come now to see if she continued obdurate, and he came meekly and with conciliation in his whole attitude. She thought, however, that she knew how to get rid of him, how to make him return alone in a week of his own accord, so far as he himself knew anything about it, and that, too, without thinking her horrid; and she laid her plans accordingly. This was something to do; and so irksome did she find the purposeless existence which the misfortune of having been born a woman compelled her to lead, that even such an object was a relief, and her spirits rose. Something—anything for an occupation; that was the state to which she was reduced. She began at once, and began by talking. All through lunch she discoursed admirably, and at first Mr. Kilroy listened fascinated, but by and by his attention became strained. He found himself forced to listen; it was an effort, and yet he could not help himself. He tried to check Angelica by assuming an absent look, but she recalled him with a sharp exclamation. He even took a letter out of his pocket and read the superscription, but put it away again shamefacedly, upon her gently apologising for monopolising so much of his attention.

"You see it is so long since I saw you," she said. "You must forgive me if I have too much to say."

When lunch was over the carriage came round, and Angelica, all radiant smiles, took it for granted that Mr. Kilroy would go with her for a drive. Now, if there were one thing which he disliked more than another it was a stupid drive there and back without an object; but Angelica seemed so uncommonly glad to see him he did not like to refuse. He had many things to attend to, but he felt that it would be bad policy not to humour her mood, especially as it was such an extremely encouraging one; so he went to please her with perfect good grace, although he could not help thinking regretfully of the precious time he was losing, of the accumulation of things there were to be seen to about his own place, and of some important letters he ought to have written that afternoon. Angelica beguiled him successfully on the way out, however, so that he did not notice the distance, but on the way back her manner changed. So far she had been all brightness and animation; now she became lugubrious, and took a morbid view of things. She talked of all the men of middle age who had died lately, and of what they had died of, showing that most of them were taken off suddenly when in perfect health apparently, and usually without any premonitory symptoms of disease. It was all the result of some change of habits, she said, which was always dangerous in the case of men of middle age; and Mr. Kilroy began to feel uneasy in spite of himself, for he had been obliged to alter his own habits considerably when he

married, and he was apt to be a little nervous about his health. Consequently he was much depressed when they returned, and finding that he had missed the post did not tend to raise his spirits. Angelica came down to dinner dressed in pale green, with something yellow on her head. Mr. Kilroy admired her immensely; she was the only subject upon which he ever became poetical, and somehow the combination of colours she wore on this occasion, with her lithe young figure and milk-white skin, made him think of an arum lily, and he told her so, and was very pleased with the pretty compliment when he had paid it, and with the dinner, and everything. The fatal age was forgotten, and he allowed himself to be cheered by hopes of success in his present mission. He had not yet mentioned it, but when they were left alone at dessert he began.

"Is my Châtelaine tired of seclusion, and willing to return with me to the great wicked city?" he ventured, with an affectation of playfulness, which rather betrayed than concealed his very real anxiety. "A wife's place is by her husband."

"Your Châtelaine is not tired of seclusion," she answered, in a cheerful, matter-of-fact tone; "and it is a wife's duty to look after her husband's house and keep it well for him, especially in his absence. But how much will you give me to go? My private purse is empty."

Mr. Kilroy laughed. "It always is, so far as I can make out," he said. "But a mercenary arum lily! what an anomaly! I will give you a hundred pounds to buy dolls, if you will go back with me next week."

Angelica appeared to reflect. "I will take fifty, thank you, and stay where I am," she answered, with decision.

Mr. Kilroy's countenance fell. "If you will not come back with me, you shall not have any," he said, with equal firmness.

"Then I shall be obliged to make it," she rejoined, with a schoolgirl grin of delight.

This threat to make money with her violin had kept her purse full ever since her marriage—not that it was ever really empty, for she had had a handsome settlement. Mr. Kilroy, however, was not the kind of man to inspect his wife's bank-book; and besides, whether she had money or not, if it amused her to obtain more, he never could be quite sure that she would not carry out that dreadful threat and try to make it. He knew she would be only too glad of an excuse; knew, too, that if ever she tried she would be certain to succeed, what with her talent, presence, family prestige, and the interest which the ill-used young wife of an elderly curmudgeon (that was the character she meant to assume, she said) was sure to excite.

She did not care for money. It was the pleasure of the chase that delighted her, the fun of extorting it. If Mr. Kilroy had given her all she asked for without any trouble, she would have soon left off asking; but he felt it his duty to refuse, by way of discipline. Seeing that she was so young, he did not think it right to indulge her extravagance, and he did his best to curb the inclination gently before it became a confirmed habit.

After dinner he went to the library to write those important letters, and Angelica retired to the drawing-room. The night was close, doors and windows stood wide open, and she got a violin and began to tune it. She was too good a musician not to be able to make the instrument

an instrument of torture if she chose, and now she did choose. She made it scream; she made it wail; she set her own teeth on edge with the horrid discords she drew from it. It crowed like a cock twenty-five times running, with an interval of half a minute between each crow. It brayed like two asses on a common, one answering the other from a considerable distance. And then it became ten cats quarrelling crescendo, with a pause after every violent outburst, broken at well-judged intervals by an occasional howl.

Mr. Kilroy endured the nuisance up to that point heroically; but at last he felt compelled to send a servant to tell Angelica that he was writing.

"Oh," she observed, perversely choosing to misinterpret the purport of this tactful message, "then I need not wait for him any longer, I suppose. Bring me my coffee, please."

The man withdrew, and she proceeded with the torture. Mr. Kilroy good-naturedly shut his doors and windows, hoping to exclude the sound, when he found the hint had been lost upon her. In vain! The library was near the drawing-room, and every note was audible.

Angelica was stumbling over an air now, a dismal minor thing which would have been quite bad enough had she played it properly, but as it was, being apparently too difficult for her, she made it distracting, working her way up painfully to one particular part where she always broke down, then going back and beginning all over again twenty times at least, till Mr. Kilroy got the thing on the brain and found himself forced to wait for the catastrophe each time she approached the place where she stumbled.

Presently he appeared at the drawing-room door with a pen in his hand, and a deprecating air. He suspected no malice, and only came to remonstrate mildly.

"Angelica, my dear," he began, "I am sorry to disturb you, but I really cannot write—I have been overworked lately—or I am tired with the journey down—or something. My head is a little confused, in fact, and a trifle distracts me. Would you mind"—

Angelica put down her violin with an injured air.

"Oh, I don't mind, of course," she protested, in a tone which contradicted the assertion flatly. "But it is very hard." She took out her handkerchief. "You are so seldom at home; and when you *are* here you do nothing but write stupid letters, and never come near me. And this time you are horrid and cross about everything. It is such a disappointment when I have been looking forward to your return." Her voice broke. "I wish I had never asked you to marry me. You ought not to have done so—it was not right of you, if you only meant to neglect me and make me miserable. You won't do anything for me now—not even give yourself the trouble to write out a cheque for fifty pounds, though it would not take you a minute." Two great tears overflowed as she spoke, and she raised her handkerchief with ostentatious slowness to dry them.

Mr. Kilroy was much distressed. "My dear child!" he exclaimed, sitting down beside her. "There, there, Angelica, now don't, please"—for Angelica was shivering and crying in earnest, a natural consequence of her immersion on the previous night, and the state of mind which had ensued. "I am obliged to write these letters. I am indeed. I ought to have done them this afternoon, but I went out with you, you know.

You really are unjust to me. I have often told you that I do not think it is right for you to be so much alone, but you will not listen to me. Come and sit with me now in the library. I would much rather have you with me. I would have asked you before, but I was afraid it might bore you. Come now, do!"

"No, I should only fidget and disturb you," she answered, but in a mollified tone.

"Well, then," he replied, "I will go and finish as fast as I can, and come back to you here. And don't fret, my dear child. You know there is nothing in reason I would not do for you," in proof of which he sent the butler a little later, by way of breaking the length of his absence agreeably, with what looked like a letter on a silver salver. Angelica opened it, and found a cheque for a hundred pounds. When she was alone again, she beamed round upon the silent company of chairs and tables, much pleased. Then her conscience smote her. "He is really very good," she said to herself—"far too good for me. I don't think I ever could have married anybody else." But there was something dubious, that resembled a question, in this last phrase.

The next day was hopelessly miserable out of doors—raining, gusty, cold. Mr. Kilroy was not sorry. He had a good deal of business connected with his property to attend to, and did not want to go out. And Angelica was not sorry. She had some little plans of her own to carry out, which a wet day rather favoured than otherwise.

Having finished her accustomed morning's work, and being obliged to stay in, it was natural that she should try to amuse herself, also natural that she should try something in the way of exercise. So she collected some dozen curs she kept about the place, demonstrative mongrels for the most part, but all intelligent; and brought them into the hall, where she made them run races for biscuits, the *modus operandi* being to place a biscuit on the top step of a broad flight of stairs there was at one end of the hall, then to collect the dogs at the other, make them stand in a row—a difficult task to begin with, but easy enough when they understood, which was very soon, although not without much shrieking of orders from Angelica, and responsive barking on their part—and then start them with a whip. The first to arrive at the top of the stairs took the biscuit as a matter of course, and the others fought him for it. It was indescribably funny to see the whole pack tear up all eagerness, and then come down again, helter-skelter, tumbling over each other in the excitement of the scrimmage, some of them losing their tempers, but all of them enjoying the game; returning of their own accord to the starting-point, waiting with yelps of excitement and eyes brightly intent, ears pricked, jaws open, tongues hanging, tails wagging, sides panting, till another biscuit was placed, then off once more—sometimes after a false start or two, caused by the impetuosity of a little yapping terrier, which *would* rush before the signal was given, and had to be brought back with the whip, the other dogs looking disgusted meanwhile, like honourable gentlemen at a cad who won't play fair. Angelica, shouting and laughing, made as much noise in her way as the dogs did in theirs, and the din was deafening; an exasperating kind of din too, not incessant, but intermittent, now swelling to a climax, now lulling, until there seemed some hope that it would cease altogether, then bursting out again, whip cracking, dogs howling and barking, feet scampering, Angelica shrieking worse than ever.

Presently Mr. Kilroy appeared, with remonstrance written on every line of his countenance.

"My dear Angelica," he said, unable to conceal his quite justifiable annoyance. "I can do nothing if this racket continues. And"—deprecatingly—"is it—is it quite seemly for you?"—

"I used to do it at home," Angelica answered.

"But you are not at home now"—quick as light she turned and looked at him with her great grieved eyes. "I mean"—he grew confused in his haste to correct himself—"of course you are at home—very much so indeed, you know. But what I want to say is—as the mistress of a large establishment—dignity—setting an example, and all that sort of thing, don't you see?"

"None of the servants are about at this hour," Angelica answered. "It is their dinner-time. But I apologise for my thoughtlessness if I have disturbed you." She smiled up at him as she spoke, and poor Mr. Kilroy retired to the library quite disarmed by her gentleness, and blaming himself for a selfish brute to have interfered with her innocent amusement. In future, he determined, he would make more allowance for her youth.

Angelica, meanwhile, had collected her dogs and disappeared. But presently she returned, and followed Mr. Kilroy to the library. He was busy writing, and she went and stood in the window, looking idly out at the rain, and drumming—absently, as it seemed—on the panes with ten strong fingers, till he could bear it no longer.

"My dear child!" he exclaimed at last, "can't you get something to do?"

Angelica stopped instantly. If her thoughtlessness was exasperating, her docility was exemplary. But she seemed disheartened; then she seemed to consider; then she brightened a little; then she got some letters, sat down, and began to write—scratch, scratch, scratch, squeak, squeak, squeak, on rough paper with a quill pen, writing in furious haste at a table just behind her husband. Why did she choose the library, his own private sanctum, for the purpose, when there were half a dozen other rooms at least where she might have been quite as comfortable? Mr. Kilroy fidgeted uneasily, but he bore this new infliction silently, though with an ever-increasing sense of irritation, for some time. Finally, however, an exclamation of impatience slipped from him unawares.

"Do I worry you with my scribbling?" Angelica demanded, with hypocritical concern. "I'm sorry. But I've just done,"—and she went away with some half-dozen notes for the post.

When they met again at lunch she told him triumphantly that she had refused all the invitations which had come for him since his arrival, on account of his health. She had told everybody that he had come home for perfect rest and quiet, which he much needed after the strain of his parliamentary duties; and as one of the notes at least would be read at a public meeting to explain his absence therefrom, and would afterward appear in the papers probably, she had made it impossible for him to go anywhere during his stay. Mr. Kilroy could not complain, however, for had he not himself said only last night that he was suffering from the effects of overwork, and so alarmed her? and he would not have complained in any case when he saw her so joyfully triumphant in the belief that she had cleverly eased him from an oppressing number of duties; but he determined to pick his excuses more carefully another time, for the prospect of a prolonged *tête-à-tête* with

Angelica in her present humour somewhat appalled his peace-loving soul, and the thought of it did just stir him sufficiently for the moment to cause him to venture to suggest that in future it might be as well for her to consult him before she answered for him in any matter. Angelica replied with an intelligent nod and smile. She was altogether charming in these days in spite of her perverseness, and Mr. Kilroy, while groaning inwardly at her irritating tricks, was also touched and flattered by the anxiety she displayed for his comfort and welfare.

He hoped to enjoy a quiet cigar and a book after luncheon, but Angelica had another notion in her head. She went to the drawing-room, opened doors and windows, sat down to the piano, and began to sing—shakes, scales, intervals, the whole exercise book through apparently from beginning to end, and with such good will that her voice resounded throughout the house. She had eaten nothing since breakfast so as to be able to produce it with the desired effect, and there was no escape from the sound. But poor Mr. Kilroy did not like to interfere with her industry as he had done with her idleness. He was afraid he had shown too much impatience already for one day, so he endured this further trial without exhibiting a sign of suffering; but after an hour or two of it, he found himself sighing for the undisturbed repose of his house in town, in a way that would have satisfied Angelica had she known it. At dinner she looked very nice, but she did not talk much. Conversation was not Mr. Kilroy's strong point, but he was good at anecdotes, and now he racked his brains for something new to tell her. She listened, however, without seeming to see the point of some, and others caused her to stare at him in wide-eyed astonishment as if shocked, which made him pause awkwardly to consider, half fearing to find some impropriety which his coarser masculine mind had hitherto failed to detect.

This caused the flow of reminiscences to languish, and presently to cease. Then Angelica began to make bread pills. She set them in a row, and flipped them off the table one by one deliberately when the servants left the room. This amusement ended, she pulled flowers to pieces between the courses, and hummed a little tune. Mr. Kilroy fidgeted. He felt as if he had been saying "Don't!" ever since he came home, and he would not now repeat it, but the self-repression disagreed with him, and so did his dinner, dyspepsia having waited on appetite in lieu of digestion.

After dinner Angelica induced him to go with her to the drawing-room, and when she had got him comfortably seated, and had given him his coffee and a paper, and just peace enough to let him fall into a pleurably drowsy state, accompanied by a strong disinclination to move, she began to pick out the "Dead March" in "Saul" and kindred melodies with one finger on the piano. Mr. Kilroy bore this infliction also; but when she brought a cookery book and insisted on reading the recipes aloud, he went to bed in self-defence.

CHAPTER II

If the first and second days at home were failures so far as Mr. Kilroy's comfort was concerned, the third was as bad, if not worse. It was a continual case of "Please don't!" from morning till

night, and Angelica herself was touched at last by the kindly nature which could repeat the remonstrance so often and so patiently; but all the same she did not forbear. All that day, however, Mr. Kilroy made every allowance for her. Angelica was thoughtless, very thoughtless; but it was only natural that she should be so, considering her youth. On the next day, however, it did occur to him that she was far too exacting, for she would not let him leave her for a moment if she could help it; and on the next he was sufficiently depressed to acknowledge that Angelica was trying; and if he did not actually sigh for solitude, he felt, at all events, that it would cost him no effort to resign himself to it if she should again prove refractory and refuse to go back with him—and Angelica knew that he had arrived at this state just as well as if he had told her; but still she was far from content. She wanted him to go, and she wanted him to stay—she did not know what she wanted. She teased him with as much zeal as at first, but the amusement had ceased to distract her in the least degree. It had become quite a business now, and she only kept it up because she could think of nothing else to do. She was conscious of some change in herself, conscious of a racking spirit of discontent which tormented her, and of the fact that, in spite of her superabundant vitality, she had lost all zest for anything. Outwardly, and also as a matter of habit, when she was with anybody who might have noticed a change, she maintained the dignity of demeanour which she had begun to cultivate in society upon her marriage; but inwardly she raged—raged at herself, at everybody, at everything; and this mood again was varied by two others, one of unnatural quiescence, the other, of feverish restlessness. In the one she would sit for hours at a time doing nothing, not even pretending to occupy herself; in the other, she would wander aimlessly up and down, would walk about the room, and look at the pictures without seeing them, or go upstairs for nothing and come down again without perceiving the folly of it all. And she was for ever thinking. Diavolo was at Sandhurst—if only he had been at Ilverthorpe! She might have talked to him. She tried the effect of a letter full of allusions which should have aroused his curiosity if not his sympathetic interest, but he made no remark about these in his reply, and only wrote about himself and his pranks, which seemed intolerably childish and stupid to Angelica in her present mood; and about his objection to early rising and regular hours, all of which she knew, so that the repetition only irritated her. She considered Mr. Kilroy obtuse, and thought bitterly that anyone with a scrap of intelligent interest in her must have noticed that she had something on her mind, and won her confidence.

This reflection occurred to her in the drawing-room one night after dinner, and immediately afterward she caught him looking at her with a grave intensity which should have puzzled her if it did not strike her as significant of some deeper feeling than that to which the carnal admiration for her person which she expected and despised would have given rise; but she was too self-absorbed to be more observant than she gave him the credit of being.

The result of Mr. Kilroy's observation was an effort to take her out of herself. He began by asking her to play to him. Not very graciously, she got out a violin, remarking that she was sorry it was not her best one.

"Where is your best one?" he asked.

"It is not at home," she answered. "I left it with Israfel, my fair-haired friend, you know." She spoke slowly, holding the end of the violin, and tightening the strings as she did so, the effort causing her to compress her lips so that the words were uttered disjointedly; and as she finished speaking, she raised the instrument to her shoulder and her eyes to Mr. Kilroy's face, into which she gazed intently as she drew her bow across the strings, testing them as to whether they were in tune or not, and seeming rather to listen than to look, as she did so. Mr. Kilroy, still quietly observing her, noticed that her equanimity had been suddenly restored; but whether it was the mellow tones of her violin or some happy thought that had released the tension he could not tell. It was as much relief, however, to him to see her brighten, as it was to her to feel when she answered him that a great weight had been lifted from her mind, and she would now be able "to talk it out," this trouble that oppressed her, unrestrainedly, as was natural to her.

When Mr. Kilroy accepted the terms upon which she proposed to marry him, namely, that he should let her do as she liked, she had voluntarily promised to tell him everything she did, and she had kept her word as was her wont, telling him the exact truth as on this occasion, but mixing it up with so many romances that he never knew which was which. He was in town when she first met the Tenor, but when he returned, she told him all that had happened, and continued the story from time to time as the various episodes occurred, making it extremely interesting, and also almost picturesque. Mr. Kilroy knew the Tenor by reputation, of course, and was much entertained by what he believed to be the romance which Angelica was weaving about his interesting personality. He suggested that she should write it just as she told it. "I have not seen anything like it anywhere," he said; "nothing half so lifelike."

"Oh, but then, you see, this is all true," she gravely insisted.

"Oh, of course," he answered, smiling. And now when she answered that she had left her best violin with the Tenor, it reminded him: "By the bye, yes," he said. "How does the story progress? I was thinking about it in the train on my way home, but I forgot to ask you—other things have put it out of my head since I arrived."

"And out of mine too," said Angelica thoughtfully—"at least I forgot to tell you—which is extraordinary, by the way, for matters are now so complicated between us that I can think of nothing else. It will be quite a relief to discuss the subject with you."

She drew up a little chair and sat down opposite to him, with her violin across her knee, and began immediately, and with great earnestness, looking up at him as she spoke. She described all that had happened on that last sad occasion minutely—the row down the river, the moonrise, the music, the accident, the rescue, the discovery, and its effect upon the Tenor; and all with her accustomed picturesqueness, speaking in the first person singular, and with such force and fluency that Mr. Kilroy was completely carried away, and declared, as on previous occasions, that she set the whole thing before him so vividly he found it impossible not to believe every word of it.

"And what are you going to do now?" he asked, with his indulgent smile, when she had told him all that there was to tell at present.

"You cannot end it there, you know, it would be such a lame conclusion."

"That was just what I thought," she answered, "and I wanted to ask you. As a man of the world, what would you advise me to do?"

"Well," he began—then he rose and held out his hand to help her up from her little chair. "Will you come out and sit on the terrace," he said, "and allow me to smoke? The night is warm."

Angelica nodded, and preceded him through one of the open windows.

"Well," Mr. Kilroy resumed, when he had lit his cigar, and settled himself in a cane chair comfortably, with Angelica in another opposite. "What a lovely night it is after the rain yesterday"—this by way of parenthesis. "Rather close, though," he observed, and then he returned to the subject. "I suppose you mean that you do not want it to be all over between you?"

"Between the Tenor and the Boy," she corrected. "The whole charm of the acquaintance, don't you see, for me, consisted in that footing—I don't know how to express it, but perhaps you can grasp what I mean."

Mr. Kilroy reflected. "I am afraid," he said at last, "that footing cannot be resumed. The influences of sex, once the difference is recognised, are involuntary. But, if he has no objection, I do not see why you should not be friends, and intimate friends too; and with that sort of man you might make some advance, especially as you are entirely in the wrong. I am not saying, you know, that this would be the proper thing to do as a rule; but here are exceptional circumstances, and here is an exceptional man."

"Now, that is significant," said Angelica, jeering. "Society is so demoralised that if a man is caught conducting himself with decency and honour on all occasions when a woman is in question, you involuntarily exclaim that he is an exceptional man!"

Mr. Kilroy smoked on in silence for some time with his eyes fixed on the quiet stars. His attitude expressed nothing but extreme quiescence, yet Angelica felt reproved.

"Don't snub me, Daddy," she exclaimed at last. "I came to you in my difficulty, and you do not seem to care."

Mr. Kilroy looked at his cigar, and flicked the ash from the end of it.

"Tell me how to get out of this horrid dilemma," Angelica pursued. "I shall never know a moment's peace until we have resumed our acquaintance on a different footing, and I have been able to make him some reparation."

"Ah—reparation?" said Mr. Kilroy dubiously.

"Do you think it is impossible?" Angelica demanded.

"Not impossible, perhaps, but very difficult," he answered. "Really, Angelica," he broke off laughingly, "I quite forget every now and again that we are romancing. You must write this story for me."

"We are *not* romancing," she said impatiently, "and I couldn't write it, it is too painful. Besides, we don't seem to get any further."

"Let me see where we were?" Mr. Kilroy replied, humouring her good-naturedly. "It is a pity you cannot unmarry yourself. You see, being married complicates matters to a much greater extent than if you had been single. A girl might, under certain circumstances, be forgiven for an escapade of the kind, but when a married woman

does such a thing it is very different. Still, if you can get well out of it, of course the difficulty will make the *dénouement* all the more interesting."

"But I don't see how I am to get well out of it—unless you will go to him yourself, and tell him you know the whole story, and do whatever your tact and goodness suggest to set the matter right." She bent forward with her arms folded on her lap, looking up at him eagerly as she spoke, and beating a "devil's tattoo," with her slender feet, on the ground impatiently the while.

"No," he answered deliberately, "that would not be natural. You see, either you must be objectionable or your husband must; and upon the whole, I think you had better sacrifice the husband, otherwise you lose your readers' sympathy."

"Make *you* objectionable, Daddy!" Angelica exclaimed. "The thing is not to be done! I could never have asked you to marry me if you had been objectionable. And I don't see why I should be so either—entirely, you know. If I had been quite horrid, I should not have appreciated you, and the Tenor and Uncle Dawne and Dr. Galbraith—oh dear! Why is it, when good men are so scarce, that I should know so many, and yet be tormented with the further knowledge that you are all exceptional, and crime and misery continue because it is so? What is the use of knowing when one can do nothing?"

Again Mr. Kilroy looked up at the quiet stars; but Angelica gave him no time to reflect.

"I don't see why I should be severely consistent," she said. "Let me be a mixture—not a foul mixture, but one of those which eventually result in something agreeable, after going through a period of fermentation, during which they throw up an unpleasant scum that has to be removed."

"That would do," Mr. Kilroy responded gravely.

"But just now," Angelica resumed, "it seems as if I should be obliged to let matters take their course and do nothing, which is intolerable."

"Oh, but you must do something," Mr. Kilroy decided; "and the first thing will be to go to him."

"Go to him!" she ejaculated.

"Well, yes," he rejoined. "Naturally you will feel it. Now that you are no longer *The Boy* made courageous by his unsuspecting confidence—I mean the Tenor's—it is quite proper for you to be shy and ashamed of yourself. As a woman, of course, you are not wanting in modesty. But there is no help for it; he would never come to you, so you must go to him. I quite think that you owe him any reparation you can make. And, knowing the sort of man he is—you have made his character well known in the place, have you not?"

Angelica nodded. "Well, then, a visit from a lady of your rank will create no scandal, nor even cause any surprise, I should think, if you go quite openly; for you are known to be a musician, and might therefore reasonably be supposed to have business with one of the profession. I wish, by the bye, you had made him an ugly man, with kind eyes, you know; it would have been more original, I think. But you will find out who he is, of course?"

"No. I hardly think so!" Angelica answered. "But you would advise me to go to him?"—this by way of bringing him back to the subject.

"Yes"—with a vigorous attempt to draw his cigar to life again, it having gone all but out—"I should advise you to go to him boldly, by day, of

course; and just make him forgive you. Insist on it; you will find he cannot resist you. Then you will start afresh on a new footing as you wish, and the whole thing will end happily."

"You forget, though, he did forgive me."

"There are various kinds of forgiveness," Mr. Kilroy replied. "There is the forgiveness that washes its hands of the culprit and refuses to be further troubled on his behalf—the least estimable form of forgiveness; and there is that which proves itself sincere by the effort which is afterward made to help the penitent: that is the kind of forgiveness you should try to secure."

"But somehow it still seems unfinished," Angelica grumbled.

"If you had been single now," Mr. Kilroy suggested, "you would, in the natural course of events, have married the Tenor."

"Oh no!" Angelica vigorously interposed. "I should never have wanted to marry him. Can't I make you understand? The side of my nature which I turned to him as the *Boy* is the only one he has touched, and I could never care for him in any other relation."

"Well, I don't know," Mr. Kilroy observed thoughtfully. "It may be so, of course, but it is unusual."

"And so am I unusual," Angelica answered quickly; "but there will be plenty more like me by and by. Now don't look 'Heaven forbid!' at me in that way."

"That was not in the least what I intended to express," he answered, with his kindly smile-indulgent. "And I am inclined to think that your own idea of loving him without being in love with him is the best; it is so much less commonplace. But what do you think"—speaking as if struck by a bright idea—"what do you think of putting him under a great obligation which will bind him to you in gratitude, and secure his friendship? You might, with great courage and devotion, and all that sort of thing, you know, find out all about him, prove him to be a prince or something—the heir to great estates and hereditary privileges, with congenial duties attached. The idea is not exactly new, but your treatment of it would be sure to be original"—

Angelica interrupted him by a decisive shake of her head. "But about going to him?" she demanded—"you do not think, speaking as a man of the world yourself, and remembering that he knows the world too although he *is* such a saint; you do not think such a proceeding on my part will lower me still further in his estimation?"

"Well, no," Mr. Kilroy replied. "I feel quite sure it will have just the opposite effect. As a man of the world he will know what it has cost a young lady like you to humble herself to that extent; as a saint he will appreciate the act, looking at it in the light of a penance, which, in point of fact, it would be; and as a human being he will be touched by your confidence in him, and the value you set upon his esteem. So that, altogether, I am convinced it is the proper thing to do."

Angelica made no reply, but got up languidly after a moment's thought, carefully ruffled his hair with both hands as she passed, called him "Dear old Daddy!" and retired.

Mr. Kilroy did not like to have his hair ruffled in that way, particularly as he was apt to forget, and appear in public with it all standing up on end; but he bore the infliction as it was intended for a caress. Angelica's caresses always took some such form; she assured him he would like

them in time, and he sincerely hoped he might, but the time had not yet arrived.

The following evening they were again in the drawing-room together. Mr. Kilroy was reading the papers, Angelica was sitting with her hands before her doing nothing—not even listening, though she affected to do so, when he read aloud such news as he thought would interest her. The week was nearly over, and nothing more had been said about her return to town. She was just wondering now if Mr. Kilroy had found the week a long one. She had given him more than enough of her company and made him feel—at least so she hoped, slipping back to the mood in which he had found her upon his arrival—made him feel how pleasant a thing it is to dwell alone in your own house with no one to trouble you; and she quite expected to find, when it came to the point, that he would cheerfully take no for an answer.

Presently she rose, went to a mirror that was let into the wall, and looked at herself critically for some seconds.

"Should you think it possible for anybody to fall so hopelessly in love with my appearance that, when love was found to be out of the question, friendship would also be impossible?" she demanded in a tone of contempt for herself, turning half round from the mirror to look at Mr. Kilroy as she spoke.

Mr. Kilroy glanced at her over his *pince-nez*. That same appearance which she disliked to be valued for was a never-failing source of pleasure to him, but he took good care to conceal the fact. On this occasion, however, he fell into the natural mistake of supposing that she was coquettishly trying to extricate a compliment from him for once, an amusing feminine device to which she seldom descended.

"Well, I should think it extremely probable," he replied—"if he were not already in love with another woman."

"Or an idea?" Angelica suggested, with a yawn; and Mr. Kilroy, perceiving that he had somehow missed the point, took up his paper, and finished the paragraph he had been reading. Then he said, looking up at her again with admiring eyes, "I do not think I quite like that red frock of yours. It seems to me that it is making you look alarmingly pale."

Angelica returned to the mirror, and once more looked at herself deliberately. "Perhaps it does," she answered; "but at anyrate you shall not see it again." And having spoken she sauntered out on to the terrace with a listless step, and from thence she wandered off into the gardens, where the scent of roses set her thinking, thinking, thinking. She sought to change the direction of her thoughts, but vainly; they would go on in spite of her, and they were always busy with the same subject, always working at the one idea. *Israfil! Israfil!* There was nobody like him, and how badly she had treated him, and how good he had always been to her, and how could she go on day after day like this with no hope of ever seeing him again in the old delightful intimate way? and oh! if she had not done this! and oh! if she had not done that! It might all have been so different if only *she* had been different; but now how could it come right? A hopeless, hopeless, hopeless case. She had lost his respect for ever. And not to be respected! A woman, and not respected!

She went down to the lodge gate where they had parted, and remembered the chill misery of the moment, the grey morning light, the pelting rain. Ah—with a sudden pang—she only thought

of it now. How wet he must have been! He had lent her his one umbrella, and she had kept it; she had it still; she had allowed him to walk back in the rain without wrap or protection of any kind.

And now she came to think of it, he had never changed his things after he had rescued her. He never did think of himself—the most selfless man alive; and she, alas! had never thought of him—never considered his comfort in anything. Oh, remorse! If only she could have those times all over again, or even one of those times so recklessly misspent! He might have lost his life through that wetting. Or what if he lost his voice? Singers have notoriously delicate throats. But happily nothing so untoward had resulted; she was saved the blame of a crowning disaster—she knew, because she had heard of him going to the cathedral as usual; she had taken the trouble to inquire, not daring to go herself, and she had seen in that day's paper that he would sing the anthem to-morrow, so evidently he had not suffered, which was some comfort—and yet—how could he go to the cathedral every day and sing as usual, just as if nothing had happened? It might be fortitude, but, considering the circumstances, it was far more likely to be indifference. And so she continued to torment herself; thinking, always thinking, without any power to stop.

The next day Mr. Kilroy returned to town alone. He had only once again alluded to his wish that she should accompany him, and that he did quite casually, for she had succeeded in making him content that she should refuse. She had convinced him that her exuberant spirits were altogether too much for him. He had not had an hour's peace since his arrival, though the place would have held a regiment comfortably; and what would it be if he shut her up in London, in a confined space, comparatively speaking, and against her will too? He left by an early afternoon train, and she drove to the station with him to see him off. She had enjoyed his visit very much—so she said—especially the last part of it, when she had surpassed herself in ingenious devices to exact attention. All that, while it lasted, really had distracted her; but the occupation was not happiness—far from it! It was a sort of intoxicant rather, which made her oblivious for the moment of her discontent. At every pause, however, remorse possessed her, remorse for the past; yet it never occurred to her that her present misdemeanours would be past in time, and might also entail consequences which would in turn come to be causes of regret.

But now, when she had succeeded in getting rid of Mr. Kilroy, she was sorry. She stood on the platform watching the train until it was out of sight, and then she returned to her carriage with a distinct feeling of loss and pain. What should she do with the rest of the day? She even thought of the next and the next and the next; a long vista of weary days, through which she must live alone and to no purpose, a waste of life, a waste of life—a barren waste, a land of sand and thorns. She wished she was a child again playing pranks with Diavolo; and she also wished that she had never played pranks, since it was so hard to break herself of the habit; yet she enjoyed them still, and assured herself that she was only discontented now because she had absolutely nobody left to torment. Then she tried to imagine what it would be to have Diavolo with her in her present mood, and instantly a squall of conflicting emotions burst in her breast, angry emotions for the most part, because he was

no longer with her in either sense of the word, because he was indifferent to all that concerned her inmost soul, and was content to live like a lady himself, a trivial idle life, the chief business of which was pleasure, unremunerative pleasure, upon which he would have had her expend her highest faculties in return for what? Admiring glances at herself—and her gowns *perhaps!*

“But what should she do with the rest of the day?” Her handsome horses were prancing through Morningquest as she asked herself the question; and there was a little milliner on the footway looking up with kindly envy at the lady no older than herself, sitting alone in her splendid carriage, with her coachman and footman and *everything*—nothing to do included, very much included, being, in fact, the principal item.

“I should be helping her,” thought Angelica. “She is ill-fed, overworked, and weakly, while I am pampered and strong; but there is no rational way for me to do it. If I took her home with me and kept her in luxurious idleness for the rest of her days, as I could very well afford to do, I should only have dragged her down from the dignity of her own honest exertions into the slough of self-indulgence in which I find myself, and made bad worse. *She* should have more and *I* should have less; but how to arrive at that? Isolated efforts seem to be abortive—yet”—She stopped the carriage, and looked back. The girl had disappeared. She desired the coachman to return, and kept him driving up and down some time in the hope of finding her, but the girl was nowhere to be seen, nor could they trace her upon inquiry. “Another opportunity lost,” thought Angelica. “A few pounds in her pocket would have been a few weeks' rest for her, a few good meals, a few innocent pleasures—she would have been strengthened and refreshed; and I should have been the better too for the recollection of a good deed done.”

The carriage had pulled up close to the curb, and the footman stood at the door waiting for orders.

“What is there to do?” thought Angelica. “Where shall I go? Not home. The house is empty. Calls? I might as well waste time in that way as any other.” She gave the order, and passed the next two hours in making calls.

Toward the end of the afternoon, she found herself within about a mile of Hamilton House, and determined to go and see her mother. There was no real confidence between them, but Lady Adeline's presence was soothing, and Angelica thought she would just like to go and sit in the same room with her, have tea there, and not be worried to talk. These peaceful intentions were frustrated, however, by the presence of some visitors who were there when she arrived, and of others who came pouring in afterward, in such numbers that it seemed as if the whole neighbourhood meant to call that afternoon. Mr. Hamilton Wells was making tea, and talking as usual with extreme precision. Angelica found him seated at a small but solid black ebony table, with a massive silver tea-service before him. He folded his hands when she entered, and, without rising, awaited the erratic kiss which it was her habit to deposit somewhere about his head when she met him; which ceremony concluded, he gravely poured her out a cup of tea, with sugar *and* milk, but *no* cream, as he observed; and then he peeped into the teapot, and proceeded to fill it up from the great urn which was bubbling and boiling in front of him. He always made tea in his own house;

it was a fad of his, and the more people he had to make it for the better pleased he was. A servant was stationed at his elbow, whose duty it was to place the cups as his master filled them on a silver salver held by another servant, who took them to offer to the visitors who were seated about the room. Angelica knew the ceremony well, and slipped away into a corner, as soon as she could escape from her father's punctilious inquiries about her own health and her husband's; and there she became wedged by degrees, as the room grew gradually crowded. Beside her was a mirror, in which she could see all who arrived and all that happened, and involuntarily she became a silent spectator, the medium of the mirror imparting a curious unreality to the scene, which invested it with all the charm of a dream; and, as in a dream, she looked and listened, while clearly, beneath the main current of conversation, and unbroken by the restless change and motion of the people, her own thoughts flowed on consciously and continuously. Half turned from the rest of the room, she sat at a table, listlessly turning the leaves of an album, at which she glanced when she was not looking into the mirror.

She saw the party from Morne enter the room—Aunt Fulda and her eternal calm! She looked just the same in the market-place at Morningquest, that unlucky night when the Tenor met the Boy. She was always the same. Is it human to be always the same?

"Who is that lady?" Angelica heard a girl ask of a benevolent-looking elderly clergyman who was standing with his back to her. "Oh, that is Lady Fulda Guthrie, the youngest daughter of the Duke of Morningquest," he replied. "She is a Roman Catholic, a pervert, as we say, but still a very noble woman. Religious, too, in spite of the errors of Rome; one must confess it. A pity she ever left us, a great pity—but of course *her* loss as well as ours. We require such women now, though; but somehow we do not keep them. And I cannot think why."

"Too cold," Angelica's thoughts ran on. "Hollow, shallow, inconsistent—loveless. Catholicism equals a modern refinement of pagan principles with all the old deities on their best behaviour thrown in; while Protestantism is an ecclesiastical system founded on fetish"—

"You are a stranger in the neighbourhood?" the benevolent old clergyman was saying. "Only on a visit? Ah! then of course you don't know. They are a remarkable family, somewhat eccentric. Ideala, as they call her, is no relation, only an intimate friend of Lady Claudia Beaumont's, and of the Marquis of Dawne. The three are usually together. The New Order is an outcome of their ideas, a sort of feminine *vehmgericht* so well as I can make out. But no good can come out of that kind of thing, and I trust as you are a very young lady"—

"Not so young—I am twenty-two."

"Indeed!" with a smile and a bow—"I should not have thought you more than nineteen. But twenty-two is not a great age either! and I do hope you will not be drawn into that set. They are sadly misguided. The ladies scoff at the wisdom of men, look for inconsistencies, and *laugh* at them—actually! It is very bad taste, you know; and they call it an impertinence for us to presume to legislate exclusively in matters which specially concern their sex, and also object to the interference of the Church, as being a distinctly masculine organisation, in the regulation of their lives. Men, they declare, have always said

that they do not understand women, and it is of course the height of folly for them to presume to express opinions upon a subject they do not understand. Now, can anything be more absurd? And it is dangerous besides—absolutely dangerous."

"Yet I hear that they are very good women," the girl ventured, and Angelica thought that she detected a note of derision, levelled at the clerical exponent of these reprehensible ideas, beneath the demure remark.

"Oh, saintlike!" he answered cordially; "but still to blame. Misguided, you know, so I venture to warn you. How can they presume to reject proper direction? Their pride is excessive, but the Church will receive them, and extend her benefits to them still if only they will humble themselves"—Conversation over the room entered upon a crescendo passage at this moment, and Angelica lost the rest of the sentence in the general outburst.

A new voice presently claimed her attention. The speaker was a young man addressing another young man, and both had their backs turned to her, and were looking hard at a portrait of herself hung so low on the wall that they had to stoop to look into it.

"Painted by a good man," were the first words she heard.

"Rather fine face; who is it?"

"Daughter of the house, don't you know? Old duke's granddaughter. Married old Kilroy of Ilverthorpe."

"Ah! Then that was done some time ago, I expect."

"Oh dear no! Only last year. It was exhibited in the last Academy."

"Then she's still young?" He peered into the portrait once more with an evident increase of interest. "She looks as if she might be larky."

"Can't make her out, on my word," was the response, delivered in a tone of strong disapproval. "Married to an elderly chap—not old exactly, but a good twenty years older than herself; who gives her her head to an unlimited extent, yet she says she doesn't care to have a lot of men bothering about, and, by Jove! she acts as if she meant it. It's beastly unnatural, you know."

"Well, I must say I like a woman to be a woman," the other rejoined, surveying the portrait from this new point of view. "But that's the way with all that Guthrie lot—and you know Dawne himself is *pi*!"—so what can you expect of the rest? the tone implied.

Suddenly Angelica felt her face flush. One of her ungovernable fits of fury was upon her. She sprang to her feet, upsetting her chair with a crash, and turned upon the two young men, who, recognising her, changed colour and countenance, and shrank back apologetically.

Her uncle, seeing something wrong, had hurried across the room to her with anxious eyes.

"Who are those people?" she asked him, indicating the two young men.

Lord Dawne, always all courtesy and consideration himself, was shocked by her tone.

"I think you have met Captain Leicester before," he gravely reminded her. "Let me introduce"—

"No, for Heaven's sake!" Angelica broke forth, glaring angrily at the offenders.

She walked away abruptly with the words on her lips, leaving Lord Dawne to settle with the delinquents as he thought fit. Her mother, who was seated at the farther end of the room talking to a charming-looking old lady Angelica did not

know, stretched out a hand to her as she approached, and drew her to a seat beside her; and instantly Angelica felt herself in another moral atmosphere.

"This is my daughter, Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe," Lady Adeline said to the old lady, then added, smiling, "There are so many Mrs. Kilroys in this neighbourhood, one is obliged to specify. Angelica dear, Mrs. Power."

Angelica bowed, and then leaned back in her chair so that she might not have to join in the conversation; but she listened in an absent sort of way, feeling soothed the while by the tone of refinement, of earnestness and sincerity, in which every word was uttered: "No, I am sure," Lady Adeline was saying, "I am sure no one who can judge would mistake that lineless calm for a device to cover all emotion."

"I never have done so myself," Mrs. Power rejoined, "although I do not know her history. But I should say, judging merely from observation, that the fineness of her countenance, which consists more in the expression of it than in either form or feature, though both are good, is the result of long self-repression, self-denial, and stern discipline, the evidence of a true and beautiful soul, and of a noble mind at rest after some heavy sorrow, or some great temptation, which, being resisted, has proved a blessing and a source of strength."

Angelica wondered of whom they were speaking, and, following the direction of their eyes, met those of Ideala fixed a little sadly, a little wistfully upon herself. Young people, as they grow up, find their own life's history so absorbingly interesting that they think little of what may have happened, or may be happening, to those whom they have always known as "grown up"; and it had never occurred to Angelica that any one of the placid, gentle-mannered women among whom she had always lived, in contrast to them herself as a comet is to the fixed stars, had ever experienced any extremes of emotion. Now, however, she felt as if her eyes had been suddenly opened, and she looked with a new interest at her old familiar friends, and wondered, her mind busy for the moment with what she had just heard. She could not keep it there, however; involuntarily it slipped away—back—back to that first attempt of hers to see the hidden wheels of life go round—the market-place, the Tenor.

Suddenly she felt as if she must suffocate if she did not get out into the air, and rising quickly she stole from the room, and out of the house unobserved. But the babble of voices seemed to pursue her. She stood for a moment on the steps, and felt as if the people were all preparing to stream out of the drawing-room after her, to surround her, and keep up the distracting buzz in her ears by their idle, inconsequent talk. Their horses were prancing about the drive; their empty carriages, with cushions awry and wraps flung untidily down on the seats, or even hanging over the doors and grazing the dusty wheels, gave her a sense of disorder and discomfort from which she felt she must fly.

"Where to, ma'am, please?" the footman asked, touching his hat when he had closed the door.

"Fountain Towers," Angelica answered. She would go and see Dr. Galbraith.

When the carriage drew up under the porch at Fountain Towers, she sat some time as if unaware of the fact; but the footman's patient face as he waited with his hand on the handle of the door, ready to help her to descend, recalled her.

She walked into the house as she had always been accustomed to do, and instantly thoughts of Diavolo came crowding. Why had Diavolo ceased to be all in all to her? She asked herself the question through a mist of tears which gathered in her eyes, but did not fall, and at the same moment her busy mind took note of the singular appearance of a statue on the staircase as she beheld it in blurred outline through her bedimmed vision.

She found Dr. Galbraith in the library sitting at his writing table. The door was half open, so she entered without knocking, and walked up to him.

He turned at the sound of her step, rose smiling, and held out his hand when he saw who it was.

"I have been thinking about you this afternoon," he remarked. "Sit down." But before she had settled herself his practised eyes had detected something wrong. "What is it?" he asked.

"Nerves," she answered. "Give me something."

He went to an inner room, and returned presently with a colourless draught in a medicine glass. She took it from him and drank it mechanically, and then he placed a cushion for her, and she leant back in the deep arm-chair, and closed her eyes. Dr. Galbraith looked at her for a few seconds seriously, and then returned to his writing. Presently Lord Dawne came in, and raised his eyebrows inquiringly when he saw Angelica, who seemed to be asleep.

"Overwrought," Dr. Galbraith replied to the silent inquiry.

"There was a *fracas* at Hamilton House just now," her uncle observed. "But how is all this going to end?"

"Well, of course; but you had better leave her to me."

Lord Dawne quietly withdrew.

"Oh, the blessed rest and peace of this place!" Angelica exclaimed shortly afterward.

Dr. Galbraith, who had resumed his writing, put down his pen again, and turned to her.

"Talk to me," she said. "I've lost my self-respect. I've lost heart. I'm a good-for-nothing, worthless person. How am I to get out of this dreadful groove?"

"Live for others. Live openly," he answered slowly, looking up beyond her—into futurity—with a kindly light in his deep grey eyes, a something of hope, of confidence, of encouragement expressed in his strong, plain face.

Angelica bowed her head. The familiar phrases had a new significance now, and diverted the stream of her reflections into another channel. She folded her hands on her lap and sat motionless once more, with her eyes fixed on the ground.

Dr. Galbraith was a specialist in mental maladies. He knew exactly how much to say, and when to say it. If a text were as much as the patient required or could bear, he never made the mistake of preaching a sermon upon it in addition; and so for the third time he took up his pen and returned to his work, leaving Angelica engaged in sober thought, and happily quiescent.

CHAPTER III

It was late when at last she went home, but the drive of many miles in the fresh evening air

helped to revive her. She had dreaded the return. The place seemed empty to her imagination, and strange and chill, as a south room in which we have sat and been glad with friends all the bright morning does, if by chance we return alone when the sun has departed.

And the place was dismal. There was no one to welcome her. Even her well-trained servants were out of the way for once, and she felt her heart sink as she crossed the deserted hall to go upstairs, and saw long lines of doors, shut for the most part, or, if open, showing big rooms beyond silent and tenantless. As she passed the library she had noticed her husband's chair half turned from his writing table, just as he had left it, probably, that very morning. It seemed a long time since then. He must have come to his journey's end—ages ago. She wondered if he had felt it as dreary on arriving as she did now, and an unaccustomed wish to be with him, in order to make things pleasanter for him, here obtruded itself. It was one of the least selfish thoughts she had had lately, and this was also one of the very few occasions on which his leaving her had not occasioned her a sense of liberty restored, which was the one unmixed delight she had hitherto experienced.

Her mind was racked by inconsistencies, but she did not perceive it herself, otherwise she must also have observed that she was running up the whole gamut of her past moods and experiences, only to find how unsatisfactory in its unstableness and futility was each. And she might still further have perceived how fatal the habit of living from day to day without any settled purpose, a mere cork of a creature on the waters of life, at the mercy of every current of impulse, is to that permanent content to which a steady effort to do right at all events, whatever else we may not do, and right only whatever happens, alone gives rise, making thereof a sure foundation of quiet happiness out of which countless pleasures, known only to those who possess it, spring perceptibly—or to which they come like butterflies to summer flowers, enriching them with their beauty and vitality while they stay, and leaving them none the poorer when they depart, but rather, it may be, gainers, by the fertilising memories which remain.

Angelica had gone to her room to dress for the evening as usual. She had no idea of shirking the ordinary routine of daily life because her mind was perturbed. But that duty over, she descended to the drawing-room to wait until dinner should be announced, and so found herself alone with her own thoughts once more. She went to one of the fireplaces, and stood with her hands folded on the edge of the mantelpiece, and her forehead resting on them, looking down at the flowers and foliage plants which concealed the grate.

"You cannot go on like this, you know," she mentally ejaculated, apostrophising herself.

Then she became conscious of a great sense of loneliness, the kind of loneliness of the heart from which there is no escape except in the presence of one who knows what the trouble is and can sympathise. She had been half inclined to confide in Dr. Galbraith, and now she regretted she had not, but presently, passing into a contrary mood, she was glad; what good could he have done? And as for her husband, an empty house was better than a bad tenant. This was before dinner was announced; but afterward, at dinner, sitting in solitary state with the servants behind her, and a book to keep her in countenance,

she made a grievance of his absence, and then sighed for such company as the seven more who were entertained in that house which was swept and garnished for another purpose, she fancied, but she could not recollect what, and it was too much trouble to try—so her thoughts rambled on uncontrolled—only she believed they were merry, and that was what she was not; but she would be very soon in spite of everything—in pursuance of which resolve she wrote several notes after dinner, asking people she knew well enough to kindly dispense with the ceremony of a long invitation and come and lunch with her tomorrow; and she despatched a groom on horseback with the notes that there might be no delay. She even thought of making up a house party, but here her interest and energy flagged, and she left the execution of that project till next day.

Then she relapsed into her regretful, discontented mood. If only—if only that wretched accident had never occurred, how different would her feelings have been at this moment, was one of her reflections as she sat alone on the terrace outside the great deserted reception rooms. She would have been waiting now till the house was quiet, and then she would have dashed up to her room to dress, with that exquisite sense of freedom which made the whole delight of the thing, and in half an hour she might have been the *Boy with Israfil*.

"You cannot go on like this, you know," Angelica repeated to herself. "You must do something."

But what? Involuntarily her mind returned to the Tenor. If she could win his respect she felt she could start afresh with a clear conscience and a steadfast determination to—what was it Dr. Galbraith had suggested? "Live openly. Live for others."

But how to win the Tenor back to tolerate her? If she would make him her friend she knew that she must be entirely true—in thought, word, and deed; to every duty, to every principle of right; and how could she be that if there were any truth in the theory of hereditary predisposition, coming as she did of a race foredoomed apparently to the opposite course? It was folly to contend with fate when fate took the form of a long line of ancestors who had made a family commandment for themselves, which was, "Be decent to all seeming! but sin all the same to your heart's content," and had kept it courageously—at least the men had—but then the women had been worthy—in which thought she suddenly perceived that there was food for reflection; for was not this contradictory fact a proof that it was a good deal a matter of choice after all? And here the Tenor's parting words recurred to her, and with them came the recollection of the impression made at the moment by the deep yet diffident tone of earnest conviction in which he had uttered that last assurance: "You will do some good in the world—you will be a good woman yet, I know—I know you will."

Should she? was the question she now asked herself. Were the words prophetic? she wondered. And from that moment her thoughts took a new departure, and she was able, as it were, to stand aloof and look back at herself as she had been, and forward to herself as she might yet become. In this quiet hour of retrospect she was quite ready to confess her sins. She was sincerely sorry she had deceived the Tenor. But why was she sorry? Why, simply because he had found her out; simply because there was an

end of a charming adventure—though less on that account than on others; for of course she knew that the end was near, that they must have parted soon in any case. It was the manner of the parting that caused her such regret. She had lost his affection, lost his confidence—lost the pleasure of his acquaintance, she supposed, which was more than she could bear. If he met her in the street he would probably look the other way. Would he? Oh! The very notion stung her. She sprang to her feet and threw up her hands; and then, as if goaded by a lash, but without any distinct idea, she ran down the steps headlong into the garden, and so on through the park till she came to the river. When she got there, she stopped at the landing-place, not knowing why she had come; and as she stood there, trying to collect her thoughts, the absence of some familiar object forced itself upon her attention—her boat! It must have been lost the night of the accident. She did not know whether it had sunk or not, but there was no name on it, so that, even if it had been found, it could not have been restored to her unless she had claimed it. And while she thought this, she was conscious of another pang of regret. She knew that had the boat been there, her next impulse would have been to go to the Tenor just as she was, bareheaded, and in her thin evening-dress. With what object, though? To beg for the honour of his acquaintance, she supposed! But, alas! she could not sneer in earnest, or laugh in earnest, at any absurdity she chose to think there was in the idea. For she acknowledged—in her heart of hearts she knew—that the acquaintance of such a man *was* an honour, especially to her, as she humbly insisted, although she had not broken any of the commandments, and never would, and never could.

Slowly she returned to the house. A servant met her on the terrace, and asked her if she should require anything more that night. Then she discovered the lateness of the hour, ordered the household to bed, and retired to her own room. There she extinguished the lights, threw the windows wider open, and sat looking out into the dim mysterious night.

Angelica loved the night. No matter what her mood might be, she felt its charm, and something also of the pride-subduing, hallowed influence which is peculiarly its own; and now, as she leant, looking out, all the beauty of it, and its heavenly purity, began to steal into her heart and to soften it. Slowly, as the tide goes out when the sea is tempestuous, the waves returning again and again with angry burst and flow to cover the same spot, as if loath to leave it, but receding inevitably till in the farther distance their harsh, impetuous roar sinks to a babble when heard from the place where they lately raged, which itself seems the safer for the contrast between the now of quiet and firmness and the then of shifting sand and watery fury; so it was with Angelica's turmoil of mind, the foaming discontent, the battling projects—by slow degrees, they all subsided; and after the storm of uncertainty there came something like the calm of a settled purpose. To be good, to ascend to the higher life—if that meant to feel like this always she would be good—if in her lay such power. She could not be wholly without religion, because she found in herself a reverence for what was religion in others. And what after all is religion? An attitude of the mind which develops in us the power to love, reverence, and practise all that constitutes moral probity. But

how to attain to this? By trying and trusting. Faith, that was it, faith in the power of goodness. Upon the recognition of this simple truth, her spirit wings unfurled, and slowly, as her senses ceased to be importunate, she became possessed by some idea of deathless love and longing which fired her soul with its heroism, and filled her heart with its pathos, until both mind and hands together unconsciously assumed the attitude of prayer.

She did not go to bed at all that night, but just sat there by the open window, patiently waiting for the dawn. Nor did she feel the time long. Her whole being thrilled to this new sensation and was subdued by it, so that she remained motionless and rapturously absorbed. It might only last till daybreak; but while it did last, it was certainly intense.

It lasted longer than that, however. It even survived the day and the luncheon party to which she had in a rash moment invited her friends. She had determined to go to the Tenor that very afternoon in the way her husband had suggested.

At first she thought she would drive, but it was a long way round by the road, much longer than by the river, and so she decided to walk, although the weather was inclined to be tempestuous. She crossed by the ferry, thinking she would, if possible, meet the Tenor as he came away from the afternoon service. In that hope, however, she was disappointed, for when she got to the cathedral she found the service over, the congregation dispersed, and the doors locked. There was nothing for it then but to go to his own house. With a fast beating heart she crossed the road, and paused at the little gate. She felt now that she had made a mistake. She should have taken her husband's advice and come in state; she would not have felt half so frightened and awkward if she could have sat in her carriage, and sent the footman to inquire if the Tenor would do her the favour to allow her to speak to him for a moment. And what would he say to her now? And what should she say? Suppose he refused to see her at all, should she ever survive it? Could she take him by storm as the Boy would have done, and demand his friendship and kind consideration as a right? Oh, for some of the unblushing assurance which had distinguished the Boy! It must have been part of the costume. But surely her confidence would return at the right moment, and then she would be able to face him boldly. Having to knock at the door and ask for him was like the first plunge into cold water. Just to think of it took her breath away. But the window was doubtless unfastened as usual; should she go in by that? No. It was absurd, though, how she hesitated, especially after all that had happened; but be deterred by this most novel and uncomfortable shyness she would not! She had come so far, and it should not be for nothing. She would not go back until—

But now, at last, with a smile at her qualms and nervous tremors, she knocked resolutely. There was a little interval before the knock was answered, and she filled it with hope. She knew just how radiant she would feel as she came away successful. She experienced something of the relief and pleasure which should follow upon this pain, and then the door was opened by the Tenor's elderly housekeeper. The woman had that worn and worried look upon her face which is common among women of her class.

"Is your master at home?" Angelica asked,

not recollecting for the moment by what name he was known.

The woman looked at her curiously, as if to determine her social status before she committed herself. The question seemed to surprise her.

"He's gone," she answered dolefully. "Didn't you know?"

"Gone," Angelica echoed blankly. "Where?"

"Gone home," the woman answered.

"Gone home!" Angelica exclaimed, unable to conceal her dismay. "He has no home but this. Where is his home?"

The woman gave her another curious look, took a moment to choose her words, then blurted out, "He's dead, miss—didn't you know?—and buried yesterday."

CHAPTER IV

THE lonely man, after leaving Angelica that night, had returned to the Close, walking "like one that hath a weary dream." When he entered his little house, and the sitting-room where the lamp was still burning, its yellow light in sickly contrast to the pale twilight of the summer dawn which was beginning to brighten by that time, the discomfort consequent on disorder struck a chill to his heart.

The roses still lay scattered about the floor, but they had been trampled under foot and their beauty had suffered, their freshness was marred, and their perfume rising acrid from bruised petals, greeted him unwholesomely after the fresh morning air, and rendered the atmosphere faint and oppressive. The stand with the flower pots, much disarranged, stood as he had left it when he pulled it roughly aside to get at the grate, and the fire had burnt out, leaving blackened embers to add to the general air of dreariness and desertion. Angelica's violin lay under the grand piano where he had heedlessly flung it when he loosed it from her rigid grasp; and there were pipes and glasses and bottles about, chairs upset and displaced; books and papers, music and magazines, piled up in heaps untidily to be out of the way—all the usual signs, to sum up, which suggest that a room has been used over night for some unaccustomed purpose, convivial or the reverse, a condition known only to the early house-and-parlour maid as a rule, and therefore acting with peculiarly dismal effect upon the chance observer; but more dismal now to the weary Tenor than any room he had ever seen under similar circumstances by reason of the associations that clung about it.

He opened the window wide, extinguished the lamp, and began mechanically to put things away and arrange the chairs. The habit of doing much for himself prompted all this; anything that was not a matter of habit he never thought of doing. His things were drying on him, and he had forgotten that they had ever been wet. He had forgotten too that the night was past and over. He was heart-sick and weary, yet did not feel that there was any need of rest. The extraordinary lucidity of mind of which he had been conscious while his much loved "Boy" was in danger had left him now, and only a blurred recollection as of many incidents crowding thickly upon each other without order or sequence recurred to him. He suffered from a sense of loss, from an overpowering grief—the kind of grief which is all the worse to bear because it has not come in the course of nature but by the fault of man, a something that might have been helped, as when a friend is killed by accident, or lost to us otherwise than by death

the consequence of disease. But one persistent thought beset him, the same thing over and over again, exhausting him by dint of forced reiteration. The girl he had been idolising—well, there was no such person, and there never had been; that was all—yet what an *all*! In the first moment of the terrible calamity that had befallen him, it seemed now that there could have been nothing like the misery of this home returning—the barren, black despair of it. It was the hopeless difference between pain and paralysis; then he had suffered, but at least he could feel; now he felt nothing except that all feeling was over.

When he had finished the simple arrangement of his room, he still paced restlessly up and down, shaking back his yellow hair, and brushing his hand up over it as if the gesture eased the trouble of his mind.

"If even the Boy had been left me!" he thought, and it was the one distinct regret he formulated.

After a while his housekeeper arrived, a pleasant elderly woman who had attended him ever since he came to Morningquest.

It was not in his nature to let any personal matter, whether it were pain or pleasure, affect the temper of his intercourse with those about him, and the force of habit helped him now again to rouse himself and greet the woman in his usual kindly, courteous way, so that, being unobservant, she noticed no change in him except that he was up earlier than usual; but then he was always an early riser. She therefore set about her work unsuspectingly, and presently drove him out of the sitting-room with her dust-pan and brush, and he went upstairs. There, happening to catch a glimpse of his own haggard face and discreditable flannels in the mirror, he began to change mechanically, and dressed himself with all his habitual neatness and precision. Then a little choir boy came to be helped with his music. It was the one who sang the soprano solos in the cathedral, a boy with a lovely voice and much general as well as musical ability, both of which the Tenor laboured to help him to develop. He came every morning for lessons, and the Tenor gave him these, and such a breakfast also as a small boy loves; but the little fellow, to do him justice, cared more for the Tenor than the breakfast.

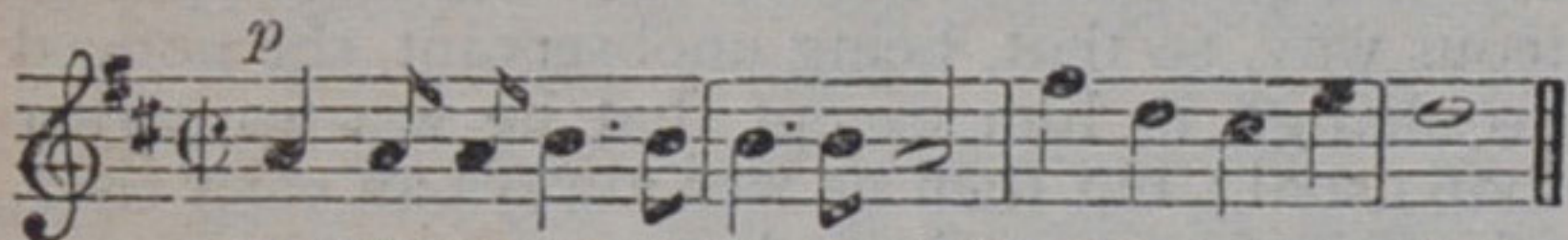
There were three services in the cathedral that day, and the Tenor went to each, but he did not sing. He seemed to have taken cold and was hoarse, with a slight cough, and a peculiar little stab in his chest and catching of the breath, which, however, did not trouble him much to begin with. But as the day advanced every bone in his body ached with a dull, wearying pain, and he was glad to go to bed early. Once there, the sense of fatigue was overpowering, yet he could not sleep until long past midnight, when he dropped off quite suddenly; or rather, as it seemed to him, when all at once he plunged headlong into the river to rescue the Boy, and began to go down, down, down to a never-ending depth, the weight of the water above him becoming greater and greater till the pressure was unbearable, and a horrid sense of suffocation, increasing every instant, impelled him to struggle to the surface, but vainly. He could not rise—and down, down, he continued to descend, reaching no bottom, yet dropping at last, before he could help himself, on a sharp stake, pointed like a dagger, that ran right through his chest. The pain aroused him with a great start, but the impression had been so vivid, that it was some time before he could shake off the sensation of descending with icy water

about him; and even when he was wide awake, and although he was bathed in perspiration, the feeling of cold remained, and so did the pain.

It was during that night that the weather changed.

The next day it was blowing a gale. Heavy showers began to fall at intervals, chilling the atmosphere, and finally settled into a steady down-pour, such as frequently occurs in the middle of summer, making everything indoors humid and unwholesome, and causing colds and sore throats and other unseasonable complaints.

The Tenor taught his little choir boy as usual in the morning, went to the three services, getting more or less wet each time, and then came home and tried to do some work, but was not equal to it—his head ached; then tried to smoke, but the pipe nauseated him; and finally resigned himself to idleness, and just sat still in his lonely room, lonely of heart himself, yet with his hands patiently folded, dreamily watching the rain as it beat upon the old cathedral opposite, and streamed from eave and gargyle, and splashed from the narrow spouting under the roof, making spreading pathways of dark moisture for itself on the grey stone walls wherever it overflowed. It was all "His Will" to the Tenor, and for His sake there was nothing he would not have borne heroically.



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

His cough was much worse that day, the pain in his chest was more acute, and his temperature rose higher and higher, yet he did not complain. He knew he was suffering from something serious now, but he derived from his perfect faith in the beneficence of the Power that orders all things an almost superhuman fortitude.

But as he sat there with his hands folded, his mind, busy with many things, returned inevitably to the old weary theme, just as, at the same time, Angelica's own was doing, but from the opposite point of view. Always, after a startling event, those who have been present as spectators, or taken some part in it, repeat their experiences, and make some remark upon them, again and again in exactly the same words, their minds working upon the subject like heat upon water that boils, forming it into bubbles which it bursts and reforms incessantly. He began each time with that remark of Angelica's about the change which mere dress effects, and went on to wonder at the transformation of a strong young woman into a slender, delicate-looking boy by it; and then went on to accept her conclusion that it was natural he should have been deceived, seeing that, in the first place, he had not the slightest suspicion, and in the second, he had never seen the "Boy" except in his own dimly lighted room, or out of doors at night—besides, it was not the first time that a boy had been successfully personated by a girl, a man by a woman; but here he found himself obliged to rehearse the instances which Angelica had quoted. Then he would reconsider the fact that the part had been well played; not only attitudes and gestures, but ideas and sentiments, and the proper expression of them, had been done to perfection—which led up again to another assertion of hers. She had been a boy for the time being, there was no doubt about that. And yet if he had had the slightest suspicion! There had been the shyness at first, which had worn off as it became apparent that the disguise was complete;

the horror of being touched or startled, of anything, as he now perceived, which might have caused a momentary forgetfulness, and so have led to self-betrayal; the boyishnesses which, alternating with older moods, might have suggested something, but had only charmed him; the womanishnesses of which, alas! there had been too few as seen by the light of this new revelation; the physical differences—but they had been cleverly concealed, as she said, by the cut of her clothing, and pads; the "funny head," however, about which they had both jested so often—oh dear! how sick he was of the whole subject! If only it would let him alone! But what pretty ways he had had—the "Boy"! What a dear, dear lad he had been with all his faults! Alas! alas! if only the Boy had been left him!

Then a pause. Then off again. He had been enchanted, like Reymond of Lusignan in olden times, by a creature that was half a monster. The Boy had been a reality to him, but the lady had never been more than a lovely dream, and the monster—well, the monster had not yet appeared, for that dark-haired girl in the unwomanly clothes, with pride on her lips and pain in her eyes, was no monster after all, but an erring mortal like himself, a poor weak creature to be pitied and prayed for. And the Tenor bowed his sunny head and prayed for her earnestly through all the long hours of solitary suffering which closed that day.

Then came another sleepless night, and another gloomy morning which brought his little chorister boy, whom he tried to teach as usual; but even the child saw what the effort cost him, and looked at him with great tender eyes solemnly, and was very docile.

Before the early service one of his fellow lay clerks came in to see how he was. They had all noticed the feverish cold from which he had appeared to be suffering the whole week, and this one, not finding him better, begged him to stay in that day and take care of himself for the sake of his voice. The Tenor brushed his hand back over his hair. He had forgotten that he ever had a voice. But at all events he must go to the morning service; after that he would stay at home. He longed for the Blessed Sacrament, which was always a "Holy Communion" to him; but he did not say so.

That afternoon he fell asleep in his easy-chair facing the window which looked out upon the cathedral—or into a troubled doze rather, from which he awoke all at once with a start, and, seeing the window shut, rose hurriedly to go and open it for the "Boy." He had done so before at night often when he chanced to forget it. But when he got to it now he had to clutch the frame to support himself, and he looked out stupidly for some seconds, wondering in a dazed way why the sun was shining when it should be dark. Then suddenly full consciousness returned, and he remembered. He should never open the window again for the Boy, never again.

He returned to his chair after that, and sat down to think.

When he began to understand it thoroughly—the meaning of the last incident—he was startled out of the apathy that oppressed him.

It became evident now that he was not merely suffering, but fast becoming disabled by illness, and it was time he let someone know, otherwise there might be confusion and annoyance about—his work—finding a substitute; and there would be a risk about—about—what was he trying to think of? Oh, her name. He might mention it

and be overheard by curious people if he lost his head—Angelica—Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe—he wished he could forget; but he would provide against the danger of repeating them aloud. He would telegraph to his own man—the fellow had written to him the other day, being in want of a place: a capital servant and discreet—glad he had thought of him. And then there were other matters—the sensible setting of his house in order which every man threatened with illness would be wise to see to. There were several letters he must write, one to the dean, amongst others, to ask him to come and see him. Writing was a great effort, but he managed with much difficulty to accomplish all that he had set himself to do, and then his mind was at rest.

Presently his old housekeeper came in with some tea. She was anxious about him.

"I've brought you this, sir," she said. "You've not tasted a solid morsel since Tuesday morning, and this is Thursday afternoon. Try and take something, sir; it will do you good. You must be getting quite faint, and indeed you look it."

"Now, I call that good of you," the Tenor answered hoarsely, as he took the cup from her hand. "I shall be glad to have some tea. I've been quite longing for something hot to drink."

The woman was examining his face with critical kindness. She noticed the constant attempt to cough, and the painful catching of the breath which rendered the effort abortive.

"I am afraid you are not at all well, sir," she said, expecting him to deny it, but he did not.

"I am not at all well, to tell you the truth," he confessed. "I have just written to the dean to tell him, and"—A fit of coughing rendered the end of the sentence unintelligible. "I want you to post these letters," he was able to say at last distinctly; "send this telegram off at once to my servant, and leave this note at the deanery. That will do as you go home. The man should be here to-morrow, and anything else there may be can be attended to when he arrives."

"You'll let your friends know you're not very well, sir?" the housekeeper suggested.

"Those letters"—indicating the ones she held in her hand—"are to tell them."

The woman, seeing to whom the letters were addressed, and hearing the Tenor talk in an off-hand way about his manservant as if he had been accustomed to the luxury all his life, feared for a moment that his mind was affected; but then some of those wild surmises as to who and what he might be, which were rife all over the ancient city when he first arrived, recurred to her, and there slipped from her unawares the remark, "Well, they always said you was *somebody*, and to look at you one might suppose you was a duke or a markis, sir, but I won't make so bold as to ask."

The Tenor smiled. "I am afraid I am only a Tenor with an abominable cold," he rejoined good-naturedly. "I really think I must nurse it a little. When I have seen the dean, I shall go to bed."

"You'll see the doctor first," she muttered decisively as she took up the tray and withdrew.

The Tenor overheard her, but was past making any objection. He had managed to take the tea, and, eased by the grateful warmth, he sank into another heavy doze from which the arrival of the doctor roused him. It was evening then.

He made an effort to rise in his courteous way to receive the doctor; was sorry to trouble him for anything so trifling as a cold; would not have

troubled him, in fact, had not his officious old housekeeper taken the law into her hands; but now that he had come was very glad to see him; singers, as the doctor knew, being fidgety about their throats; and really—with a smile—even a cold was important when it threatened one's means of livelihood.

The doctor responded cheerfully to these cheerful platitudes, but he was listening and observing all the time. Then he took out a stethoscope in two pieces, and as he screwed them together he asked—

"Been wet lately?"

"Well, yes," the Tenor answered—"something of that kind."

"And you did not change immediately?"

"N-no, now I think of it, not for hours. In fact, I believe my things dried on me."

"Ah-h-h!" shaking his head. "And you'd been living rather low before that, perhaps? (Just let me take your temperature.) I should say that you had got a little down—below par, you know, eh?"

"Well, perhaps," the Tenor acknowledged.

"Humph." The doctor glanced at his clinical thermometer. "You have a temperature, young man. Now let me"—he applied the stethoscope. "I am afraid you are in for a bad dose," he said, after a careful examination. "I wish you had sent for me twenty-four hours sooner. These things should be taken in time. And it is marvellous how you have kept about so long. But now go to bed at once. Keep yourself warm, and the temperature as even as possible. It is all a matter of nursing; but I'll save"—he had been going to say "your life," but changed the phrase—"your voice, never fear!"

The Tenor smiled. "Pneumonia, I suppose?" he said interrogatively.

"I am sorry to say it is," the doctor answered, as he rose to depart; "and double pneumonia, to boot. I'll send you something to take at once"—and he hurried away before the housekeeper had time to speak to him.

When the medicine arrived, however, she had the satisfaction of administering a dose to her master, and she begged at the same time that she might be allowed to stay in the house that night in case he wanted anything; but this the Tenor would not hear of. He did not think he should want anything—(he could think of nothing, unfortunately, but the risk of mentioning Angelica's name). She might come a little earlier in the morning and get him some tea; probably he would be glad of some then. He was not going to get up in the morning; he really meant to take care of himself. The housekeeper coaxed, but in vain. There was no place for her to sleep in comfort, no bell to summon her, and as to sitting up all night that was out of the question; who would do her work in the morning? There would be plenty of people to look after him to-morrow. One night could make no difference.

Had she heard the doctor's orders she would have disobeyed her master, but as it was his manner imposed upon her, he spoke so confidently; and accordingly she left the house at the usual hour, to the Tenor's great relief.

When she had gone he was seized with an attack of hæmoptysis, and after he had recovered from that sufficiently he went to bed—or rather he found himself there, not knowing quite how it had come to pass, for the disease had made rapid progress in the last few hours, and he now suffered acutely, his temperature was higher, and the terrible sense of suffocation continued to increase.

It was at this time that the dean, in his comfortable easy-chair, looked up from the Tenor's note, and said to his wife deprecatingly, "He is ill, it seems, and wishes to see me. Do you think I need go to-night?"

"No, my dear, *certainly* not," was the emphatic reply. "There cannot be much the matter with him. I saw him out only yesterday or the day before. And at all events it will do in the morning. You must consider yourself."

So the dean stayed at home to lay up a lifelong regret for himself, but not with an easy conscience. He had a sort of feeling that it would be well to go, which his dislike to turning out on a raw night like that would not have outweighed without his wife's word in the scale.

Nothing was being done to relieve the Tenor. There were no medicines regularly administered, no soothing drinks for him, no equable temperature, no boiling water to keep the atmosphere moist with steam, the common necessaries of such a case; all these the Tenor, knowing his danger, had composedly foregone lest perchance in a moment of delirium he should mention a lady's name; and that he had had the foresight to do so was a cause of earnest thanksgiving to him when every breath of cold air began to stab like a knife through his lungs, and his senses wandered away for lengths of time which he could not compute, and he became conscious that he was uttering his thoughts aloud in spite of himself.

"It is not so very long till morning," he found himself saying once. "I will just lie still and bear it till then. I am drowsy enough—and in the morning"—But now all at once he asked himself, was there to be any more morning for him?

He was too healthy-minded to long for death, and too broken-hearted to shrink from it. His first feeling, however, when he realised the near prospect, was nothing but a kind of mild surprise that it should be near, and even this was instantly dismissed. No more morning for him meant little leisure to think of her, and here he hastened to fold his hands and bow his golden head: "Lord, Lord," he entreated, in the midst of his martyrdom, "make her a good woman yet."

The bells above him broke in upon his prayer. "Amen" and "amen" they seemed to say; and then the chime, full-fraught for him with promise, rang its constant message out, and as he listened his heart expanded with hope, his last earthly sorrow slipped away from him, and his soul relied upon the certainty that his final supplication was not in vain.

After this he was conscious of nothing but his own sufferings for a little. Then there came a blank; and next he thought he was singing.

He heard his own marvellous voice, and wondered at it; and he remembered that once before he had had the same experiences, but when or where he could not recall. Now, he would fain have stopped; for every note was a dagger in his breast, yet he found himself forced to sing till at last the pain aroused him.

When full consciousness returned, a terrible thirst devoured him. What would he not have given for a drink!—something to drink, and someone to bring it to him.

What made him think of his mother just then? Where was his mother? It was just as well, perhaps, she should not be there to see him suffer.

He had never a bitter thought in his mind about any person or thing, nor did he dream of bemoaning the cruel fate which left him now at his death,

as at his birth, deserted. What he did think of were the many kind people who would have been only too glad to come to his assistance had they but known his need.

But the torment of thirst increased upon him.

He thought of the dear Lord in *His* agony of thirst, and bore it for a time. Then he remembered that there must be water in the room. With great difficulty he got up to get it for himself. His face was haggard and drawn by this time, and there were great black circles round his sunken eyes, but the expression of strength and sweetness had been intensified if anything, and he never looked more beautiful than then.

It seemed like a day's journey to the washstand. He reached it at last, however, reached it and grasped the carafe—with such a feeling of relief and thankfulness! Alas! it was empty. So also was the jug. The woman had forgotten for once to fill them, and there was not a drop of water to moisten his lips.

Tears came at this, and he sank into a chair. It was hard, and he was much exhausted, but still there was no reproach upon his lips. Presently he found himself in bed again with his pillows arranged so as to prop him up. The struggle for breath was awful, and he could not lie down. He had only to fight for a little longer, however, then suddenly the worst was over. And at the same moment, as it seemed to him, the chime rang out again triumphantly; and almost immediately afterward his first friend and foster father, the rough collier, grasped his hand. But he had scarcely greeted him when his second friend arrived, and bending over him called him as of old, "Julian, my dear, dear boy!" This reminded the Tenor. "Where *is* the Boy?" he said. "Is the window open? It is time he came."

"Israfil, I am here," was the soft response. The Tenor's face became radiant. All whom he had ever cared for were present with him, coming as he called them—even the dean, who was kneeling now beside his bed murmuring accustomed prayers. "What happiness!" the Tenor murmured. "I was so sorrowful this afternoon, and now! A happy death! a happy death! Ah, Boy, do you not see that He gives us our heart's desire? He slumbers not, nor sleeps," and the Tenor's face shone.

Then the chime was ringing again, and now it never ceased for him. He had sunk into the last dreamy lethargy, from which only the clash of the bells above roused him hour by hour during the few that remained; but all sense of time was over; the hours were one; and so the beloved music accompanied him till his spirit rose enraptured to the glory of the Beatific Vision itself.

It was just at the dawn, when the Boy was wont to leave him, that, according to his ancient faith, the dear-earned wings were given him, the angel guardian led him, and the true and beautiful pure spirit was welcomed by its kindred into everlasting joy.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Angelica heard those dreadful words: "He's dead, miss—didn't you know?—and buried yesterday," her jaw dropped, and for a moment she felt the solid earth reel beneath her. The colour left her face and returned to it, red chasing white as one breath follows another, and she glared at the woman. For her first indignant

thought was that she was being insulted with a falsehood. The thing was impossible; he could not be dead.

"And buried yesterday," the woman repeated.

"I don't believe you," Angelica exclaimed, stamping her foot imperiously.

The woman drew herself up, gave one indignant look, then turned her back, and walked into the house.

Angelica ran down the passage after her, and grasped her arm. "I beg your pardon," she said. "But, oh! do tell me—do make me understand, for I cannot believe it! I cannot believe it!"

The woman pushed open the sitting-room door, and led her in.

"Was you a friend of his, miss—or ma'am?" she asked.

"I am Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe," Angelica answered. "Yes, I was a friend of his. I cared for him greatly. It is only a few days since I saw him alive and well. Oh! it isn't true! it isn't true!" she broke off, wringing her hands. "I cannot believe it!"

The woman sat down, threw her apron back over her face, and rocked herself to and fro.

Angelica, dazed and dry-eyed, stared at her stupidly. The shock had stunned her.

Presently the woman recovered herself, and seeing the lady's stony face, forgot her own trouble for the moment, and hastened to help her.

"I don't wonder you're took to, my lady," she said. "It's bin a awful blow to a many, a awful blow. Oh! I never thought when they used to come and see him here in their fine carriages and with their servants and their horses and that, as it was anything but the music brought 'em—tho', mind you, he was as easy with them as they with him. Oh dear! Oh dear!"

Angelica's lips were so parched she could hardly articulate. "Tell me," she gasped, "tell me all. I cannot understand."

The woman fetched her some water. "Lie back a bit in this chair, ma'am," she said, "and I'll just tell you. It'll come easier when you know. When one knows, it helps a body. You see, ma'am, it was this way"—and then she poured forth the narrative of those last sad days, omitting no detail, and Angelica listened, dry-eyed at first, but presently she was seized upon by the pitifulness of it all, and then, like scattered rain-drops that precede a heavy shower, the great tears gathered in her eyes and slowly overflowed, forerunners of a storm which burst at last in deep convulsive sobs that rent her, so that her suffering body came to the relief of her mind.

"I wanted to stay with 'im that last night and see to 'im," the housekeeper proceeded, "for the doctor's very words to me was, when I went to fetch 'im, before ever 'e had come to see what was the matter, 'e ses, knowing me for a many years, 'e ses, 'You'll look after 'im well, I'm sure, Mrs. Jenkins,' 'e ses, and I answered, 'Yes, sir, please God, I will,' for I felt as something was 'anging over me then, I did, tho' little I knowed what it was. And I did my best to persuade 'im to let me stay that night and nurse 'im, but 'e wouldn't hear of it; 'e said there wasn't no need; and what with the way 'e 'ad as you didn't like to go agin 'im in nothing, and what with 'is bein' so cheerful like, 'e imposed upon me, so I went away. Oh, it's been a bad business"—shaking her head disconsolately—"a bad business! To think of 'im bein' alone that night without a soul

near 'im, and it 'is last on earth. He'd not 'ave let a dog die so, 'e wouldn't."

Angelica's sobs redoubled.

"But I couldn't rest, ma'am," the woman went on. "The whole night through I kep' awaking up and thinking of 'im, and I 'eard every hour strike, till at last I couldn't stand it no longer, and I just got up and came to see 'ow 'e was. I'd 'a' bin less tired if I'd a sat up all night with 'im. And I came 'ere, and as soon as I opened the door, ma'am, there!" she threw her hands before her—"I knew there was something! For the smell that met me in the passage, it was just for all the world like fresh turned clay. But still I didn't think. It wasn't till afterward that I knowed it was 'is grave. And I went upstairs, ma'am, not imaginin' nothin' neither, and tapped at 'is door, and 'e didn't answer, so I opens it softly, and ses, 'Ow are you this mornin', sir?' I ses, quite softly like, in a whisper, for fear of wakin' 'im if 'e should be asleep. Oh dear! Oh dear! I needn't 'a' bin so careful! And I ses it agin: 'Ow are you, sir, this mornin'?' I ses: 'I 'ope you 'ad a good night,' I ses; but still 'e didn't answer, and some'ow it struck me, ma'am, that the 'ouse was very quiet—it seemed kind of unnatural still, if you understand. So, just without knowin' why like, I pushed the door open"—showing how she did it with her hands—"little by little, bit by bit, all for fear of disturbing 'im, till at last I steps in, makin' no noise—Oh dear! Oh dear!" She threw her apron up over her face again, and rocked herself as she stood. "And there 'e was, ma'am," she resumed huskily, "propped up by pillows in the bed so as to be almost sittin', and the top one was a great broad pillow, very white, for 'e was always most pertic'lar about such things, and 'ad 'em all of the very best. And 'is face was turned away from me as I came in, ma'am, so that I only saw it sidewise, and just at first I thought 'e was asleep—very sound." She wiped her eyes with her apron, and shook her head several times. "And there's a little window to 'is room what slides along instead of openin' up," she proceeded, when she had recovered herself sufficiently, "with small panes, and outside there's roses and honeysucklers, what made shadows that flickered, for the mornin' was gusty though bright, and they deceived me. I thought 'e was breathin' natural. But while I stood there the sun shone in and just touched the edges of 'is 'air, ma'am, and it looked for all the world like a crown of gold against the white pillows, it did, indeed—ch! ma'am, I don't wonder you take on!" This emphatically upon a fresh outburst of uncontrollable grief from Angelica. "For I ses to myself, when the light fell on 'is face strong like that. 'It's the face of an angel,' I ses—but there!" raising her hands palms outward, slowly, and bringing them down to her knees again—"I can't tell you! But 'is lips were just a little parted, ma'am, with a sort o' look on 'em, not a smile, you understand, but just a look that sweet as made you feel like smilin' yourself! and 'is skin that transapparent you'd 'ave expected to see through it; but that didn't make me think nothin', for it was always so—as clear as your own, ma'am, if you'll excuse the liberty; and some folk said it was because he was a great lord in disguise, for such do 'ave fine skins; and some said it was because 'e was so good, but I think it was both myself. But 'owever, ma'am, seein' 'e slept so sound, I made bold to creep in a little nearer, for 'e was a picter!" shaking her head solemnly—"an' I was

just thinkin' what a proud woman 'is mother would be if she was me to see 'im at that moment an' 'im so beautiful, when, ma'am"—but here her voice broke, and it was some seconds before she could add—"you might 'a' 'eard me scream at the cathedral. And after I 'ad screamed I'd 'a' given untold gold not to 'a' done it. For it seemed a sin to make a noise, and 'im so still. And, oh! ma'am, 'e'd bin dyin' the 'ole o' that last afternoon an' I never suspected 'e'd more nor a cold, though I knew it was bad. An' 'e'd bin alone the 'ole o' that blessed night a-dyin', an' sensible they say to the last, an' not a soul to give 'im so much as a drink, an' the thirst awful, so I'm told. An' 'e'd bin up to try an' get one for 'imself, for the bottle of the washstand was lyin' on the floor as if he'd dropped it out of 'is 'and—'e'd got up to get a drink for 'imself," she repeated impressively, "an' 'im dyin', ma'am, *and there wasn't a drop o' water there.* I knowed it—I knowed it the moment I see that bottle on the floor. I'd forgot to bring up any before I left the day before, though I ses to myself when I did the room in the mornin'—"I must fetch that water at once," and never thought of it again from that moment."

"Oh, this is dreadful! dreadful!" Angelica moaned.

"Eh!" the woman ejaculated sympathetically. "And the 'ardest part of it was the way they came when it was too late. Everybody. An' me, 'eaven forgive me, thinkin' 'im out o' 'is mind when 'e wrote to 'em an' said they was 'is friends. There was 'is lordship the Markis o' Dawne, and 'is two sisters, an' that other great lady what is with 'em so much. An' they didn't say much any of 'em except 'er, but she wept an' wrung 'er 'ands, and blamed 'erself and everybody for lettin' the master 'ave 'is own way an' leaving 'im, as it seems it was 'is wish to be left, alone with some trouble 'e 'ad. But they 'ad come to see 'im, too, Dr. Galbraith and the markis 'ad, many times, for I let 'em in myself, an' never thought nothin' of it in the way of their bein' friends of 'is; I thought they came about the music. Eh!" she repeated, "they didn't say much, any of 'em, but you could see, you could see! An' the dean came, an' you should 'a' 'eard 'im! full o' remorse 'e was, ma'am, for not 'avin' come the night before, though 'e was asked. An' they all went upstairs to see 'im, an' 'im lyin' there so quiet and all indifferent to their grief, yet with such a look of peace upon 'is face! It was sweet and it was sad too; for all the world as if 'e'd bin 'urt cruel by somebody in 'is feelin's but 'ad forgiven 'em, an' then bin glad to go."

"Israfil! Israfil!" the wretched Angelica moaned aloud. She could picture the scene. Her Aunt Fulda, prayerful but tearless, only able to sorrow as saints and angels do; Ideala with her great human heart torn, weeping and wailing and wringing her hands; Aunt Claudia, hard of aspect and soft of heart, stealthily wiping her tears as if ashamed of them; Uncle Dawne sitting with his elbows on his knees and his face hidden in his hands; and Dr. Galbraith standing beside the bed looking down on the marble calm of the dead with a face as still, but pained in expression—Angelica knew them all so well, it was easy for her imagination to set them before her in characteristic attitudes at such a time; and she was not surprised to find that they had been friends of his although no hint of the fact had ever reached her. They were a loyal set in that little circle, and could keep counsel among themselves, as she knew; an ex-

ample which she herself would have followed as a matter of course under similar circumstances, so surely does the force of early associations impel us instinctively to act on the principles which we have been accustomed to see those about us habitually pursue.

"An' they covered 'im with flowers, an' one or other of those great ladies in the plainest black dresses with nothin' except just white linen collar an' cuffs, stayed with 'im day an' night till they took 'im to 'is long ome yesterday," the woman concluded.

Then there was a long silence, broken only by Angelica's heavy sobs.

"Can't I do nothin' for you, ma'am?" the housekeeper asked at last.

"Yes," Angelica answered; "leave me alone a while."

And the woman had tact enough to obey.

Then Angelica got up, and went and knelt by the Tenor's empty chair, and laid her cheek against the cold cushion.

"It isn't true, it isn't true, it isn't true," she wailed again and again, but it was long before she could think at all; and her dry eyes ached, for she had no more tears to shed.

Presently she became aware of a withered rose in the hollow between the seat of the chair and the back. She knew it must be one of those she had thrown at him that night, perhaps the one he had carelessly twirled in his hand while they talked, now and then inhaling its perfume as he listened, watching her with quiet eyes.

"Dead! dead!" she whispered, pressing the dry petals to her lips.

Then she looked about her.

The light of day, falling on a scene which was familiar only by the subdued light of a lamp, produced an effect as of chill and bareness. She noticed worn places in the carpet, and a certain shabbiness from constant use in everything, which had not been visible at night, and now affected her in an inexpressibly dreary way. There was very little difference really, and yet there was *some* change which, as she perceived it, began gradually to bring the great change home to her. There was the empty chair, first relic in importance and saddest in significance. There were his pipes neatly arranged on a little fretwork rack which hung where bell handles are usually put beside the fireplace. She remembered having seen him replace one of them the last time she was there, and now she went over and touched its cold stem, and her heart swelled. The stand of ferns and flowers which he had arranged with such infinite pains to please the "Boy" stood in its accustomed place, but ferns and flowers alike were dead or drooping in their pots, untended and uncared for, and some had been taken away altogether, leaving gaps on the stand, behind which the common grate, empty, and rusted from disuse, appeared.

There was dust on her violin case, and dust on his grand piano—her violin which he kept so carefully. She opened the violin case expecting to find the instrument ruined by water. But no! it lay there snugly on its velvet cushion without a scratch on its polished surface or an injured string. She understood. And perhaps it had been one of his last conscious acts to put it right for her. He was always doing something for her, always. They said now that his income had been insufficient, or that he gave too much away, and that the malady had been rendered hopeless from the first by his weakness for want of food. The woman who waited on him had told her so. "He'd feed that

chorister brat what come every morning," she said, "in a way that was shameful, but his own breakfast has been dry bread and coffee, without neither sugar nor milk, for many and many a day—and his dinner an ounce of meat at noon, with never a bite nor sup to speak of at tea, as often as not."

"Oh, Israfil! Israfil!" she moaned, when she thought of it. There had always been food, and wine too, for that other hungry "Boy," food and wine which the Tenor rarely touched—she remembered that now. To see the "Boy" eat and be happy was all he asked, and if hunger pinched him, he filled his pipe and smoked till the craving ceased. She saw it all now. But why had she never suspected it, she who was rolling in wealth? His face was wan enough at times, and worn to that expression of sadness which comes of privation, but the reason had never cost her a thought. And it was all for her—or for "him" whom he believed to be near and dear to her. No one else had ever sacrificed anything for her sake, no one else had ever cared for her as he had cared, no one else would ever again. Oh, hateful deception! She threw herself down on her knees once more.

"Oh, Israfil! Israfil!" she cried; "only forgive me, and I will be true! only forgive me, and I will be true!"

It was trying to rain outside. The wind swept down the Close in little gusts, and dashed cold drops against the window pane, and in the intervals sprays of the honeysuckle and clematis tapped on the glass, and the leaves rustled. This roused her. She had heard them rustle like that on many a moonlight night—with what a different significance! And he also used to listen to them, and had told her that often when he was alone at night and tired, they had sounded like voices whispering, and had comforted him, for they had always said pleasant things. Oh, gentle, loving heart, to which the very leaves spoke peace, so spiritually perfect was it! And these were the same creepers to which he had listened, these that tapped now disconsolately, and this was his empty chair—but where was he? he who was tender for the tiniest living thing—who had thought and cared for everyone but himself. What was the end of it all? How had he been rewarded? His hearth was cold, his little house deserted, and the wind and the rain swept over his lonely grave.

She went to the window and opened it. She would go to his grave—she would find him.

While she stood on the landing-stage at the water-gate waiting for the flat ferry boat, which happened to be on the farther side of the narrow river, to be poled across to her, the Tenor's little chorister boy came up and waited too. He had a rustic posy in his hand, but there was no holiday air in his manner; on the contrary, he seemed unnaturally subdued for a boy, and Angelica somehow knew who he was, and conjectured that his errand was the same as her own. If so he would show her the way.

The child seemed unconscious of her presence. He stepped into the boat before her, and they stood side by side during the crossing, but his eyes were fixed on the water and he took no notice of her. On the other side of the landing when they reached it was a narrow lane, a mere pathway, between a high wall on the one hand and a high hedge on the other, which led up a steep hill to a road, on the other side of which was a cemetery. The child followed this path, and then Angelica knew that she had been right in her conjecture, and had only to follow him. He led her quite across the cemetery to a quiet

corner where was an open grassy space away from the other graves. Two sides of it were sheltered by great horse chestnuts, old and umbrageous, and from where she stood she caught a glimpse of the city below, of the cathedral spire appearing above the trees, of Morne in the same direction, a crest of masonry crowning the wooded steep, and, on the other side, the country stretching away into a dim blue hazy distance. It was a lovely spot, and she felt with a jealous pang that the care of others had found it for him. In life or death it was all the same; he owed her nothing.

The grass was trampled about the grave; there must have been quite a concourse of people there the day before. It was covered with floral tokens, wreaths and crosses, with anchors of hope and hearts of love, pathetic symbols at such a time.

But was he really there under all that? If she dug down deep should she find him?

The little chorister boy had gone straight to the grave, and dropped on his knees beside it. He looked at the lovely hothouse flowers and then glanced ruefully at his own humble offering—sweetwilliam chiefly, snapdragon, stocks, and nasturtium. But he laid it there with the rest, and Angelica's heart was wrung anew as she thought of the tender pleasure this loving act of the child would have been to the Tenor. Yet her eyes were dry.

The boy pressed the flowers on the grave as if he would nestle them closer to his friend, and then all at once as he patted the cold clay his lip trembled, his chest heaved with sobs, his eyes overflowed with tears, and his face was puckered with grief.

Having accomplished his errand, he got up from the ground, slapped his knees to knock the clay off them, and, still sniffing and sobbing, walked back the way he had come in sturdy dejection.

All that was womanly in Angelica went out to the poor little fellow. She would like to have comforted him, but what could she say or do? Alas! alas! a woman who cannot comfort a child, what sort of a woman is she?

Presently she found herself standing beside the river looking up to the iron bridge that crossed it with one long span. There were trees on one side of the bridge, and old houses piled up on the other picturesquely. Israfil had noticed them the last time they rowed down the river. The evening was closing in. The sky was deepening from grey to indigo. There was one bright star above the bridge. But why had she come here? She had not come to see a bridge with one great star above it! nor to watch a sullen river slipping by—unless, indeed— She bent over the water, peering into it. She remembered that after the first plunge there had been no great pain—and even if there had been, what was physical pain compared to this terrible heartache, this dreadful remorse, an incurable malady of the mind which would make life a burden to her for evermore, if she had the patience to live? Patience and Angelica! What an impossible association of ideas! Her face relaxed at the humour of it, and it was with a smile that she turned to gather her summer drapery about her, bending sideways to reach back to the train of her dress, as the insane fashion of tight skirts, which were then in vogue, necessitated. In the act, however, she became aware of someone hastening after her, and the next moment a soft white hand grasped her arm and drew her back.

"Angelica! how can you stand so near the edge in this uncertain light? I really thought you would lose your balance and fall in."

It was Lady Fulda who spoke, uttering the words in an irritated, almost angry tone, as mothers do when they relieve their own feelings by scolding and shaking a child that has escaped with a bruise from some danger to life and limb. But that was all she ever said on the subject, and consequently Angelica never knew if she had guessed her intention or only been startled by her seeming carelessness, as she professed to be.

The sudden impulse passed from Angelica, as is the way with morbid impulses, the moment she ceased to be alone. The first word was sufficient to take her out of herself, to recall her to her normal state, and to readjust her view of life, setting it back to the proper focus. But still she looked out at the world from a low level, if healthy; a dull, dead level, the mean temperature of which was chilly, while the atmosphere threatened to vary only from stagnant apathy to boisterous discontent, positive, hopeless, and unconcealed.

Moved by common consent, the two ladies turned from the river, and walked on slowly together and in silence. The feeling uppermost in Angelica's mind was one of resentment. Her aunt had appeared in the same unexpected manner at the outset of her acquaintance with the Tenor, and she objected to her reappearance now, at the conclusion. It was like an incident in a melodrama, the arrival of the good influence—it was absurd; if she had done it on purpose, it would have been impertinent.

The entrance to Ilverthorpe was only a few hundred yards from where they had met, and they had now reached a postern which led into the grounds. Angelica opened it with a latch-key, and then stood to let her aunt pass through before her.

"I suppose you will come in," she said ungraciously.

But Lady Fulda forgave the discourtesy, and the two walked on together up to the house—passing, while their road lay through the park, under old forest trees that swayed continually in a rising gale; and somewhat buffeted by the wind till they came to a narrow path sheltered by rows of tall shrubs, on the thick foliage of which the rain, which had fallen at intervals during the day, had collected, and now splashed in their faces or fell in wetting drops upon their dresses as the bushes, struck by the heavy gusts, swayed to and fro.

Angelica, whose nervous system was peculiarly susceptible to discomfort of the kind, felt more wretched than ever. She thought of the desolate grave with mud-splashed, bedraggled flowers upon it and of the golden head and beautiful calm face beneath; thought of him as we are apt to think of our dead at first, imagining them still sentient, aware of the horror of their position, crushed into their narrow beds with a terrible weight of earth upon them, left out alone in the cold, uncomfited and uncared for, while those they loved and trusted most recline in easy-chairs round blazing fires, talking forgetfully. Something like this flashed through Angelica's mind, and a cry as of acute pain escaped from her unawares.

Her companion's features contracted for a moment, but otherwise she made no sign of having heard.

They had not exchanged a word since they had entered the grounds, but now the gentle Lady Fulda began again—with some trepidation, however, for Angelica's manner continued to be chilling, not to say repellent, and she could not tell how her advances would be received.

"I was looking for you," she said.

"For me?" raising her eyebrows.

"Yes. I went to his house this afternoon and heard from the housekeeper that a young lady had been there, and I felt sure from the description and — and likelihood — that it must be you. She said you had been wholly unprepared for the dreadful news, and it had been a great shock to you. And I thought you would probably go to see his grave. It is always one's first impulse. And I was going to look for you there when I saw you in the distance on the towing-path."

Angelica preserved her ungracious silence, but her attention was attracted by the way in which her aunt spoke of the Tenor in regard to herself, apparently as if she had known of their intimacy. Lady Fulda resumed, however, before Angelica had asked herself how this could be.

"I am afraid you will think me a very meddling person," she said, speaking to her young niece with the respect and unassuming diffidence of high breeding and good feeling; "but perhaps you know—how one fancies that one can do something—or say something—or that one ought to try to. I believe it is a comfort to one's self to be allowed to try."

"Yes," Angelica assented, thinking of her desire to help the child, and thawing with interest at this expression of an experience similar to her own. "I felt something of that—a while ago."

They had reached the house by this time, and Angelica ushered her aunt in, then led her to the drawing-room where she herself usually sat, the one that opened on to the terrace. This was the sheltered side of the house that day, and the windows stood wide open, making the room as fresh as the outer air. They sat themselves down at one of them, from which they could see the tops of trees swaying immediately beneath, and farther off the river, then the green upland terminating in a distance of wooded hills.

"I always think this is prettier than the view from Morne, although not so fine," Lady Fulda remarked tentatively. She was a little afraid of the way in which Angelica in her present mood might receive any observation of hers, however inoffensive. She had been looking out of the window when she spoke, but the silence which followed caused her to turn and look at Angelica. The latter had risen for some purpose—she could not remember what—and now stood staring before her in a dazed way.

"I am afraid you are not well, dear," Lady Fulda said, taking her hand affectionately.

"Oh, I am well enough," Angelica answered, almost snatching her hand away, and making a great effort to control another tempest of tears which threatened to overwhelm her. "But don't—don't expect me to be polite—or anything—today. You don't know"—She took a turn up and down the room, and then the trouble of her mind betrayed her. "Oh, Aunt Fulda!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands, and wringing them, "I have done such a dreadful thing!"

"I know," was the unexpected rejoinder.

Angelica's hands dropped, and she stared at her aunt, her thoughts taking a new departure under the shock of this surprise. "Did he tell you?" she demanded.

"No," Lady Fulda stammered. "I saw you with him—several times. At first I thought it was Diavolo, and I did not wonder, he is so naughty—or rather he used to be. But when I asked with whom he was staying, everybody was amazed, and maintained that he had not been in

the neighbourhood at all. So I wrote to him at Sandhurst, and his reply convinced me that I must have been mistaken. Then I began to suspect. In fact, I was sure"—

Lady Fulda spoke nervously, and with her accustomed simplicity; but Angelica felt the fascination of the singular womanly power which her aunt exercised, and resented it.

"Is that all?" she said defiantly. "Why didn't you interfere?"

"For one thing, because I did not like to."

"Why?"

"On your account."

"Did you know I was deceiving him?"

"Yes—or you would not have been with him under such circumstances," Lady Fulda rejoined; "and then—I thought, upon the whole, it was better not to interfere"—She broke off, recurring once more to Angelica's question. "I was sure he would find you out sooner or later, and then I knew he would do what was right; and in the meantime the companionship of such a man under any circumstances was good for you."

"You seem to have known him very well."

"Yes," Lady Fulda answered. "He was at the University with your Uncle Dawne and George Galbraith. They were great friends, and used to come to the Castle a good deal at that time, but eventually Julian's visits had to be discontinued."

Lady Fulda coloured painfully as she made this last statement, and Angelica, always apt to put two and two together, instantly inserted this last fragment into an imperfect story she possessed of a love affair and disappointment of her aunt's, and made the tale complete.

She had heard that

... never maiden glow'd,
But that was in her earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of human love,
Which being rudely blunted glanced and shot
Only to holy things; to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms.

They must have been about the same age, Angelica reflected, as she examined the lineless perfection of Lady Fulda's face, and then there glanced through her mind a vision of what might have been—what ought to have been, as it seemed to her: "But why should he have been banished from the Castle because you cared for him?" she asked point blank.

Lady Fulda's confusion increased. "That was not the reason," she faltered, making a brave effort to confide in Angelica in the hope of winning the latter's confidence in return. "There was a dreadful mistake. Your grandfather thought he was paying attention to me, and spoke to him about it, telling him I should not be allowed to marry—beneath me; and Julian said, not meaning any affront to me,—never dreaming that I cared,—that he had not intended to ask me, which made my father angry and unreasonable, and he scolded me because he had made a mistake. Men do that, dear, you know; they have so little sense of justice and self-control. And I had little self-control in those days either. And I retorted and told my father he had spoilt my life, for I thought it would have been different if he had not interfered. However, I don't know"; she sighed regretfully. "But when such absolute uncertainty prevailed it was impossible to say that Julian was beneath me by birth, and as to position—But there"—she broke off, "of course he never came amongst us any more."

"Otherwise I should have known him all my life," Angelica exclaimed, "and there would have been none of this misery."

They had returned to their seats, and she sat now frowning for some seconds, then asked her aunt, "Does Uncle Dawne know—did you tell him about my escapade?"

"No."

"You are a singularly reticent person."

"I am a singularly sore-hearted one," Lady Fulda answered, "and very full of remorse, for I think now—I might have done something—to prevent"—she stammered.

"The final catastrophe," Angelica concluded. "Then you are laying his death at my door?"

"Oh no; Heaven forbid!" her aunt protested.

A long pause ensued, which was broken by Lady Fulda rising.

"It is time I returned," she said. "Come back with me to Morne. It will be less miserable for you than staying here alone to-night."

Angelica looked up at her for a second or two with a perfectly blank countenance, then rose slowly. "How do you propose to return?" she asked.

"I had not thought of that—I left the carriage in Morningquest," Lady Fulda answered.

"Really, Aunt Fulda," Angelica snapped, then rang the bell impatiently; "you can't walk back to Morningquest, and be in time for dinner at the Castle also, I should think. The carriage immediately," this was to the man who had answered the bell.

"You will accompany me?" Lady Fulda meekly pleaded.

"I suppose so," was the ungracious rejoinder—"that is, if you will decide for me. I am tired of action. I just want to drift."

"Come, then," said Lady Fulda kindly.

CHAPTER VI

"I AM tired of action, I just want to drift. I am tired of action, I just want to drift," this was the new refrain which set itself as an accompaniment to Angelica's thoughts. She was tired of thinking too, but thought ran on, an inexhaustible stream; and the more passive she became to the will of others outwardly, the more active was her mind.

She leant back languidly in the carriage beside her aunt as they drove together through the city to Morne, and remained silent the whole time, and motionless, all but her eyes, which roved incessantly from object to object while she inwardly rendered an account to herself of each, and of her own state of mind; keeping up disjointed comments, quotations, and reflections consciously, but without power to check the flow.

There were a few blessed moments of oblivion caused by the bustle of their departure from the house, then Angelica looked up, and instantly her intellect awoke. They were driving down the avenue—"The green leaves rustle overhead," was the first impression that formulated itself into words. "The carriage wheels roll rhythmically. Every faculty is on the alert. There is something unaccustomed in the aspect of things—things familiar—this once familiar scene. A new point of view; the change is in me. We used to ride down that lane. Blackberries. The day I found a worm in one. Ugh! Diavolo, Diavolo—no longer in touch—a hundred thousand miles away—what does it matter? I am tired of action; I

just want to drift. I am tired of action; I just want to drift, just want to drift—drifting now to Morne—a restful place; but I shall drift from thence again. Whither? Better be steered—no, though. I am not a wooden ship to be steered, but a human soul with a sacred individuality to be preserved, and the grand right of private judgment. What happens when such ennobling privileges are sacrificed? Demon worship—grandpapa.

"The old duke sat in his velvet cap in a carved oak chair in the oriel room—nonsense! And Aunt Fulda. As passive as a cow. Is she, though? Is Angelica as passive as a cow for all that she's so still? Poor Daddy! Drudging at the House just now, not thinking of me. I hope not. Do I hope not? No, he belongs to me, and—I *do* care for him. The kind eyes, the kind caress, the kind thought. 'Angelica dear—Oh, Daddy! I'm sorry I tormented you—sorry, sorry—The lonely grave, the lonely grave—Oh, Israfil! 'Dead, dead, long dead, and my heart is a handful of dust.' The horses' hoofs beat out the measure of my misery. The green leaves rustle overhead. The air is delicious after the rain. The dust is laid. Only this afternoon. I went to see him; what was I thinking of? Can I bring him back again? Never again! Never again! Only this afternoon, but time is not measured by minutes. Time is measured by the consciousness of it. 'He's dead, miss—haven't you heard?—and buried yesterday.' 'Dead, dead, long dead'—

"The dearest friend to me, the kindest man,
The best conditioned and unwearied spirit
In doing courtesies.

"On through the dim rich city. A pretty girl and poor. Do you envy me, my dear? Stare at me hard. I am a rich lady, you see, asked everywhere

"The daughter of a hundred earls,
You are not one to be desired.

"The palace—poor Edith! Here we are at the Castle Hill—and that idiot Aunt Fulda has forgotten her carriage. Shall I remind her? There is still time to turn back. No, don't trouble yourself. 'Let them alone and they'll come home.' I wish I had no memory. It is a perfect nuisance to have to think in inverted commas all the time. And Shakespeare is the greatest bore of all. The whole of life could be set to his expressions—that cannot be quite right: what I mean is, the whole of life could be expressed in his words. Diavolo and I tried once to talk Shakespeare for a whole day. I made the game. But Diavolo could remember nothing but 'To be or not to be,' which went no way at all when he tried to live on it, so he said Shakespeare was rot, and I pulled his hair—I wish I could stop thinking—suspend my thoughts—The pine woods

"From the top of the upright pine
The snowlumps fall with a thud,
Come from where the sunbeams shine
To lie in the heart of the mud—

The heart of the mud, the heart of the mud—Oh, for oblivion. Nirvana—'The dewdrop slips into the shining sea'—We're slipping into the courtyard of the Castle. How many weary women, women waiting, happy women, despairing women, thoughtful women, thoughtless women, have those rows of winking windows eyed as they entered? Women are much more interesting than men—The lonely grave, the lonely grave"—

"Angelica!" Lady Fulda exclaimed, as they drew up at the door, "I've left the carriage in Morningquest!"

"Yes, I know," said Angelica.

"My dear child, why didn't you remind me?"

Angelica shrugged her shoulders. "Let them alone and they'll come home," recurred to her, and then: "I must be more gracious. Aunt Fulda"—aloud—"who are here?"

"Your Uncle Dawne"—

"And Co., I suppose!" Angelica concluded derisively.

"Your Aunt Claudia and her friend are also here," Lady Fulda corrected her, with dignity.

"Not exactly a successful attempt to be gracious," Angelica's thoughts ran on. "Ah, well! What does it matter? Live and let live, forget and forgive—forgetting *is* forgiving, and everyone forgets"—and then again *piano*—"The lonely grave, the lonely grave."

At dinner she sat beside her grandfather, her uncle being opposite, silent and serious as usual. But they were all subdued that night except the old duke, who, unaware of any cause for their painful preoccupation, and glad to see Angelica, who roused him as a rule with her wonderful spirits, chatted inconsequently. But Angelica's unnatural quietude could not escape the attention of the rest of the party, and inquiring glances were directed to Lady Fulda, in the calm of whose passionless demeanour, however, there was no consciousness of anything unusual to be read, and of course no questions were asked.

In the drawing-room, after dinner, Angelica sat on a velvet cushion at her uncle's feet, and rested her head against his knee. Close beside her there was a long narrow mirror let into the wall of the room like a panel, and in this she could see herself and him reflected. At first she turned from the group impatiently; but presently she looked again, and began to study her uncle's appearance with conscious deliberation. It was as if she had never seen him before, and was receiving a first impression.

Lord Dawne was one of those men who make one think of another and more picturesque age. He would have looked natural in black velvet and point lace. He was about five-and-thirty at that time, to judge by his appearance—tall, well-made, and strong with the slim strength of a race-horse, all superfluous flesh and bone bred out of him. His skin was dark, clear, and colourless; his hair black, wavy, and abundant; his eyes deep blue, a contrast inherited from an Irish mother. "A Spanish hidalgo in appearance," Angelica decided at this point.

It was a sad face, as high-bred faces often are. You would not have been surprised to hear that his life had been blighted at the outset by some great sorrow or disappointment. But it was a strong face too, the face of a manly man, you would have said, and of one with self-denial, courage, endurance, and devotion enough for a hero and a martyr.

"Angelica," her grandfather broke in upon her reflections with kindly concern. "You look pale. Do you not feel well, my dear child?"

"Not exactly, thank you," Angelica answered mendaciously, with formal politeness, hoping thereby to save herself the annoyance of further remarks; then inwardly added, "Sick at heart, in very truth," to save her conscience, which was painfully sensitive just then. When anyone addressed her, thought was suspended by the effort to answer, after which the rush returned; but the

current had usually set in a new direction, as was now the case. Her uncle, as seen in the mirror, gave place, when she had spoken, to the Tenor's long low room as she had seen it that afternoon: "The light shone in and showed the shabby places. Should the light be shut out to conceal what is wrong? Oh no! Show up, expose, make evident. Let in knowledge, the light"—

But here her grandfather arose. The evening was to end with service in the chapel. "Will you come, Angelica?" he asked. "Do you feel equal to the exertion?"

"Oh yes," Angelica answered indifferently, letting herself go again to drift with the stream.

The private chapel at Morne was lavishly decorated, an ideal shrine the beauty of which alone would have inclined your heart to prayer and praise by reason of the pleasure it gave you, and of the desire, which is always a part of this form of pleasure, to express your gratitude in some sort.

On this occasion the altar was brilliantly illuminated, and as she passed in before Lord Dawne, she was attracted like a child by the light, and stationed herself so as to see it fully, admiring it as a spectator, but only so. The scene, although familiar, was always impressive, being so beautiful; and as she settled herself on a chair apart her spirit revived under its influence enough to enable her to entertain the hope that, by force of habit and association, that sensation of well-being which is due to the refined and delicate flattery of the senses, a soothing without excitement, merging in content, and restful to the verge of oblivion, would steal over her and gradually possess her to the exclusion of all importunate and painful thought. And this was what happened.

It came at a pause in the service when the people bent their heads, and seemed to wait; or rather followed upon that impressive moment as did the organ prelude, and the first notes of a glorious voice—the voice of a woman who suddenly sang.

Angelica looked up amazed by the fervour of it, while a feeling, not new, but strange from its intensity, took possession of her, steeping her soul in bliss, a feeling that made her both tremble and be glad. She thought no more of the lonely grave, but of an angel in ecstasy, an angel in heaven. She looked around, she raised her eyes to the altar, she tried to seize upon some idea which should continue with her, and be a key with which she could unlock this fountain of joy hereafter when she would. She almost felt for the moment as if it would be worthy to grovel for such opium at the knees of an oleosaccharine priest and contribute to his support for ever. She tried to think of something to which to compare the feeling, but in vain. In the effort to fix it her mind and memory became a blank, and for a blissful interval she could not think, she could only feel. Then came the inevitable moment of grateful acknowledgment when her senses brought of their best to pay for their indulgence—their best on this occasion being that vow to Israfil which presently she found herself renewing. She would indeed be true.

After this surfeit of sensuous distraction she retired to her room, the old room, as far away from Diavolo's as possible, which she had always occupied at the Castle. She dismissed her maid, and sat down to think; but she was suffering from nervous irritability by this time, and could not rest. She drew up a blind and looked out of the open window. The night was calm, the air

was freshly caressing, a crescent moon hung in the indigo sky, and there were stars, bright stars. Up from the pine woods which clothed the castle hill balsamic airs were wafted, and murmurs came as of voices inviting—friendly voices of nature claiming a kinship with her, which she herself had recognised from her earliest childhood. Out there in the open was the unpolluted altar at which she was bidden to worship, and in view of that, with the healthy breath of night expanding her lungs revivingly, she felt that her late experiences, in the midst of perfumes too sweet to be wholesome, and with the help of accessories too luxurious to be anything but enervating, had been degrading to that better part of her to which the purity and peace of night appealed. She would go shrieve herself in haunted solitudes, and listen to the voice which spoke to her heart alone, saying "Only be true," in the silence of those scenes incomparable which tend to reverence, promote endeavour, and prolong love.

She went to her door, opened it, looked out, and listened. The corridor was all in darkness; an excessive silence pervaded the place; the whole household had apparently retired.

With confident steps, although in the dark, Angelica went to Diavolo's room, and presently returned with a suit of his clothes. These she put on, and then, without haste, went downstairs, crossed the hall, opened a narrow door which led into a dark, damp, flagged passage, along which she groped for some distance, then descended a crooked stone staircase at the foot of which was a heavy door. This she opened with a key, careless of the noise she made, and found herself out in the open air, under the stars, on a gravel walk, with a broad lawn stretched before her. She stood a moment, breathing deeply in pure enjoyment of the air, then put up both hands to rearrange a little cloth cap she wore which was slipping from off her abundant hair. Then she threw up her arms and stretched every limb in the joy of perfect freedom from restraint; and then with strong bounds she cleared the grassy space, dashed down a rocky step, and found herself a substance amongst the shadows out in the murmuring woods.

When she returned she was making less vigorous demonstrations of superabundant strength and vitality, but still her step was swift, firm, and elastic; and she was running up the grand staircase from the hall when she saw that the door at the top, leading into the suite of rooms occupied by Lord Dawne when he was at the Castle, was wide open, showing the room beyond, brilliantly lighted.

She would have to pass that open door or stay downstairs till it was shut; but the latter she did not feel inclined to do, so, with scarcely a pause to nerve herself for what might happen, she continued rapidly to ascend the stairs.

As she expected, when she reached the top, her uncle appeared.

"Oh!" he exclaimed in surprise, seeing Diavolo, as he supposed, emerging from the darkness. "I thought it was Angelica's step. I fancied I heard her go down some time ago, and I have been waiting for her. She complained of not feeling well this evening, and I thought she might possibly want something. Come in." He had turned to lead the way as he spoke. "By the bye," he broke off, "what are you doing here, you young rascal?"

Angelica, overcome by one of her mischievous impulses, and grinning broadly, boldly followed her uncle into the room.

"I had forgotten for a moment that you ought not to be here, it is so natural to find you marauding about the place at night," he pursued, bending down to adjust the wick of a lamp that was flaring as he spoke. Angelica sat down, and coolly waited for him to turn and look at her, which he did when he had done with the lamp, meeting her dark eyes unsuspectingly at first, then with fixed attention inquiringly.

"Angelica!" he exclaimed. "How can you?"

"I have been out in the woods," she rejoined, with her accustomed candour. "The suffocating fumes of incense and orthodoxy overpowered me in the chapel, and I was miserable besides—soul-sick. But the fresh air is a powerful tonic, and it has exhilarated me, the stars have strengthened me, the voices of the night spoke peace to me, and the pleasant creatures, visible and invisible, gave me welcome as one of themselves, and showed me how to attain to their joy in life." She bent forward to brush some fresh earth from the leg of her trousers. "But you would have me forego these innocent, healthy-minded, invigorating exercises, I suppose, because I am a woman," she pursued. "You would allow Diavolo to disport himself so at will, and approve rather than object, although he is not so strong as I am. And then these clothes, which are decent and convenient for him, besides being a greater protection than any you permit me to wear, you think immodest for me—you mass of prejudice."

Lord Dawne made no reply. He had taken a seat, and remained with his eyes fixed on the floor for some seconds after she had spoken. There was neither agreement nor dissent in his attitude, however; he was simply reflecting.

"What is it, Angelica?" he said at last, looking her full in the face.

"What is what?" she asked defiantly.

"What is the matter?" he answered. "There is something wrong, I see, and if it is anything that you would like to talk about—I don't pretend to offer you advice, but sometimes when one speaks—you know, however, what a comfort it is to 'talk a thing out,' as you used to call it when you were a little girl." He looked at her and smiled. When she entered the room fresh from the open air a brilliant colour glowed in her cheeks, but now she was pale to her lips, which, perceiving, caused him to rise hastily, and add, "But I am afraid you have tired yourself, and"—glancing at the clock—"it is nearly breakfast-time. I'll go and get you something."

After a considerable interval he returned with a tray upon which was a plentiful variety of refreshments, prawns in aspic jelly, cold chicken and tongue, a freshly opened tin of *paté de foie gras*, cake, bread, butter, and champagne.

"I think I've brought everything," he remarked, surveying the tray complacently when he had put it down upon the table beside her.

"You've forgotten the salt," snapped Angelica.

His complacency vanished, and he retired apologetically to remedy the omission.

"Do you remember the night you and Diavolo taught me where to find food in my father's house?" he asked, when he returned.

"Yes," Angelica answered, with a grin; and then she expanded into further reminiscences of that occasion, by which time she was in such a good humour that she began to feel hungry, and under the stimulating influences of food and champagne she told her uncle the whole story of her intimacy with the Tenor.

Lord Dawne listened with interest, but almost

in silence. The occasion was not one, as it appeared to him, which it would be well to improve. He discussed the matter with her, however, as well as he could without offering her advice or expressing an opinion of her conduct; and, in consequence of this wise forbearance on his part, she found herself the better in every way for the interview.

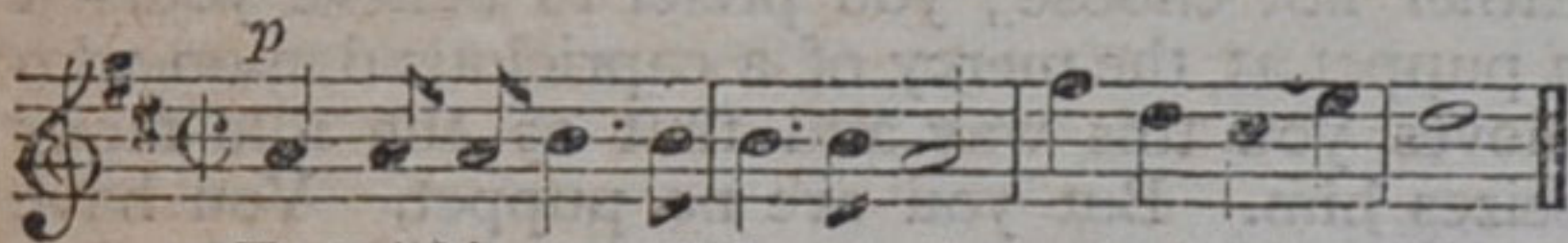
CHAPTER VII

ANGELICA awoke unrefreshed after a few hours of light and restless sleep, much broken by dreams. "Dead! dead!" was the first thought in her mind, but it came unaccompanied by any feeling. "Is Israfil really dead—buried—gone from us all for ever?" she asked herself in a kind of wonder. It was not at the thought of his death that she was wondering, however, but because the recollection of it did not move her in any way. Reflections which had caused her the sharpest misery only yesterday recurred to her now without affecting her in the least degree—except in that they made her feel herself to be a kind of monster of callousness, coldness, and egotism. The lonely grave, looking deserted already, with the rain-bespattered, mud-bedraggled flowers fading upon it; the man himself as she had known him; his goodness, his kindness, the disinterested affection he had lavished upon her—she dwelt upon these things; she racked her brain to recall them in order to reawaken her grief and remorse, but in vain. Mind and memory responded to the effort, but her own heart she could not touch. The acute stage was over for the moment, and a most distressing numbness, attended by a sense of chilliness and general physical discomfort, had succeeded it. The rims of her eyes were red and the lids still swollen by the tears of the day before; but the state of weeping, with the nervous energy and mental excitement which had been the first consequence of the shock, was a happy one compared with the dry inhuman apathy of this, and she strove to recall it, but only succeeded in adding the old sensation of discontent with everything as it is and nothing is worth while to her already deep depression. She loved order and regularity in a household, but now the very thought of the old accustomed dull routine of life at the Castle exasperated her. After her grandfather would come her uncle, and after him in all human probability Diavolo would succeed, and there would be a long succession of solemn servants, each attending to the same occupations which had been carried on by other servants in the same place for hundreds of years; horrible monotony, all tending to nothing! For she saw as in a vision the end of the race to which she belonged. They and their like were doomed, and, with them, the distinguished bearing, the high-bred reserve, the refined simplicity and dignity of manner which had held them above the common herd, a class apart, until she came, were also doomed. "I am of the day," she said to herself; "the vulgar outcome of a vulgar era, bred so, I suppose, that I may see through others, which is to me the means of self-defence. I see that in this dispute of 'womanly or unwomanly,' the question to be asked is, not 'What is the pursuit?' but 'What are the proceeds?' No social law-maker ever said, 'Catch me letting a woman into anything that pays!' It was left for me to translate the principle into the vernacular."

She breakfasted upstairs so that she might not

have to talk, but went down immediately afterward in order to find somebody to speak to, so rapid were the alternations of her moods. It was not in Angelica's nature to conceal anything she had done from her friends for long, and before she had been twenty-four hours at the Castle she had taken her Aunt Claudia, and the lady known to them all intimately as "Ideala," into her confidence; but neither of them attempted to improve the occasion. They said even less than her uncle had done, and this reticence perplexed Angelica. She would have liked them to make much of her wickedness, to have reasoned with her, lectured her, and incited her to argue. She did not perceive, as they did, that she was one of those who must work out their own salvation in fear and trembling, and she was angry with them because they continued their ordinary avocations as if nothing had happened when everything had gone so wrong with her.

The weary day dragged its slow length along. A walk about the grounds, luncheon, a long drive, calling at Ilverthorpe on the way back for letters; afternoon tea with her grandfather in the oriel room, and afterward the accustomed wait with bowed head for the chime, which floated up at last from afar, distinct, solemn, slow, and weary like the voice of one who vainly repeats a blessed truth to ears that will not hear:



He, watching o - ver Is - ra - el, slumbers not, nor sleeps.

Her grandfather raised his velvet cap, and held it above his bald head while he repeated the words aloud, after which he muttered a prayer for the restoration of "Holy Church," then rose, and, leaning heavily on his ebony stick, walked from the room with the springless step of age, accompanied by his daughter Claudia and his son, and followed by two deerhounds, old and faithful friends who seldom left him. When the door closed upon this little procession, Angelica found herself alone with her aunt Lady Fulda, to whom she had not spoken since the day before. They were sitting near to each other, Angelica being in the window, from whence she had looked down upon the tree-tops and the distant city while they waited for the chime, the melancholy cadence of which had added something to the chill misery of her mood.

"Do you still believe it?" she asked ironically, and then felt as if she were always asking that question in that tone.

Lady Fulda had also looked about as she listened, but now she left the window, and, taking a seat opposite to Angelica, answered bravely, her face lighting up as she spoke, "I do believe it."

"Then why did He let a man like that die?" Angelica asked defiantly. "Why did He create such a man at all merely to kill him?—Wouldn't a commoner creature have done as well?"

"We are not told that any creature is common in His sight," Lady Fulda answered gently. "But suppose they were, would a common creature have produced the same effect upon you?"

"Do you mean to say you think he was created to please me?"—

"Oh no, not that," Lady Fulda hastily interposed, and Angelica, perceiving that she had at last found somebody who would kindly improve the occasion, turned round from the window, and

settled herself for a fray. "And I don't mean," Lady Fulda pursued, "I dare not presume to question; but still—oh, I must say it! Your heart has been very hard. Would anything but death have touched you so? Had not every possible influence been vainly tried before that to soften you?"

Angelica smiled disagreeably. "You are insinuating that he died for me, to save my soul," she politely suggested.

Her aunt took no notice of the sneer. "Oh, not for you alone," she answered earnestly; "but for all the hundreds upon whom you, in your position, and with your attractions, will bring the new power of your goodness to bear. You cannot think, with all your scepticism, that such a man has lived and died for nothing. You must have some knowledge or idea of the consequences of such a life in such a world, of the influence for good of a great talent employed as his was, the one as an example and the other as a power to inspire and control."

Angelica did not attempt to answer this, and there was a pause; then she began again: "I did grasp something of what you mean, I saw for a moment the beauty of holiness, and the joy of it continued with me for a little. Then I went to tell Israfil. I was determined to be true, and I should have been true had I not lost him; but now my heart is harder than ever, and I shall be worse than I was before."

"Oh no!" her aunt exclaimed, "you are deceiving yourself. If you had found him there that day, your good resolutions would only have lasted until you had bound him to you—enslaved him; and then, although you would have carefully avoided breaking the letter of the law, you would have broken the spirit; you would have tried to fascinate him, and bring him down to your own level; you would have made him loathe himself, and then you would have mocked him."

"Like the evil-minded heroine of a railway novel!" Angelica began, then added doggedly, "You wrong me, Aunt Fulda. There is no one whose respect I valued more. There is nothing in right or reason I would not have done to win it—that is to say, if there had been anything I could have done. But I do not think now that there was." This last depressing thought brought about another of those rapid revulsions of feeling to which she had been subject during these latter days, and she broke off for a moment, then burst out afresh to just the opposite effect, "I do not know, though. I am not sure of anything. Probably you are right, and I deceived myself. I inherit bad principles from my ancestors, and it may be that I can no more get rid of them than I could get rid of the gout or any other hereditary malady, by simply resolving to cure myself. It is different with you. You were born good. I was born bad, and delight in my wickedness."

"Angelica!" her aunt remonstrated, "do not talk in that reckless way."

"Well, I exaggerate," Angelica allowed, veering again, as the wind does in squally weather before it sets steadily from a single quarter. "But what have I done, after all, that you should take me to task so seriously? Wrong, certainly; but still I have not broken a single commandment."

"Not one of the Decalogue, perhaps; but you have sinned against the whole spirit of uprightness. Has it never occurred to you that you may keep the ten commandments strictly, and yet be a most objectionable person? You might smoke, drink, listen at doors, repeat private conversations, open

other people's letters, pry amongst their papers, be vulgar and offensive in conversation, and indecent in dress—altogether detestable, if your code of morality were confined to the ten commandments. But why will you talk like this, Angelica? Why will you be so defiant, when your heart is breaking, as I know it is?"

Angelica hid her face in her hands with one dry sob that made her whole frame quiver.

"Oh, do not be so hard!" the other woman implored. "Listen to your own heart, listen to all that is best in yourself; you have good impulses enough, I know you have; and you have been called to the Higher Life more than once, but you would not hear."

"Yes"—thoughtfully—"but it is no use—no help. I never profit by experiences because I don't object to things while they are happening. It is only afterward, when all the excitement is over and I have had time to reflect, that I become dissatisfied." And she threw herself back in her easy-chair, crossed one leg over the other so as to display a fair amount of slender foot and silk-clocked stocking, as it is the elegant fashion of the day to do; clasped her hands behind her head, and fixed her eyes on the ceiling, being evidently determined to let the subject drop.

Lady Fulda compressed her lips. She was baffled, and she was perplexed. A quarter rang from the city clocks. "Do you know," she began again, "I have a fancy—many people have—that a time comes to us all—an hour when we are called upon to choose between good and evil. It is a quarter since we heard the chime"—

"Only a quarter!" Angelica ejaculated. "It seems an age!"

"But suppose this is your hour," Lady Fulda patiently pursued. "One precious quarter of it has gone already, and still you harden your heart. You are asked to choose now, you are called to the Higher Life; you must know that you are being called—specially—this moment. And what if it should be for the last time? What if, after this, you are deprived of the power to choose, and forced by that which is evil in you to wander away from all that is good and pure and pleasant into the turmoil and trouble, the falseness, the illusion, and the maddening unrest of the other life? You know it all. You can imagine what it would be when that last loophole of escape, upon which we all rely—perhaps unconsciously—was closed, when you knew you never could return; when you came to be shut out from hope, a prey to remorse, a tired victim compelled to pursue excitement, and always to pursue it, descending all the time, and finding it escape you more and more, till at last even that hateful resource was lost to you, and you found yourself at the end of the road to perdition, a worn-out woman, face to face with despair!"

Angelica slowly unclasped her hands from behind her head, let her chin sink on her chest, and looked up from under her eyebrows at her aunt. Her eyes were bright, but otherwise her face was as still as a statue's, and what she thought or felt it was impossible to say. "It is idle to talk of choice," she answered coldly. "I had chosen—honestly. I told you; you see what has come of it!"

"Forgive me," said Lady Fulda, "but you had not chosen *honestly*. You had not chosen the better life—to lead it for its own sake, but for his. You wanted to bring yourself nearer to him, and you would have made goodness a means to that end if you could. But you see it was not the right way, and it has not succeeded."

Angelica sat up, and the dull look left her face. She seemed interested. "You see through all my turpitude," she observed, affecting to smile, although in truth she was more moved than her pride would allow her to show.

Her aunt sighed, seeing no sign of softening. She feared it was labour lost, but still she felt impelled to try once more before she renounced the effort. She was nervous about it, however, being naturally diffident, and hesitated, trying to collect her thoughts; and in the interval the evening shadows deepened, the half-hour chimed from the city clocks, and then she spoke. "Just think," she said sadly—"Just think what it will be when you have gone from here this evening—if you carry out your determination and return after dinner; just think what it will be when you find yourself alone again in that great house with the night before you; and your aching heart, and your bitter thoughts, and the remorse which gnaws without ceasing, for companions; and not one night of it only but all the years to come, and every phase of it; from the sharp pain of this moment to the dull discontent in which it ends, and from which nothing on earth will rouse you; think of yourself then without comfort and without hope." Angelica changed her position uneasily. "You still hesitate," Lady Fulda continued; "you are loath to commit yourself; you would rather not choose; you prefer to believe yourself a puppet at the mercy of a capricious demon who moves you this way and that as the idle fancy seizes him. But you are no puppet. You have the right of choice; you *must* choose; and, having chosen, if you look up, the Power Divine will be extended to you to support you, or—but either way your choice will at once become a force for good or evil."

She ended abruptly, and then there was another long pause.

Angelica's mind was alive to everything—to the rustle of summer foliage far below; to the beauty of the woman before her, to the power of her presence, to the absolute integrity which was so impressive in all she said, to her high-bred simplicity, to the grace of her attitude at that moment as she sat with an elbow on the arm of her chair, covering her eyes with one white hand; to the tearless turmoil in her own breast, the sense of suffering not to be relieved, the hopeless ache. Was there any way of escape from herself? Her conscience whispered one. But was there only one? The struggle of the last few days had recommenced; was it to go on like this for ever and ever, over and over again? What a prospect! And, oh! to be able to end it! somehow! anyhow! Oh, for the courage to choose! but she must choose, she knew that; Aunt Fulda was right, her hour had come. The momentous question had been asked, and it must be answered once for all. If she should refuse to take the hand held out to help her now, where would she drift to eventually? Should she end by consorting with people like—and she thought of an odious woman; or come to be talked of at clubs, named lightly by low men—and she thought of some specimens of that class. But why should she arrive at any decision? Why should she feel compelled to adopt a settled plan of action? Why could she not go on as she had done hitherto? Was there really no standing still? Were people really rising or sinking always, doing good or evil? Why, no, for what harm had she done? Quick, answering to the question with a pang, the rush of recollection caught her, and again the vow, made

and forgotten for the moment as soon as made, burned in her heart: "Israfil! Israfil! only forgive me, and I will be true."

She did not wait to think again. The mere repetition was a renewal of her vow, and in the act she had unconsciously decided.

Slipping from her chair to the ground, she laid her head on Lady Fulda's lap.

"I wish I could be sure of myself," she said, sighing deeply. "You must help me, Aunt Fulda."

"Now the dear Lord help you," was the soft reply.

And almost at the same moment, the city clocks began to strike, and they both raised their heads involuntarily, waiting for the chime.

It rang at last with a new significance for Angelica. The hour was over which had been her hour; a chapter of her life had closed with it for ever; and when she looked up then, she found herself in another world, wherein she would walk henceforth with other eyes to better purpose.

CHAPTER VIII

ANGELICA drove back to Ilverthorpe alone directly after dinner, and went straight to bed. She slept from ten o'clock that night till the next morning, and awoke to the consciousness that the light of day was garish, that she herself was an insignificant trifle on the face of the earth, and that everything was unsatisfactory.

"Now, had I been the heroine of a story," she said to herself, "it would have been left to the reader's imagination to suppose that I remained for ever in the state of blissful exaltation up to which Aunt Fulda wound me by her eloquence yesterday. Here I am already, however—with my intentions still set fair, I believe—but in spirit, oh, so flat! a siphon of soda water from which the gas has escaped. Well, I suppose it must be recharged, that is all. Oh dear! I *am* so tired. Just five minutes more, Angelica dear, take five minutes more!" She closed her eyes. "I'm glad I'm the mistress and not the maid—am I though? Poor Elizabeth! It spoils my comfort just to think of her always obliged to be up and dressed—with a racking headache, perhaps, hardly able to rise, but forced to drag herself up somehow nevertheless to wait upon worthless, selfish me. Live for others"—Here, however, thought halted, grew confused, ceased altogether for an imperceptible interval, and was then succeeded by vivid dreams. She fancied that she had wavered in her new resolutions, and gone back to her old idea. If the conditions of life were different, *she* would be different, in spirit and in truth, instead of only in outward seeming as now appeared to be the case. She was doing no good in the world; her days were steeped in idleness; her life was being wasted. Surely it would be a creditable thing for her to take her violin, and make it what it was intended to be, a delight to thousands. Such genius as hers was never meant for the benefit of a little circle only, but for the world at large, and all she wanted was to fulfil the end and object of her being by going to work. She said so to Mr. Kilroy, and he made no objection, which surprised her, for always hitherto he had expressed himself strongly on the subject even to the extent of losing his temper on one occasion. Now, however, he heard her in silence, with his eyes fixed on the floor, and when she had said her say he uttered

not a word, but just rose from his seat with a deep sigh—almost a groan—and a look of weariness and perplexity in his eyes that smote her to the heart, and slowly left the room.

"I make his life a burden to him," she said to herself. "I can do nothing right. I wish I was dead. I do." And then she followed him to the library.

He was sitting at his writing table with his arms folded upon it, and his face bowed down and hidden on them, and he did not move when she entered.

The deep dejection of his attitude frightened her. She hastened to him, knelt down beside him, and putting her arms round his neck drew him toward her; and then he looked at her, trying to smile, but a more miserable face she had never beheld.

"Oh, Daddy, Daddy," she cried remorsefully, "I didn't mean to vex you. I'll never play in public as long as I live—there! I promise you."

"I don't wish you to make rash promises," he answered hoarsely. "But if you could care for me a little"—

"Daddy—*dear*—I do care for you. I do indeed," she protested. "I like to know you are here. I like to be able to come to you when—whenever I like. I cannot do without you. If anything happened to you"—

The shock of such a dreadful possibility awoke her. She was less refreshed than she had been when she first opened her eyes that morning, but she sprang out of bed in an instant. The blinds were up and the windows open as usual; the sun had spun round to the south, and now streamed hotly in, making her feel belated.

"Elizabeth!" she called, then went to the bell and rang it, standing a moment when she had done so, and looking down as if to consider the blurred reflection of her bare white feet on the polished floor; but only for an instant, for the paramount feeling that possessed her was one of extreme haste. The painful impression of that dream was still vividly present with her, and she wanted to do *something*, but what precisely she did not wait to ask herself. As soon as she was dressed, one duty after another presented itself as usual, and, equally as usual with her in her own house, was carefully performed, so that she was fully occupied until lunch time, but after lunch she ordered the carriage, and drove into Morningquest to do some shopping for the household. This task accomplished, she intended to return, but as she passed the station the recollection of the dream, of her husband's bowed head, of the utter misery in his face when he looked up at her, of the pain in his voice when he spoke, and the effort he made in his kindly way to control it, so that he might not hurt her with an implied reproach when he said, "If you could care for me a little"—Dear Daddy! always so tender for her! always so kindly forbearing! What o'clock was it? The London express would go out in five minutes. It was the train he had gone by himself last time. How could she let him go alone? Stop at the station, write a line to Elizabeth—"Please pack up my things, and follow me to town immediately." Get me a ticket, quick! Here is the train. In. Off. Thank Heaven!

Angelica threw herself back in the centre seat of the compartment, and closed her eyes. The hurry and excitement of action suited her; her lips were smiling, and her cheeks were flushed. There was a young man seated opposite to her

who stared so persistently that at last she became aware of his admiring gaze and immediately despised him, although why she should despise him for admiring her she could not have told. When he had left the carriage, a charming-looking old Quaker lady, who was then the only other passenger, addressed Angelica in the quaint grammar of her sect. "Art thee travelling alone, dear child?"

"Yes," Angelica answered, with the affable smile and intonation for which the Heavenly Twins were noted.

"Doubtless there are plenty of friends to meet thee at thy journey's end," the lady suggested, responding sympathetically to Angelica's pleasantness.

"Plenty," said Angelica—"not to mention my husband." When she had said it she felt proud for the first time since her marriage because she had a husband.

"Ah!" the lady ejaculated, somewhat sadly. "Well," she added, betraying her thought, "in these sad days the sooner a young girl has the strong arm of a good man to protect her the better." Then she folded her hands and turned her placid face to the window.

Angelica looked at her for a little, wondering at the delicate pink and white of her withered cheek, and becoming aware of a tune at the same time set to the words *A good man! A good man!* by the thundering throbbing crank as they sped along. Daddy was a good man—*suppose she lost him?* Nobody belonged to her as he did—*suppose she lost him?* There was nobody else in the world to whom she could go by right as she was going to him, nobody else in whom she had such perfect confidence, nobody on whose devotion to herself she could rely as she did on his; she was all the world to him. *A good man! A good man! Suppose—suppose she lost him?*

The sudden dread gripped her heart painfully. It was not death she feared, but that worse loss, a change in his affection. He was a simple, upright, honourable man—what would he say if he knew? But need he ever know? The question was answered as soon as asked, for Angelica felt in her heart that she could bear to lose him and live alone better than be beside him with that invisible barrier of a deception always between them to keep them apart. It was a need of her nature to be known for what she was exactly to those with whom she lived.

The train drew up at the terminus, and the moment she moved she was again conscious of that terrible feeling of haste which had beset her more or less the whole day long.

"No one to meet thee?" the Quaker lady said.

"No, I am not expected," Angelica answered, with her hand on the handle of the door. "I am a bad wife in a state of repentance, going to give a good husband an unpleasant surprise." She sprang from the carriage, hastened across the platform, and got into a hansom, telling the man to drive "quick! quick!"

On arriving at the house she entered unannounced, after some little opposition from a new manservant who did not know her by sight, and was evidently inclined to believe her to be an impostor bent on pillage. This check on the threshold caused her to feel deeply humiliated.

Her husband happened to be crossing the hall at the time, but he went on without noticing the arrival at the door, and she followed him to his study. Unconscious of her presence, he passed into the room before her with a heavy step, and

as she noted this it seemed to her that she saw him now for the first time as he really was—of good figure and quiet, undemonstrative manners; faultlessly dressed; distinguished in appearance, upon the whole, if not actually handsome; a man of position and means, accustomed to social consideration as was evident by his bearing; and not old as she was wont to think him—what difference did twenty years make at *their* respective ages? No, not old, but—unhappy, and lonely, for if she did not care to be with him who would? Her heart smote her, and she stepped forward impetuously, anxious above everything to make amends.

"Daddy!" she gasped, grasping his arm.

Startled, Mr. Kilroy turned round, and looked down into her face incredulously.

"Is it you—Angelica?" he faltered. "Is anything the matter, dear?" Then suddenly his whole being changed. A glad light came into his eyes, making him look years younger, and he was about to take her in his arms, but she coldly repulsed him, acting on one of two impulses, the other being to respond, to cling close to him, to say something loving.

"There is nothing the matter," she began. "I thought I should like to come back to you—at least"—recollecting herself—"that isn't true. But I do wish I had never separated myself from you in any way. I do wish I had been different." And she threw herself into a low, easy, leather-lined arm-chair, and leant back, looking up to him with appealing eyes.

Mr. Kilroy's pride and affection made him nicely observant of any change in Angelica, but still he was at a loss to understand this new freak, and her manner alarmed him.

"I am afraid you are not well," he said anxiously.

She sat up restlessly, then threw herself back in the chair once more, and lay there with her chin on her chest, in an utterly dejected attitude, not looking up even when she spoke. "Oh, I am well, thank you," she said, "quite well."

"Then something has annoyed you," he went on kindly. "Tell me what it is, dear child. I am the proper person to come to when things go wrong, you know. So tell me all about it. I—I"—he hesitated. She so often snubbed any demonstration of affection that he shrank from expressing what he felt, but another look at her convinced him that there was little chance of a rebuff to-day. He remained at a safe distance, however, taking a chair that stood beside an oval table near to which he happened to be standing.

Newspapers and magazines were piled up on the table, and these he pushed aside, making room for his right forearm to rest on the cool mahogany, on the polished surface of which he kept up a continual nervous tickle-tickle with the ends of his finger nails as he spoke. "If you do not come to me for everything you want, to whom will you go?" he inquired, lamely if pleasantly, being perturbed by the effort he was making to conceal his uneasiness and assume a cheerful demeanour both at once. "And there is nothing I would not do for you, as you know, I am sure." He tapped a few times on the table. "In fact, I should be only too glad if you would give me the opportunity"—tap, tap, tap—"a little oftener, you know"—tap, tap, tap. "What I want to say is, I should like you to consult me and, eh, to ask me, and all that sort of thing, if you want anything"—advice he had been going to add, but modestly changed the word—"money, for in-

stance." And now his countenance cleared. He thought he had accidentally discovered the difficulty. "I expect you have been running into debt, eh?" He spoke quite playfully, so greatly was he relieved to think it was only that; "and you have been thinking of me as a sort of stern parent, eh? who would storm and all that sort of thing. But, my dear child, you mustn't do that. You should never forget 'with all my worldly goods I thee endow.' I assure you, ever since I uttered those words, I have felt that I held the property in trust for you and"—he had been going to add our children, but sighed instead. "I have, I know, remonstrated with you when I thought you unduly extravagant. I could not conscientiously countenance undue extravagance in so young a wife; but still I hope you have never had to complain of any want of liberality on my part in—in anything. In fact, what is the good of money to me if you do not care to spend it? Come, now, how much is it this time? Just tell me and have done with it, and then we will go somewhere, or make plans, and 'have a good time,' as the Americans call it. I have a better box than usual for you at the opera this year—I think I told you. And I never lend it to anybody. I like to keep it empty for you in case you care to go at any time. And I have season tickets, see"—he got up and rummaged in a drawer until he found them—"for everything, I almost think. I go sometimes myself just to see what is going on, you know, and if it is the sort of thing you would like, so as to know what to take you to when you come. And I accept all the nice invitations for you, conditionally, of course. I say if you are in town at the time, and I hope you may be (which is true enough always), you will be happy to go, or words to that effect. So you see there is plenty for you to do at any time in the way of amusement. I am always making arrangements; it is like getting ready to welcome you. When I am answering invitations or doing the theatres I feel quite as if I expected you. It is childish, perhaps, but it makes something to look forward to, and when I am busy preparing for you, somehow the days do not seem so blank."

Angelica felt something rise in her throat, but she neither spoke nor moved.

"Or we might go to Paris," he proceeded tentatively. "Shall we? I could pair with someone till the end of the session. We might go anywhere, in fact, and I should enjoy a holiday if—if you would accompany me." He looked at her with a smile, but the intermittent tick, tick, tick of his nervous drumming on the table told that he was far from feeling all the confidence he assumed. For in truth Angelica's attitude alarmed him more and more. On other occasions, when he had tried to be more than usually kind and indulgent, she had always called him a nice old thing or made some such affable if somewhat patronising acknowledgment, even when she was out of temper; but now, finding that he was waiting for an answer, she just looked up at him once, then fixed her eyes on the ground again, and spoke at last in a voice so hopeless and toneless that he would not have recognised it.

"I think I have only just this moment learnt to appreciate you," she said. "I used to accept all your kind attentions as merely my due, but I know now how little I deserve them, and I wish I could be different. I wish I could repay you. I wish I could undo the past and begin all over again—begin by loving you as a wife should. You are ten thousand times too good for me.

Yet I *have* cared for you in a way," she protested; "not a kind way, perhaps, but still I have relied upon you—upon your friendship. I have felt a sense of security in the certainty of your affection for me—and presumed upon it. Oh, Daddy! why have you let me do as I like?"

Mr. Kilroy's face became rigid, and the fingers with which he had kept up that intermittent tapping on the table turned cold.

"What do you mean, Angelica?" he asked hoarsely. "Are you in earnest? Have you done—anything—or are you only tormenting me? If you are—it is hard, you know. I do care for you; I always have done; and I have never ceased to look forward to a time when you would love me too. God help me if you have come to tell me that that time will never come."

Again that lump rose in Angelica's throat. A horrible form of emotion had seized upon her: "I had better tell you and get it over," she said, speaking in hurried gasps, and sitting up, but not looking at him. "You will care less when you know exactly. You will see then that I am not worth a thought. I am suffering horribly. I want to *shriek*." She tore her jacket open, and threw her hat on the floor. "What a relief. I was suffocating. I don't know where to begin." She looked up at him, then stopped short, frightened by the drawn and haggard look in his face, and tranquillised too, forgetting herself in the effort to think of something to say to relieve him. "But you do know all about it," she added, speaking more naturally than she had done yet. "I told you"—

"Told me *what*?"

"About—about—you thought I was inventing it—that story—about the Tenor and the Boy."

Mr. Kilroy curved his fingers together and held them up over the table for a moment as if he were about to tap upon it again, and it was as if he had asked a question.

"It was all true," Angelica proceeded, "all that I told you. But there was more."

Mr. Kilroy uttered a low exclamation, and hung his head as if in shame. The colour had fled from his face, leaving it ghastly grey for a moment like that of a dead man. Angelica half rose to go to him, fearing he would faint, but he had recovered before she could carry out her intention. She looked at him compassionately. She would have given her life to be able to spare him now, but it was too late, and there was nothing for it but to go on and get it over.

"You remember the picture I had painted—'Music'?" Mr. Kilroy made a gesture of assent. "That was his portrait."

"I always understood it was an ideal singer."

"An *idealised* singer was what I said; but it was not even that, as you would have seen for yourself if you had ever gone to the cathedral. It is a good likeness, nothing more."

"And you had yourself put into a picture with a common tenor, and exhibited to all the world!"

"Yes, and all the world thought it a great condescension. But he did not consent to it, or sit for it. He objected to the picture as strongly as you do. He was not a *common* tenor at all. He was an old and intimate friend of Uncle Dawne's and Dr. Galbraith's. They all—all our people—knew him. He was often at Morne before you came to Ilverthorpe; but I did not know it myself until afterward."

"Afterward?" he questioned.

"I had better go on from where I left off," she replied, her confidence returning. "I told you

about the accident on the river, and his finding out who I was, and his contempt for me; and I told you I desired most sincerely to win his respect, and you advised me to go to him and endeavour to do so. Well, I went." She paused, and Mr. Kilroy looked hard at her; his face was flushed now. "And he was dead," she gasped.

Mr. Kilroy seemed bewildered. "I don't—understand," he exclaimed.

"I told you there was more, and that was it—that was all. He was dead," she repeated.

Mr. Kilroy drew a deep breath, and leant back in his chair. "I am ashamed to say I feel relieved," he began, as if speaking to himself; "yet I scarcely know what I expected." He looked down thoughtfully at his own hand as it lay upon the table. He wanted to say something more, but his mind moved slowly, and no words came at first. He was obliged to make a great effort to collect himself, and in the interval he resumed that irregular tapping upon the table. It maddened Angelica, who found herself forced to watch and wait for the recurrence of the sound.

"Let me tell you, though—let me finish the story," she exclaimed at last, unable to bear it any longer; and then she gave him every detail of her doings since last they parted.

Mr. Kilroy let his hand drop on the table, and listened without looking at her. "And that is all?" he said, when she had finished. "I mean—have you really told me all, Angelica?"

She met his eyes fearlessly, and there was something in her face, something innocent, an unsuspecting look of inquiry such as a child assumes when it waits to be questioned which would have made him ashamed of a degrading doubt had he entertained one.

"You were not—you did not care for him?"

"Oh, yes!" she exclaimed, with most perfect and reassuring candour, "I cared for him. Of course I cared for him. Haven't I told you? No one could know such a man and not care for him."

"Thank God!" he said softly, with tremulous lips. "It would have broken my heart if he had not been such a man."

The words brought down upon him one of Angelica's tornado-tempests of unreasonable wrath. "Are you insinuating that my good conduct depended upon his good character?" she demanded. "Are you no better than those hateful French people who have no conception of anything unusual in a woman that does not end in gross impropriety of conduct; and fill their books with nothing else?"

Mr. Kilroy's face flushed. "Such an unworthy suspicion would never have occurred to me in connection with yourself," he said. "At the risk of appearing ungenerous, I must call your attention to the fact that it is you yourself who have been the first to allude to the bare possibility of such a thing. For my own part, if you choose to travel round the world alone with a man, at night or at any other time that suited your convenience, I should be content to know that you were doing so, especially if it amused you, such is my perfect confidence in your integrity, and in the discretion with which you choose your friends."

"I beg your pardon, forgive me!" Angelica humbly ejaculated. "You shame me by a delicacy which I can only respect and admire in you. I cannot imitate it; it is beyond me."

"I owe you an apology," he answered. "I should have spoken plainly. It was your feelings

—your heart, not your conduct, that I suspected. You have never pretended to love me—to be in love with me, and your Tenor was a younger man, and more attractive."

"Not to me," Angelica hastily and sincerely asseverated.

She did not look up to see the effect of her words upon Mr. Kilroy. Her eyes had been fixed on his feet as she spoke, and now it struck her that they were exceedingly well-shaped feet, and well-booted in the quiet way characteristic of the man. Everything about him was unobtrusive as his own manner, but good as his own heart.

Angelica leant back in her chair, and a long silence ensued, during which she lapsed into her old attitude, lying back in her chair, her hands on the arms, her chin on her chest, her wandering glance upon the ground, so that she did not see that her husband was watching her with eyes that filled as he looked. What was to be the end of this? Should she lose his affection? Would she be turned out of the kind heart that had loved her with all her faults, and cherished her with a patient, enduring, self-denying fondness that was worth more, and had been a greater comfort to her, as she knew now, than all the things together, youth, beauty, rank, wealth, and talents, for which she was envied? If he said to her in his gentle way, "You had better return to Ilverthorpe, and live there," which would mean that he cared for her no longer, should she go? Yes, she would go without a word. She would go and drown herself.

But Mr. Kilroy was far from thinking harsh thoughts of her. On the contrary, he was blaming himself, little as he deserved it, for the circumstances which had brought Angelica to this bitter moment of self-abasement. He was not eloquent either in thought or speech, and with regard to his wife he had always felt more than he could express even to himself, though what he felt did find a certain form of expression, intelligible enough to a loving soul, in his constant care for her, and in the uncomplaining devotion which led him to sacrifice his own wishes to her whims, to absent himself when he perceived that she did not want him, and to suffer her neglect without bitterness, though certainly not without pain. And now he never thought of blaming her. What occurred to him was that this young half-educated girl had been committed to his care, and left by him pretty much to her own devices. He had not done his duty by her; he had not influenced her in any way; he had expected too much from her. It was the old story. Had he not himself seen fifty households wrecked because the husband, when he took a girl, little more than a child in years, and quite a child in mind and experience, from her own family, and the wholesome influences and companionship of father, mother, brothers, sisters, probably left her to go unguided, to form her character as best she could, putting that grave responsibility in her own weak hands as if the mere making a wife of her must make her a mature and sensible woman also? This was what he had done himself, and if Angelica had got into bad hands, and come to grief irreparable, there would have been nobody to blame but himself for it, especially as he knew she was headstrong, excitable, wild, original, fearless, and with an intellect large out of all proportion for the requirements of the life to which society condemned her; a force which was liable, if otherwise unemployed, to expend itself in outbursts of mischievous energy, although there was not a scrap of vice in her—no, not a scrap, he loyally insisted. For just look

how she had come to him and told him! Would a girl who was not honest at heart have done that when she might so easily have deceived him? It was this confidence which touched him more than anything. She had come to him, as she should have done, the first thing, and she had come full of remorse and willing to atone. All this trouble was tending to unite them; it had brought her home; it would prove what is called a blessing in disguise, after all, he hoped. His great love inspired him with insight and taught him tact in all his dealings with Angelica; and now it prompted him to do the one wise simple thing that would avail under the circumstances. He went to her, and bending over her, always

delicately considerate of her inclinations even in the matter of the least caress, laid a kind hand on her shoulder, uttering at the same time brokenly the very words of her dream that morning, "If you could care for me a little, Angelica."

She looked up, amazed at first, then, understanding, she rose. The distressing tension relaxed in that moment, her heart expanded, her eyes filled with tears and overflowed; she could not command her voice to speak, but she threw herself impetuously into her husband's arms, and kissed him passionately, and clung to him, until she was able to sob out, "Don't let me go again, Daddy; keep me close. I am—I am grateful for the blessing of a good man's love."

END OF BOOK V.

BOOK VI

THE IMPRESSIONS OF DR. GALBRAITH

Nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice.—*Othello*, Act V. Sc. II.

NOTE.—The fact that Dr. Galbraith had not the advantage of knowing Evadne's early history when they first became acquainted adds a certain piquancy to the flavour of his impressions, and the reader, better informed than himself with regard to the antecedents of his "subject," will find it interesting to note both the accuracy of his insight and the curious mistakes which it is possible even for a trained observer like himself to make by the half light of such imperfect knowledge as he was able to collect under the circumstances. His record, which is minute in all important particulars, is specially valuable for the way in which it makes apparent the changes of habit and opinion and the modifications of character that had been brought about in a very short time by the restriction Colonel Colquhoun had imposed upon her. In some respects it is hard to believe that she is the same person. But more interesting still, perhaps, are the glimpses we get of Dr. Galbraith himself in the narrative, throughout which it is easy to decipher the simple earnestness of the man, the cautious professionalism and integrity, the touches of tender sentiment held in check, the dash of egotism, the healthy-minded human nature, the capacity for enjoyment and sorrow, the love of life, and, above all, the perfect unconsciousness with which he shows himself to have been a man of fastidious refinement and exemplary moral strength and delicacy; of the highest possible character; and most lovable in spite of a somewhat irascible temper and manner which were apt to be abrupt at times.

CHAPTER I

EVADNE puzzled me. As a rule, men of my profession, and more particularly specialists like myself, can class a woman's character and gauge her propensities for good or evil while he is diagnosing her disease if she consult him, or more easily still during half an hour's ordinary conversation if he happens to be alone with her. But even after I had seen Evadne many times, and felt broadly that I knew her salient points as well as such tricks of manner or habitual turns of expression as distinguished her from other ladies, I was puzzled.

We are not sufficiently interested in all the people we meet to care to understand their characters exactly, but a medical man who has not insight enough to do so at will has small chance of success in his profession, and when I found myself puzzled about Evadne it became a point of importance with me to understand her. She was certainly an interesting study, and all the more so because of that initial difficulty—a difficulty, by the way, which I found from the gossip of the place that everybody else was experiencing more or less. For it was evident from the first that whatever her real character might be, she was anything but a nonentity. Before she had been in the neighbourhood a fortnight she had made a distinct impression and was freely discussed, a fact which speaks for itself in two ways: first, her individuality was strongly marked enough to attract immediate attention; and secondly, there was that about her which provoked criticism. Not that the criticism of a community like ours is worth much, consisting as it does of carping mainly, and the kind of carping which reflects much more upon the low

level of intelligence that obtains in such neighbourhoods than upon the character of the person criticised, for what the vulgar do not understand they are apt to condemn. Somebody has said that to praise moderately is a sign of mediocrity; and somebody might have added that to denounce decidedly shows deficiency in a multitude of estimable qualities, among which discernment must be specially mentioned—not, however, that there was any question of denouncing here, for Evadne was always more discussed for what she was not than for what she was. One lady of my acquaintance put part of my own feeling into words when she declared that Evadne *could* be nicer if *she would*, that part of it which first made me suspect that there was something artificial in her attitude towards the world at large and more especially towards the world of thought and opinion, and that, had she been natural, she would have differed from herself as we knew her in many material respects. Naturalness, however, is a quality upon which too much stress is generally laid. If you are naturally nice it is all very well, but suppose you are naturally nasty? We should be very thankful indeed to think that some of our friends are not natural.

In looking back now, I am inclined to ask why we, Evadne's intimate friends, should always have expected more of her than we did of other people. That certainly was the case, and she disappointed us. We felt that she should have been a representative woman such as the world wants at this period of its progress, making a name for herself and an impression on the age; and it was probably her objection, expressed with quite passionate earnestness, to play a part in which we gathered from many chance indications

that she was eminently qualified to have excelled, that constituted the puzzle. Her natural bent was certainly in that direction, but something had changed it; and here in particular the external tormenting difficulty with regard to her occurred with full force. At a very early period of our acquaintance, however, I discovered that her attitude in this respect was not inherent, but deliberately chosen.

"I avoid questions of the day as much as possible," she said on one occasion in answer to some remark of mine on a current topic of conversation. "I do not, as a rule, read anything on such subjects, and if people begin to discuss them in my presence I fly if I can."

"I should have thought that all such questions would have interested you deeply," I observed.

"They seem to possess a quite fatal fascination for people who allow themselves to be interested," she answered evasively, and in a tone which forbade further discussion of the subject.

But it was the evasion which enlightened me. She would not have been afraid of the "fatal fascination" if she had never felt it herself, and it was therefore evident that her objection was not the outcome of ignorant prejudice, but of knowledge and set purpose. It was the attitude of a burnt child.

The impression she made upon the neighbourhood was curious in one way—it was so very mixed. In the adverse part of the mixture, however, a good deal of personal pique was apparent, and one thing was always obvious: people liked her as much as she would let them. She even might have been popular had she chosen, but popularity comes of condescending to the level of the average, and Evadne was exclusive. She was *une vraie petite grande dame* at heart as well as in appearance, and would associate with none but her equals; and out of those again she was fastidious in the selection of her friends. To servants, people who knew their proper place, and retainers generally, with legitimate claims to her consideration, she was all kindly courtesy, and they were devoted to her; but she met the aspiring parvenu, seeking her acquaintance on false pretences of equality, with that disdainful civility which is more exasperating than positive rudeness, because a lady is only rude to her equals.

And hence most of the animadversion.

But her manner was perfectly consistent. Her coldness or cordiality to mere acquaintances only varied of necessity according to her position and responsibilities. In her own house, where the onus of entertaining fell upon her, she was charming to everybody to-day, neglecting none, and giving an equally flattering share of her attention to each; but if she met the same people at somebody else's place to-morrow, when she was off duty, as it were, she certainly showed no more interest than she felt in them. I do not believe, however, that she ever committed a breach of good manners in her life. When she spoke to you she did so with the most perfect manner, giving you her whole attention for the moment, and never letting her eyes wander, as underbred people so often do, especially in the act of shaking hands. Fairly considered, her attitude in society was distinguished by an equable politeness, in which, however, there was no heart, and that was what the world missed. She did not care for society, and society demands your heart, having none of its own. She certainly did her duty in that state of life, but without any affectation of delight in it. She went to all the local entertain-

ments as custom required, and suffered from suspended animation under the influence of the deadly dulness which prevailed at most of them, but in that she was not peculiar, and she could conceal her boredom more successfully than almost anybody else I ever knew, and did so heroically.

In her religion too she was quite conventional. Like most people in these days, she was a good churchwoman without being in any sense a Christian. She did not love her neighbour as herself, or profess to; but she went to church regularly and made all the responses, pleasing the clergy, and deriving some solace herself from the occupation—at least she always said the services were soothing. She was genuinely shocked by a sign of irreverence, and would sing the most jingling nonsense as a hymn with perfect gravity and without perceiving that there was any flaw in it. In these matters she showed no originality at all. She would repeat "my duty towards my neighbour is to love him as myself, and to do to all men as I would that they should do unto me" fervently, and come out and cut Mrs. Chrimes to the quick just afterward because she had the misfortune to be a tanner's wife and nobody's daughter in particular. It was what she had been taught. Any one of her set would have said "my duty to my neighbour" without a doubt of their own sincerity, and given Mrs. Chrimes the cold shoulder too; the inconsistency is customary, and in this particular Evadne was as much a creature of custom as the rest.

It was my fate to take Evadne in to dinner on the first occasion of our meeting. I did not hear her name when I was presented, and had no idea who she was, but I was struck by her appearance. Her figure was fragile to a fault, and she was evidently delicate at that time, not having fully recovered, as I was afterwards told, from a severe attack of Maltese fever; but her complexion was not unhealthy. Her features were refined and exquisitely feminine. She looked about twenty, and her face in repose would have been expressionless but for the slight changes about the mouth which showed that the mind was working within. Her long eyes seemed narrow from a trick she had of holding them half shut. They were slow-glancing and steadfast, and all her movements struck one at first as being languid; but that impression wore off after a time, and then it became apparent that they were merely rather more deliberate than is usual with a girl.

She answered my first remarks somewhat shortly; but certainly such observations as one finds to make to a strange lady while taking her from the drawing-room to the dining-room and arranging her chair at table are not usually calculated to inspire brilliant responses. She had the habit of society to perfection and was essentially self-possessed, but I fancied she was shy. Coldness is often a cover for extreme shyness in women of her station, and I did my best to thaw her; but the soup and fish had been removed and we had arrived at the last *entrée* before I made a remark that roused her in the least. I forget what I said exactly, but it was some stupid commonplace about the difficulties of the political situation at the moment.

"I hate politics," she then observed. "Business is a disagreeable thing, whether it be the business of the nation or of the shop. I hear women say that they are obliged to interfere just now in all that concerns themselves, because men have cheated and imposed upon them to a quite

unbearable extent. But they will do no good by it. Their position is perfectly hopeless. And the mere trade of governing is a coarse pursuit, and therefore most objectionable for us." She drew in her breath and tightened her lips. "But for myself," she added, "what I object to mainly is the thought. Why are they trying to make us think? The great difficulty is not to think. There are plenty of men to think for us, and while they are thinking we can be feeling. I, for one, have no joy in eventful living. Feeling is life, not thought. You need not be afraid to give us the suffrage," she broke off, with the first glimpse of a smile I had seen on her lips. "After the excitement of conquering your opposition to it was over we should all be content, and not one woman in a hundred would trouble herself to vote."

"I believe women are more public-spirited than that," I answered. "They are toiling everywhere now for the furtherance of all good works, and they come forward courageously whenever necessity compels them to take such an extreme and uncongenial course. In times of war"—

She had been leaning back in her chair in a somewhat languid attitude, but now suddenly she straightened herself, her face flushed crimson, and I stopped short. Something in the word "War" either hurt or excited her. Her long eyes opened on me wide and bright for the first time, and flashed a look into mine more stirring than the wine that bubbled in the glass between my fingers.

"She is beautiful!" I said to myself; but up to that moment I had not suspected it.

"War!" she exclaimed, speaking under her breath, but incisively. "Do not let us talk about it! War is the dirty work of a nation; it is one of the indecencies of life, and should never be mentioned!"

She looked straight into my face for a moment with eyes wide open and lips compressed when she had finished speaking, and then took her *menu* in her left hand, and began to study it with great apparent attention.

Having discovered that she thought politics a coarse, contaminating business, and war the dirty work of a nation, I felt curious to know her views on literature and art.

"I have just been reading a book that might interest you," I began; "it strikes me as being so true to life."

"I think I should be inclined to avoid it, then," she answered, "for I always find that 'true to life' in a book means something revolting."

"Unfortunately, yes, it often does," I agreed. "But still we ought to know. If we refused to study the bad side of life, no evil would ever be remedied."

"Do you think any good is ever done?" she asked.

"I am afraid you are a pessimist," I rejoined.

"But do you really like books that are true to life yourself?" she proceeded. "Don't you think we see enough of life without reading about it? For my own part, I am grateful to anyone who has the power to take me out of this world and make me feel something—realise something—beyond. The dash of the supernatural, for instance, in *John Inglesant*, *Mr. Isaacs*, *The Wizard's Son*, and *The Little Pilgrim* has the effect of rest upon my mind, and gives me greater pleasure than the most perfect picture of real life ever presented. In fact, my ideal of perfect bliss in these days is to know nothing and believe in ghosts."

This also was a comprehensive opinion, and I felt no further inclination to name the book to which I had alluded. But now that she had begun to respond I should have been well content to continue the conversation. There was something so unusual in most of her opinions that I wanted to hear more, although I confess that what she said interested me less than she herself did. Before I could touch on another topic, however, the ladies left the table.

A big blond man, middle-aged, bald, bland, and with a heavy moustache, had been sitting opposite to us during dinner, and had attracted my attention by the way he looked at my partner from time to time. It was a difficult look to describe, because there was neither admiration nor interest in it, approval nor disapproval; he might have looked at a block of wood in exactly the same way, and it could hardly have been less responsive. Once, however, their eyes did meet, and then the glance became one of friendly recognition on both sides; but even after that he still continued to look in the same queer way, and it was this fact that struck me as peculiar.

When the ladies had gone I happened to find myself beside this gentleman, and asked him if he could tell me who it was I had taken in to dinner.

"Well, she is supposed to be my wife," he answered deliberately; "and I am Colonel Colquhoun."

He spoke with a decidedly Irish accent of the educated sort, and seemed to think that I should know all about him when he mentioned his name, but I had never heard of the fellow before. I rightly conjectured, however, that he was the new man who had come to command the depôt at Morningquest while I had been abroad for my holiday.

CHAPTER II

FIRST impressions are very precious for many reasons. They have a charm of their own to begin with, and it is interesting to recall them; and salutary, also, if not sedative. Collect a few, and you will soon see clearly the particular kind of ass you are by the mistakes you have made in consequence of having confided in them. When I first met Evadne I was still young enough, in the opprobrious sense of the word, to suppose that I should find her mentally, when I met her again, just where she was when she left me after our little chat at the dinner-table; and I went to pay my duty call upon her under that most erroneous impression. I intended to resume our interrupted conversation, and never doubted but that I should find her willing to gratify my interest in her peculiar views. It was a mistake, however, which anybody, whose delight in his own pursuits is continuous, might make, and one into which the cleverest man is prone to fall when the object is a woman.

I called on Evadne the day after the dinner. She was alone, and rising from a seat beside a small work-table as I entered, advanced a step, and held out a nerveless hand to me. She was not looking well. Her skin was white and opaque, her eyes dull, her lips pale, and her apparent age ten years more than I had given her on the previous evening. She was a lamplight beauty, I supposed. But her dress satisfied. It was a long indoor gown which indicated without indelicacy the natural lines of her slender figure,

and she was innocent of the shocking vulgarity of the small waist, a common enough deformity at that time, although now, it is said, affected by third-rate actresses and women of indifferent character only. The waist is an infallible index to the moral worth of a woman; very little of the latter survives the pressure of a tightened corset.

"Will you sit there?" Evadne said, indicating an easy-chair and subsiding into her own again as she spoke. "Colonel Colquhoun is not at home," she added, "but I hope he will return in time to see you. He will be sorry if he does not."

It was quite the proper thing to say, and her manner was all that it ought to have been, yet somehow the effect was not encouraging. Had I been inclined to presume I should have felt myself put in my place, but, being void of reproach, my mind was free to take notes, and I decided off-hand that Evadne was a society woman of unexceptionable form, but ordinary, and my nascent interest was nowhere. My visit lasted about a quarter of an hour, during which time she gave me back commonplace for commonplace punctually, doing damage to her gown with a pin she held in her left hand the while, and only raising her eyes to mine for an instant at a time. Nothing could have been easier, colder, thinner, more uninspiring than the fluent periods with which she favoured me, and nothing more stultifying to my own brain. If it had not been for that pin my wits must have wandered. As it was, however, she inadvertently forced me to concentrate my attention upon the pin, with fears for her femoral artery, by apparently sticking it into herself in a reckless way whenever there was a pause, and each emphatic little dig startled my imagination into lively activity and kept me awake.

But, altogether, the visit was disappointing, and I left her under the impression that the glimpse of mind I had had the night before was delusive, a mere transient flash of intelligence caused by some swift current of emotion due to external influences of which I was unaware. Love, or an effervescent wine, will kindle some such spark in the dullest. But there was nothing in Evadne's manner indicative of the former influence; and as to the latter, the only use she ever made of a wineglass was to put her gloves in it.

As I gathered up the reins to drive my dogcart home that afternoon I was conscious of an impression on my mind as of a yawn. But I was relieved to have the visit over—and done with, as I at first believed it to be; but it was not done with, for during the drive a thought occurred to me with chastening rather than cheering effect, a thought which proves that my opinion of Evadne's capacity had begun to be mixed even at that early period of our acquaintance. I acknowledged to myself that one of us had been flat that day, and had infected the other; but which was the original flat one? Some minds are like caves of stalactite and stalagmite, rich in treasures of beauty, the existence of which you may never suspect because you bring no light yourself to dispel the darkness that conceals them.

CHAPTER III

THE next time I saw Evadne it was at her own house also, and it was only a few days after my first visit. I was driving past, but encountered Colonel Colquhoun at the gate, and pulled up for

politeness' sake, as I had not seen him when I called. He was returning from barracks in a jovial mood, and made such a point of my going in that I felt obliged to. We found Evadne alone in the drawing-room, and I noticed to my surprise that she was extremely nervous. Her manner was self-possessed, but her hands betrayed her. She fidgeted with her rings or her buttons or her fingers incessantly, and certainly was relieved when I rose to go.

The little she said, however, impressed me, and I would gladly have stayed to hear more had she wished it. I fancied, however, that she did not wish it, and I accordingly took my leave as soon as I decently could.

As I drove home I found myself revising my revised opinion of her. I felt sure now that she was something more than an ordinary society woman. Still, like everybody else at that time, I could not have said whether I liked or disliked her. But I wanted to see her again. Before I had an opportunity of doing so, however, I received a request with regard to her which developed my latent curiosity into honest interest, and added a certain sense of duty to my half-formed wish to know more of her.

The request arrived in the shape of a letter from Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells, an intimate friend of mine, and one who has always had my most sincere respect and affection. She is a woman who lives altogether for others, devoting the greater part of her ample means, and all the influence of an excellent position, to their service; and she is a woman who stands alone on the strength of her own individuality, for Mr. Hamilton-Wells does not count. Her great charm is her perfect sincerity. She is essentially true.

When I saw her note on the breakfast-table next day, I knew that somehow it would prove to be of more importance than the whole of my other letters put together, and I therefore hastened to open it first.

"VILLA MIGNONNE,
"15th March 1820.

"Colonel Colquhoun, late of the Colquhoun Highlanders, has been appointed to command the depôt at Morningquest, I hear. Kindly make his wife's acquaintance at your earliest convenience to oblige me. She is one of the Fraylings of Fraylingay. Her mother is a sister of Mrs. Orton Beg's, and a very old friend of mine. I used to see a good deal of Mrs. Colquhoun up to the time that she met her husband, and she was then a charming girl, quiet, but clever. I lost sight of her after her marriage, however, for about two years, and only met her again last January in Paris, when I found her changed beyond all knowing of her, and I can't think why. She is not on good terms with her own people for some mysterious reason, but, apart from that, she seems to have everything in the world she can want, and makes quite a boast of her husband's kindness and consideration. I noticed that she did not get on well with men as a rule, and she may repel you at first, but persevere, for she *can* be fascinating, and to both sexes too, which is rare; but I am told that people who begin by disliking often end by adoring her—people with anything in them, I mean, for, as I have learnt to observe under your able tuition, the 'blockhead majority' *does* do despitefully by what it cannot comprehend. And that is why I am writing to you. I am afraid Evadne will come into collision with some of the

prejudices of our enlightened neighbourhood. She is not perfect, and nothing but perfection is good enough for certain angelic women of our acquaintance. They will call her very character in question at the trial tribunals of their tea-tables if she be, as I think, of the kind who cause comment; and they will throw stones at her and make her suffer even if they do her no permanent injury. For I fear that she is nervously sensitive both to praise and blame, a woman to be hurt inevitably in this battle of life, and a complex character which I own I do not perfectly comprehend myself yet, perhaps because parts of it are still nebulous. But doubtless your keener insight will detect what is obscure to me, and I rely upon you to befriend her until my return to England, when I hope to be able to relieve you of all responsibility.

"Tell me, too, how you get on with Colonel Colquhoun. I should like to know what you think of them both.

"ADELINE HAMILTON-WELLS."

My answer to this letter has lately come into my possession, and I give it as being of more value probably than any subsequent record of these early impressions—

"FOUNTAIN TOWERS,
"19th March 1880.

"MY DEAR LADY ADELINE,—I had made Mrs. Colquhoun's acquaintance before I received your letter, and have seen her three times altogether. And three times has not been enough to enable me to form a decided opinion of her character, which seems to be out of the common. Had you asked me what I thought of her after our first meeting, I should have said she is peculiar; after the second I am afraid I should have presumed to say 'not much'; but now, after the third, I am prepared to maintain that she is decidedly interesting. Her manner is just a trifle stiff to begin with, but that is so evidently the outcome of shyness that I cannot understand anybody being repelled by it. Her voice is charming, every tone is exquisitely modulated, and she expresses herself with ease, and with a certain grace of diction peculiarly her own. It is a treat to hear English spoken as she speaks it. She uses little or no slang and few abbreviations, but she is perfectly fearless in her choice of words, and invariably employs the one which expresses her meaning best, however strong it may be, yet somehow the effect is never coarse. Yesterday she wanted to know the name of an officer now at the barracks, and made her husband understand what she meant in this way: 'He is a little man,' she said, 'who puts his hands deep down in his pockets, hunches up his shoulders, and says *damn* emphatically.' How she can use such words without offence is a mystery; but she certainly does.

"All this, however, you must have observed for yourself, and I know that it is merely skimming about your question, not answering it. But I humbly confess, though it cost me your confidence in my 'keen insight' for ever, that I cannot answer it. So far, Mrs. Colquhoun has appealed to me merely as a text upon which to hang conclusions. I do not in the least know what she is, but I can see already what she will become—if her friends are not careful; and that is a phrasemaker.

"Colonel Colquhoun is likely to be a greater favourite here than his wife. Ladies say he is 'very nice!' 'so genial,' and 'a *thorough* Irishman!' whatever they mean by that. He does affect

both brogue and blarney when he thinks proper. Perhaps, however, I ought to tell you at once that I do not like him, and am not at all inclined to cultivate his acquaintance. He strikes me as being a very commonplace kind of military man, tittle-tattling, idle, and unintellectual; and in the habit of filling up every interval of life with brandy and soda water. The creature is rapidly becoming extinct, but specimens still linger in certain districts. And I should judge him upon the whole to be the sort of man who pleases by his good manners those whom he does not repel by his pet vices—most people, that is to say. The world is constant and kind to its own.

"They are at As-You-Like-It, the gloomiest house in the neighbourhood. I fancy Colonel Colquhoun took it to suit his own convenience without consulting his wife's tastes or requirements, and he will be out too much to suffer himself, but I fear she will feel it. She is a fragile little creature, for whose health and well-being generally I should say that bright rooms and fresh air are essential. The air at As-You-Like-It is not bad, but the rooms are damp. That west window in the drawing-room is the one bright spot in the house, and the sun only shines on it in the afternoon. I am sorry that I cannot answer your letter more satisfactorily, but you may rest assured that I shall be glad to do Mrs. Colquhoun any service in my power.

"Diavolo wrote and told me the other day that his colonel thinks him too good for the Guards, and has strongly advised him, if he wishes to continue in the service, to exchange into some other regiment! I have asked him to come and stay with me, and hope to discover what he has been up to. With your permission, I should urge him to apply for the depôt at Morningquest. It would do the duke good to have him about again, and Angelica would be delighted; and besides, Colonel Colquhoun would keep his eye on him and put up with more pranks probably than those who know not Joseph.

"Angelica is very well and happy. Her devotion to her husband continues to be exemplary, and he has been good-natured enough to oblige her by delivering some of her speeches in Parliament lately, with excellent effect. She read the one now in preparation aloud to us the last time I was at Ilverthorpe. It struck me as being extremely able, and eminent for refinement as well as for force. Mr. Kilroy himself was delighted with it, as indeed he is with all that she does now. He only interrupted her once. 'I should say the country is going to the dogs, there,' he suggested. 'Then I am afraid your originality would provoke criticism,' Angelica answered.

"When do you return? I avoid Hamilton House in your absence, it looks so dreary all shut up.—Yours always, dear Lady Adeline,

"GEORGE BETON GALBRAITH."

CHAPTER IV

HAVING despatched my letter, I began to consider how I might best follow up my acquaintance with Evadne with a view to such intimacy as should enable me at any time to have the right to be of service to her should occasion offer, and during the day I arranged a dinner-party for her special benefit, not a very original idea, but by accident it answered the purpose.

The Colquhouns accepted my invitation, but when the evening arrived Evadne came alone, and quite half an hour before the time. I had dressed, luckily, and was strolling about the grounds when I saw the carriage drive up the avenue, and hastened round the house to meet her at the door.

"The days are getting quite long," she said, as I helped her to alight. Then, glancing up at a clock in the hall, she happened to notice the time. "Is that clock right?" she asked.

"It is," I answered.

"Then my coachman must have mistaken the distance," she said. "He assured me that it would take an hour to drive here. But I shall not have occasion to regret the mistake if you will let me see the house," she added gracefully. "It seems to be a charming old place."

It would have been a little awkward for both of us but for this happy suggestion; there were, however, points of interest enough about the house to fill up a longer interval even.

"But I am forgetting!" she exclaimed, as I led her to the library. "I received this note from Colonel Colquhoun at the last moment. He is detained in barracks to-day, most unfortunately, and will not be able to get away until late. He begs me to make you his apologies."

"I hope we shall see him during the evening," I said.

"Oh yes," she answered; "he is sure to come for me."

There was a portrait of Lady Adeline in the library, and she noticed it at once.

"Do you know the Hamilton-Wellses?" she asked, brightening out of her former manner instantly.

"We are very old friends," I answered. "Their place is next to mine, you know."

"I did not know," she said. "I have never been there. Lady Adeline knows my people, and used to come to our house a good deal at one time; that is where I met her. I like her very much—and trust her."

"That everybody does."

"Do you know her widowed sister, Lady Claudia Beaumont?"

"Yes."

"And their brother, Lord Dawne?"

"Yes—well. He and I were 'chums' at Harrow and Oxford, and a common devotion to the same social subjects has kept us together since."

"He is a man of most charming manners," she said thoughtfully.

"He is," I answered cordially. "I know no one else so fastidiously refined, without being a prig."

She was sitting on the arm of a chair with Adeline's photograph in her hand, and was silent a moment, looking at it meditatively.

"You must know that eccentric 'Ideala,' as they call her, also?" she said at last, glancing up at me gravely.

"We do not consider her eccentric," I said.

"Well, you must confess that she moves in an orbit of her own," she rejoined.

"Not alone, then," I answered, "so many luminaries circle round her."

"Lady Adeline criticises her severely," she ventured, with a touch of asperity.

"*Les absents ont toujours tort*," I answered.

"But, at the same time, when Lady Adeline criticises Ideala severely, I am sure she deserves it. Her faults are patent enough, and most

provoking, because she could correct them if she would. You don't know her well?"

"No."

"Ah! Then I understand why you do not like her. She is not a person who shows to advantage on a slight acquaintance, and in that she is just the reverse of most people; her faults are all on the surface and appear at once, her good qualities only come out by degrees."

"I feel reproved," Evadne answered, smiling. "But it is really hard to believe that the main fabric of a character is beautiful when one only sees the spoilt bits of it. You must be quite one of that clique," she added, in a tone which expressed "What a pity!" quite clearly.

"You are not interested in social questions?" I ventured.

"On the contrary," she answered decidedly, "I hate them all."

She put the photograph down, and looked round the room.

"Where does that door lead to?" she asked, indicating one opposite.

"Into my study."

"Then you do not study in the library?"

"No. I read here for relaxation. When I want to work I go in there."

"Let me see where you work."

I hesitated, for I kept my tools there, and I did not know what might be about.

"It is professional work I do there," I said.

She was quick to see my meaning. "Oh, in that case," she began apologetically. "I am indiscreet; forgive me. I have not realised your position yet, you see. It is so anomalous being both a doctor and a country gentleman. But what a dear old place this is! I cannot think how you can mix up medical pursuits with the manes of your ancestors. Were I you I should belong to the Psychical Society only. The material for that kind of research lingers long in these deep recesses. It is built up in thick walls, and concealed behind oak panels. Oh, how *can* you be a doctor here?"

"I am not a doctor here," I assured her, "at least only in the morning when I make this my consulting room."

"I am glad," she said. "This is a place in which to be human."

"Is a doctor not human, then?" I asked, a trifle piqued.

"No," she answered, laughing. "A doctor is not a man to his lady patients, but an abstraction—a kindly abstraction for whom one sends when a man's presence would be altogether inconvenient. If I am ever ill I will send for you in the abstract confidently."

"Well, I hope I may more than answer your expectations in that character," I replied, "should anything so unfortunate as sickness or sorrow induce you to do me the favour of accepting my services."

She gave me one quick grave glance. "I know you mean it," she said; "and I know you mean more. You will befriend me if I ever want a friend."

"I will," I answered.

"Thank you," she said.

It was exactly what I had intended with regard to her since I had received Lady Adeline's letter, but a compact entered into on the occasion of our fourth meeting struck me as sudden. I had no time to think of it, however, at the moment, for Evadne followed up her thanks with a question.

"How do you come to have an abode of this kind and be a doctor also?" she asked.

"The house came to me from an uncle, who died suddenly, just after I had become a fully qualified practitioner," I told her; "but there is not income enough attached to it to keep it up properly, and I wanted to live here; and I wanted, besides, to continue my professional career, so I thought I would try and make the one wish help the other."

"And the experiment has succeeded?"

"Yes."

"Are you very fond of your profession?"

"It is the finest profession in the world."

"All medical men say that," she remarked, smiling.

"Well, I can claim the merit—if it be a merit—of having arrived at that conclusion before I became"—

"Eminent?" she suggested.

"Before I had taken my degree," I corrected.

"So you came and established yourself as a doctor in this old place?"

She glanced round meditatively.

"That seems to surprise you?"

"It is the dual character that surprises me," she answered. "Your practice makes you a professional man, and you are a county magnate also by right of your name and connections."

She evidently knew all about me already, and I was flattered by the interest she showed, which I thought special until I found that she was in the habit of knowing, and knowing accurately too, all about everyone with whom she was brought into close contact.

"I cannot imagine how you find time for it all," she continued; "you are not a general practitioner, I believe."

"Not exactly," I answered. "Of course I never refuse to attend in any case of emergency, but my regular practice is all consultation, and my speciality has somehow come to be nervous disorders. Sometimes I have my house full of patients—interesting cases which require close attention."

"I know," she said, "and poor people who cannot pay as often as the rich, who will give you anything to attend them."

"I should very much like you to believe the most exaggerated accounts of my generosity if any such are about," I hastened to assure her; "but honesty compels me to explain that I benefit by every case which I treat successfully."

"Go to! you do not deceive me," she answered, laughing up in my face.

Her manner had quite changed now. She recognised me as one of her own caste, and knew that however friendly and familiar she might be, I should not presume.

When it was time to think of my other guests, she begged to be allowed to remain in the library until they had all arrived.

"It would be such an exertion to have to explain to each one separately, how it is that I am here alone—and I do so dislike strange people," she added plaintively. "It makes me quite *ill* to have to meet them. And, besides," she broke out laughing, "as it is a new place, perhaps I ought to try and make myself interesting and of importance to the inhabitants by coming in late! When you keep people waiting for dinner you *do* become of consequence to them—to their comfort—and then they think of you!"

"But not very charitably under such circumstances," I suggested.

"That depends," she answered. "If you arrive in time to save their appetites, they will associate a pleasant sense of relief with your coming which will make them think well of you for evermore. They mistake the sensation for an opinion, and as they like it, they call it a good one!"

She looked pretty when she unbent like that and talked nonsense—or what was apt to strike you as nonsensical until you came to consider it. For there was often a depth of worldly wisdom and acuteness underlying her most apparently careless sallies that surprised you.

She lingered long in the library—so long that at first I felt impatiently that she might have remembered that I had an appetite as well as the strangers within my gates with whom it apparently pleased her to trifle, and I felt obliged, during an awkward pause, to account for the delay by explaining for whom we were waiting. If she were in earnest about wishing to make a sensation, or attract special attention to herself, she had gained her end, for the moment I mentioned the name of Colquhoun people began to speak of her, carefully, because nobody knew as yet who her friends might be, but with interest. I never supposed for a moment, however, that she was in earnest. There was something proudly self-respecting about her which forbade all idea of anything so paltry as manoeuvring. I did at first think that she might have fallen asleep; but, afterward, on recollecting that she was a nervous subject, it occurred to me that her courage might have failed her, and that she would never present herself to a whole room full of strangers alone. Excusing myself to my guests, therefore, as best I could, I went at last to the library, and found that this latter surmise was correct. She was standing in the middle of the room with her hands clasped, evidently in an agony of nervous trepidation. I went up to her, however, as if I had not noticed it, and offered her my arm.

"If you will come now, Mrs. Colquhoun," I said, "we will go to dinner."

She took my arm without a word, but I felt as soon as she touched me that her confidence was rapidly returning, and by the time we had reached the drawing-room, and I had explained that Colonel Colquhoun had been detained by duty most unfortunately, but Mrs. Colquhoun had been kind enough to come nevertheless, she had quite recovered herself, and only a slight exaggeration of the habitual *noli me tangere* of her ordinary manner remained in evidence of her shyness.

When we were seated at table, and she was undoubtedly at her ease again, I expected to see her vivacity revive; but the nervous crisis had evidently gone deeper than her manner, and affected her mood. I had left her all life and animation, a mere girl bent upon pleasure, but with every evidence of considerable capacity for the pursuit; but now, at dinner, she sat beside me, cold, constrained, and listless, neither eating nor interested; pretending, however, courageously, and probably deceiving those about her with the even flow of polished periods which she kept up to conceal her indifference. I thought perhaps her husband's absence had something to do with it, and expected to see her brighten up when he arrived. He did not come at all, however, and only once at table did she show any sign of the genuine intellectual activity which I was now pretty sure was either concealed or slumbering in these moods. The sign she made was de-