

ceptive, and probably only a man of my profession, accustomed to observe, and often obliged to judge more by indications of emotion than by words, would have recognised its true significance. In the midst of her chatter she became suddenly silent, and one might have been excused for supposing that her mind was weary; but that, in truth, was the moment when she really roused herself, and began to follow the conversation with close attention. There was an old bore of a doctor at table that evening who would insist on talking professionally, a thing which does not often happen in my house, for I think, of all "shop," ours is the most unsuitable for general conversation because of the morbid fascination it has for most people. Ladies especially will listen with avidity to medical matters, perceiving nothing gruesome in the details at the moment; but afterward developing nerves on the subject, and probably giving the young practitioner good reason to regret unwary confidences. I tried to stave off the topic, but the will-power of the majority was against me, and finally I found myself submitting, and following my friend's unwholesome lead.

"You must have some curious experiences, in your branch of the profession especially," the lady on my left remarked.

"We do," I said, answering her expectations against my better judgment, and partly, I think, because this was the moment when Evadne woke up. "I have had some myself. The extraordinary systems of fraud and deceit which are carried on by certain patients, for no apparent purpose, would astonish you. Their delight is essentially in the doing, and the one and only end of it all is invariably the same: a morbid desire to excite sympathy by making themselves interesting. I had one girl under my charge for six months, during which time she suffered daily from long fainting fits and other distressing symptoms which reduced her to the last degree of emaciation, and puzzled me extremely because there was nothing to account for them. Her heart was perfectly sound, yet she would lie in a state of insensibility, livid and all but pulseless, by the hour together. There was no disease of any organ, but certain symptoms, which could not have been simulated, pointed to extensive disorder of one at least. It was a case of hysteria clearly, but no treatment had the slightest effect upon her, and, fearing for her life, I took her at last to Sir Shadwell Rock, the best specialist for nervous disorders now alive. He confirmed my diagnosis, and ordered the girl to be sent away from her friends with a perfect stranger, a hard, cold, unsympathetic person who would irritate her, if possible; and she was not to be allowed luxuries of any kind. I had considered the advisability of such a course myself, but the girl seemed too far gone for it, and I own I never expected to see her alive again. After she went abroad I heard that when she fainted she was left just where she fell to recover as best she could, and when any particular food disagreed with her, it was served to her incessantly until she professed to have got over her dislike for it; but in spite of such heroic treatment, she was not at that time any better. Then I lost sight of her, and had forgotten the case, when one day, without any warning whatever, she came into my consulting room, looking the picture of health and happiness, and with a very fine child in her arms. 'I suppose you are surprised to see me alive,' she said. 'I am married now, and this is my boy—isn't he a

beauty? And I am very happy—or rather I should be but for one thing—that illness of mine—when I gave you so much trouble'—'Oh, don't mention that,' I interrupted, thinking she had come to overwhelm me with undeserved thanks: 'my only trouble was that I could do nothing for you. I hope you recovered soon after you went abroad?' 'As soon as I thought fit,' she answered significantly, 'and that is what I have come about. I want to confess. I want to relieve my mind of a burden of deceit. Doctor—I was never insensible in one of those fainting fits; I never had a symptom that I could not have controlled. I was shamming from beginning to end.' 'Well, you nearly shammed yourself out of the world,' I said. 'Tell me how you did it?' 'I can't tell you exactly,' she answered. 'When I wanted to appear to faint I just set my mind somehow—I can't do it now that I am happy and have plenty of interests in life. At that time I had nothing to take me out of myself, and those daily doings were an endless source of occupation and entertainment to me. But lately I have had qualms of conscience on the subject.'"

"And was she cured?" Evadne asked.

"Oh yes," I answered. "There was no fear for her after she confessed. When the moral consciousness returns in such cases, and there is nothing but relief of mind to be gained by confession, the cure is generally complete."

"But what could have been the motive of such a fraud?" somebody asked.

"It is difficult to imagine," I answered. "Had it been more extensive the explanation would have been easier; but as myself and the young lady's parents were her only audience, I have never been able to account for it satisfactorily."

I noticed, while I was speaking, that Evadne was thinking the problem out for herself.

"She would not have given herself so much trouble without a very strong motive," she now suggested, "and human passions are the strongest motives for human actions, are they not?"

"Of course," I said, "but the question is, what passion prompted her. It could not have been either anger, ambition, revenge, or jealousy."

"No," she answered, in the matter-of-fact tone of one who merely arrives at a logical conclusion, "and it must therefore have been love. She was in love with you, and tried in that way to excite your sympathy and attract your attention."

"It is quite evident that view of the case never occurred to you, Galbraith," Dr. Lauder observed, laughing.

And I own that I *was* taken aback by it, considerably—not of course as it affected myself, but because it gave me a glimpse of an order of mind totally different from that with which I should have credited Evadne earlier in the evening.

"But how do you treat these cases?" she proceeded. "Is there any cure for such depravity?"

"Oh yes," I answered confidently. "They are being cured every day. So long as there is no organic disease, I am quite sure that wholesome surroundings, patience and kind care, and steady moral influence will do all that is necessary. The great thing is to awaken the conscience. Patients who once feel sincerely that such courses are depraved may cure themselves—if they are not robbed of their self-respect. The most hopeless cases I have, come from that class of people who give each other bits of their mind—very objectionable bits, consisting of vulgar abuse for the most part, and the calling of names that rankle. The operators seem to derive a solemn kind of self-

satisfaction from the treatment themselves, but it does for the patient almost invariably."

This led to a discussion on bad manners, during which Evadne relapsed. I saw the light go out of her eyes, and she showed no genuine interest in anything for the rest of the evening; and when I had wrapped her up, and seen her drive away, I somehow felt that the entertainment had been a failure so far as she was concerned, and I wondered why she should so soon be bored. At her age she should have had vitality enough in herself to carry her through an evening.

"Colonel Colquhoun will regret that he has not been able to come," she said as she wished me good-bye.

And I noticed afterward that she was always most punctilious about such little formalities. She never omitted any trifle of etiquette, and I doubt if she could have dined without "dressing" for dinner.

CHAPTER V

COLONEL COLQUHOUN called next day himself to explain his absence on the previous evening. I forget what excuse he made, but it sufficed.

I saw Evadne, too, that same afternoon. She had been to make a call in the neighbourhood, and was waiting at a little country station to return by train. Something peculiar in her attitude attracted my attention before I recognised her. She was standing alone at the extreme end of the platform, her slender figure silhouetted with dark distinctness against the sloping evening sky. She might have been waiting anxiously for someone to come that way, or she might have been waiting for a train with tragic purpose. She wore a long dark green dress, the train of which she was holding up in her left hand. She showed no surprise when I spoke to her, although she had not heard me approach.

"What do the people here think of me?" she asked abruptly. "What do they say?"

"They have yet to discover your faults," I answered.

She compressed her lips, and looked down the line again.

"That is my train, I think," she said presently.

When I had put her into a carriage, she shook hands with me, thanking me gravely, then threw herself back in her seat and was borne away.

That was literally all that passed between us, yet she left me standing there, staring after her stupidly, and curiously impressed. There was always a suggestion of something unusual about her which piqued my interest and kept it alive.

During the summer and autumn I met her at various places and saw her also in her own house, and she seemed, so far as an outsider could judge, as happily situated as most women of her station, and not at all likely to require any special service at the hands of a friend. Her husband was a good deal older than herself, but the disparity made no apparent difference to their comfort. When he was absent she never talked about him, but when he was present she treated him with unvarying consideration, and they appeared together everywhere. Mindful of my promise to Lady Adeline, I showed them both every attention in my power. I called regularly, and Colonel Colquhoun as regularly returned my calls, sometimes bringing Evadne with him.

The winter that year came upon us suddenly and sharply, and until it set in I had only

seen her under the most ordinary circumstances; but at the beginning of the cold weather she had an illness which was the means of my learning to know more of her true character and surroundings in a few days than I should probably have done in years of mere social intercourse. I stopped for a moment one morning as I drove past As-You-Like-It to leave her some flowers, and her own maid, who opened the door, showed me upstairs to a small sitting-room, the ante-chamber to another room beyond, at the door of which she knocked.

I heard no answer, but the girl entered and announced me. I followed her in and found myself face to face with Evadne. She was in bed. The maid withdrew, closing the door after her.

"What nonsense is this—I am exceedingly sorry, doctor!" Evadne exclaimed feebly. "That stupid girl must have thought that you were coming to see me professionally. But, oh! do let me look at the flowers!" and she stretched out her left hand for them, offering me her right at the same time to shake, and burying her face and her embarrassment together. Her hand was hot and dry.

"I don't require you in the least, doctor," she assured me, looking up brightly from the flowers, "but I am very glad to see you."

"Why are you in bed?" I asked, responding cheerfully to this cheerful greeting.

"Oh, I have a little cold," she answered.

I drew a chair to the bedside, laid my hand on her wrist, and watched her closely as I questioned her—cough incessant; respiration rapid; temperature high, I judged; pulse 120.

"How long have you had this cold?" I asked.

"About a week," she said. "It makes me ache all over, you know, and that is why I am in bed to-day."

I saw at once that she was seriously ill, and I also saw that she was bearing up bravely, and making as little of it as possible.

"Why isn't your fire lit?" I asked.

"Oh, I never thought of having one," she answered.

"And what is that you are drinking?"

"Cold water."

"Well, you mustn't drink any more cold water, or anything else cold until I give you leave," I ordered. "And don't try to talk. I will come and see you again by and by."

I went downstairs to look for Colonel Colquhoun, and found him just about to start for barracks.

"I am sorry to say your wife is very ill," I said. "She has an attack of acute bronchitis, and it may mean pneumonia as well; I have not examined her chest. She must have fires in her room, and a bronchitis kettle at once. Don't let the temperature get below 70° till I see her again. Her maid can manage for a few hours, I suppose? But you had better telegraph for a nurse. One should be here before night."

"What a damned nuisance these women are," Colquhoun answered cheerfully. "There's always something the matter with them!"

I returned between five and six in the evening, walked in, and not seeing anybody about, went up to Evadne's sitting-room. The door leading into the bedroom was open, and I entered. She was alone, and had propped herself up in bed with pillows. The difficulty of breathing had become greater, and she found relief in that attitude. She looked at me with eyes unnaturally large and solemn as I entered, and it was a full moment be-

fore she recognised me. The fires had not been lighted in either of the rooms, and she was evidently much worse.

"Why haven't these fires been lighted?" I demanded.

"This is only October," she answered, jesting, "and we don't begin fires till November."

I rang the bell emphatically.

"Do not trouble yourself, doctor," she remonstrated gently. "What does it matter?"

I went out into the sitting-room to meet the maid as she entered.

"Why haven't these fires been lighted?" I asked again.

"I don't know, sir," she answered. "I received no orders about them."

"Where is Colonel Colquhoun?"

"He went out after breakfast, sir, and has not come back yet."

"Has the nurse arrived?"

"No, sir."

"Well, light these fires at once."

"I don't light fires, sir," she said, drawing herself up; "it isn't my work."

"Whose work is it?" I demanded.

"Either of the housemaids, sir, but they're both out," she answered, ogling me pertly.

I own that I was exasperated, and I showed it in such a way that she fled precipitately. I followed her downstairs to find the butler. I happened to know the man. His wife had been in my service, and I had attended her through a severe illness since her marriage.

"Do you know if there's such a thing as a sensible woman in this establishment, Williamson?" I demanded.

"Well, sir, the cook's sensible when she's sober," he answered, pinching his chin dubiously.

"Does she happen to be sober now?"

He glanced at the clock. "I'll just see, sir," he said.

When he returned he announced, with perfect gravity, that she was "passable sober, but busy with the dinner."

"Then look here," I exclaimed, out of all patience, "we must do it ourselves."

"Yes, sir," he said. "Anything I *can* do."

When I explained the difficulty, he suggested sending for his wife, who could manage, he thought, until the trained nurse arrived, and help her afterward. It was a good idea, and my man was despatched to bring her immediately.

"They're a bad lot o' servants, the women in this 'ouse at present," Williamson informed me. "The missus didn't choose 'em 'erself"—and he shook his head significantly. "But she knows what's what, and they're going. That's why they're takin' advantage."

I returned to Evadne. Her eyes were closed and her forehead contracted. Every breath of cold air was cutting her lungs like a knife, but she looked up at me when I took her hand, and smiled. I never knew anybody so patient and uncomplaining. She was lying on a little iron bedstead, hard and narrow as a camp bed. The room was bare-looking, the floor being polished, and with only two small rugs, one at the fireplace and one beside the bed, upon it. It looked like a nun's cell, and there was a certain suggestion of purity in the sweetness and order of it quite consistent with the idea; but it was a north room, and very cold. Evadne had unconsciously clasped my hand, and dozed off for a few minutes, holding it tight, but the cough re-aroused her. When she looked at me again her

mind was wandering. She knew me, but she did not know what she was saying.

"I am so thankful!" she exclaimed. "The peace of mind—the peace of mind—I cannot tell you what a relief it is!"

Williamson came in on tiptoe and lit the fire, and Evadne's maid followed him in and stood looking on, half sheepishy and half in defiance. I noticed now that she was a hard-faced, bold-looking girl, not at all the sort of person to have about my delicate little lady, and when Mrs. Williamson arrived, I ordered her out of the room, and never allowed her to enter it again. During the week she left altogether, and I was fortunately able to procure a suitable woman to wait upon Mrs. Colquhoun. She has been with her ever since, by the way.

I felt pretty sure by this time that no nurse had been sent for, and I therefore despatched one of Colonel Colquhoun's men in a dogcart to Morningquest to telegraph for one. But she could not arrive before daylight even by special train, and it had now become a matter of life and death; and as Mrs. Williamson had no knowledge of nursing to help her good will, I determined to spend the night beside my patient.

When Colonel Colquhoun came in and found me making myself at home in his house, he expressed himself greatly pleased.

"When I returned this afternoon to see how Mrs. Colquhoun was progressing, I found that none of my orders had been carried out, and now she is dangerously ill," I said severely.

"Faith," he replied, changing countenance, "I'm very sorry to hear it, and I'm afraid I'm to blame, for I was in the deuce of a hurry when I saw you this morning, and never thought of a word you said from that moment to this. Now I'm genuinely sorry," he repeated. "Is there nothing I can do? Mrs. Orton Beg"—

"She's gone abroad for the winter."

"Ah, to be sure!"

"And everybody else is away who would be of any use," I added, "and I therefore propose, if you have no objection, to stay here to-night myself."

"You'd oblige me greatly by doing so," he answered earnestly. "I don't know what there is for dinner, but I shall enjoy it all the more myself for the pleasure of your company."

He made no special inquiries about his wife's condition, and never went near her; but as he was in a tolerably advanced state of intoxication before he retired for the night, it was quite as well, perhaps.

Mrs. Williamson had probably done her day's work before I sent for her, and, with all the will in the world to wake and watch, she fell fast asleep before midnight, and I let her sleep. There were only the fires to be attended to—at least that was all that I could have trusted her to do. Watching the case generally, and seizing opportune moments to administer remedies, would not have been in her line at all.

Evadne knew me always, but she lost all count of time.

"You seem to come every day now, doctor," she said once during the night, "and I *am* glad to see you!"

For two hours toward dawn, when the temperature is sensibly lower, I gave my little lady up; but she was better by the time the trained nurse arrived, and eventually she pulled through—greatly owing, I am sure, to her own perfect patience. She was always the same all through her illness, gentle, uncomplaining, grateful for

every trifle that was done for her, and tranquillity itself. My impression was that she enjoyed being ill. I never saw a symptom of depression the whole time; but when she had quite recovered, and although, as often happens after a severe illness, when so-called "trifles" are discovered and checked which would otherwise have been allowed to run on until they grew serious—although for this reason she was certainly stronger than she had ever been since I became acquainted with her, no sooner did she resume her accustomed habits than that old unsatisfactory something in her, which it was so easy to perceive but so difficult to define, returned in full force.

I had ceased to be critical, however. Colonel Colquhoun's careless neglect of her had continued throughout her illness, and I thought I understood.

CHAPTER VI

I HAD necessarily seen much of Evadne during her illness, and the intimacy never again lapsed.

Jealousy was not one of Colonel Colquhoun's vices. He always encouraged any man to come to the house for whom she showed the slightest preference, and I have heard him complain of her indifference to admiration.

"She'll dress herself up carefully in the evening to sit at home alone with me, and go out to a big dinner-party in the dowdiest gown she's got," he told me once. "She doesn't care a hang whether she's admired or not—rather objects, if anything, perhaps."

Colonel Colquhoun rubbed his hands here with a certain enjoyment of such perversity. But I could see that Evadne did not relish the subject. It was one afternoon at As-You-Like-It. I was tired after a long day, and had dropped in to ask for some tea. Colonel Colquhoun came up to entertain me, and Evadne went on with her work while we chatted familiarly.

"You were never so civil to any of your admirers, Evadne, as you were to that great boy in the regiment," Colonel Colquhoun continued, quite blind to her obvious and natural though silent objection to being made the subject of conversation—"a young subaltern of ours," he explained to me, "a big broad-shouldered lad, six feet high, who just worshipped Evadne!"

"Poor boy!" said Evadne, sighing. "He was cruelly butchered in a horribly fruitless skirmish with his fellow-creatures during that last small war. I was glad I was able to be kind to him. He was always very nice to me."

"Well, there's a reason for everything!" Colonel Colquhoun observed gallantly.

"Don't you like boys?" Evadne asked, looking up at me. "The ones we have here at the depôt, when they first come, fresh from the public schools, are delightful, with their high spirits and their love affairs, their pranks and the something beyond which will make men of them eventually. I can never see enough of *our* boys. But Colonel Colquhoun very kindly lets me have as many of them here as I like."

"Faith, I can't keep them out, for they're all in love with you," said Colonel Colquhoun.

"And I am in love with them all!" she answered brightly, leaning back in her chair, and holding up her work to look at it. As she did so, the lower half of her face was concealed from me, and her eyes were cast down. I only glanced at her, but, in the act of doing so, I suddenly became

aware, by one of those curious flashes of imperfect recollection which come to us all at times to torment us, that I had seen her somewhere, before I knew who she was, in that attitude exactly; but where, or under what circumstance, I failed to recollect. The impression, however, was indelible, and haunted me ever afterward.

"Now, there's Diavolo," Colonel Colquhoun continued—the exchange I had suggested had been effected by this time, and Diavolo was quartered at the depôt—not exactly to Colonel Colquhoun's delight, perhaps, but he was very good about it. "Now, there's Diavolo. He tells me to my face that he was the first to propose to Mrs. Colquhoun, and always meant to marry her, and means it still. He said to me coaxingly, only last Friday, when I was coming out of barracks, 'Take me home with you to-day, sir.' And I answered, pretending to be severe, but pulling his sleeve, you know, 'Indeed I won't. You'll be making love to Mrs. Colquhoun.' And he got very red, and said quite huffily, 'Well, I think you might let a fellow look at her.' And of course I had to bring him back with me, and he sat down on the floor at her feet there, and got on with the most ridiculous nonsense. You couldn't help laughing! 'I should like to kill you and carry her off,' he said, for all the world as if he meant it. And no more harm in the boy, either, than there is in Evadne herself," Colonel Colquhoun added good-humouredly.

This is a specimen of the man at his best. Latterly I had seldom seen him in such a genial mood at home—abroad he brightened up. But in his own house *now*—for a process of deterioration had been going on ever since his arrival in Morningquest—his mind was apt to resemble a dark cave which is transformed diurnally by a single shaft of sunshine which streams in for a brief space at a certain hour. The happy moment with him occurred about the time of the tenth brandy-and-soda, as nearly as I could calculate, and it lasted till the eleventh, when he usually relapsed into gloom again, and became overcast until the next recurrence of the phenomena. But whatever his mood was, Evadne humoured it. She responded always—or tried to—when he was genial; and when he was morose, she was dumb. I thought her a model wife.

CHAPTER VII

AFTER her illness Evadne spent much of her time in the west window of the drawing-room at As-You-Like-It with her little work-table beside her, embroidering. I never saw her reading, and there were no books about the room; but the work she did was beautiful. She used to have a stand before her with flowers arranged upon it, and copy them on to some material in coloured silks direct from nature. She could not draw either with pen or pencil, or paint with a brush, but she could copy with her needle quite accurately, and would do a spray of lilies to the life, or in the most approved conventional manner, if it pleased her. Her not being able to draw struck me as a curious limitation, and I asked her once if she could account for it in any way.

"I believe I am an example of how much we owe to early influences," she answered, laughing; "and probably I have the talent both for drawing and painting in me, but it remains latent for want of cultivation. My mother drew and painted

beautifully as a girl, but she had given both up before I was old enough to imitate her, and only copied flowers as I do with her needle, and I used to watch her at her work until I felt impelled to do the same. If she had gone on with her drawing I am sure I should have drawn too; but as it was, I never thought of trying."

"Moral for mothers," I observed: "Keep up your own accomplishments if you would have your daughters shine."

Evadne was not enough in the fresh air at this time, and she was too much alone. I ventured once, in my professional capacity, to say that she should have friends to stay with her occasionally; but she passed the suggestion off without either accepting or declining it, and then I spoke to Colonel Colquhoun. He, however, pooh-poohed the idea altogether.

"She's all right," he said. "You don't know her. She always lives like that; it's her way."

I also counselled regular exercise, and to that she replied, "I *do* go out. Why, you passed me yourself on the road only the other day."

I certainly had seen her more than once, alone, miles away from home, walking at the top of her speed, as if impelled by some strong emotion or inexorable necessity, and I did not like the sign. "One or two hours' walk regularly every day is what you should take," I told her. "The virtue of it is in the regularity. If you make a habit of taking a short walk daily you will have got more sunshine and fresh air, which is what you specially require, in one year than you will in two if you continue to go out in a jerky, irregular way. And you must give up covering impossible distances in feverish haste, as you do now. Walk gently, and make yourself feel that you have full leisure to walk as long as you like. You will find the effect tranquillising. It is a common mistake to make a business of taking exercise. I am constantly lecturing my patients about it. If you want exercise to raise your spirits, brace your nerves, and do you good generally, it must be all pure pleasure without conscious exertion. Pleasurable moments prolong life."

"Thank you," Evadne answered gently. "I know, of course, that you are right, and I will do my best to profit by your advice, if it be only to show you how much I appreciate your kindness. But I must have a scamper occasionally, a regular *burst*, you know. Please don't stop that! The indulgence, when I am in the mood, is my pet vice at present."

The great drawing-room at As-You-Like-It, which I had mentioned in my letter to Lady Adeline as containing the one bright spot in that gloomy abode, was an addition tacked on to the end of the house, and evidently an afterthought. It was entered by a flight of shallow steps from the hall, and was above the level of the public road, which ran close past that end of the house, the grounds and approach being on the other side. It was lighted by three high, narrow windows looking toward the north, and three more close together looking west, and forming a bay so deep as to be quite a small room in itself. It almost overhung the high road, only a tall holly hedge being between them, but so near that the topmost twigs of the holly grew up to the window-sill. It was a quiet road, however, too far from the town for much traffic, and Evadne could sit there with the windows open undisturbed, and enjoy the long level prospect of fertile land, field and fallow, wood and water, that lay before her. She sat in the centre window, and I think it was from thence

that she learnt to appreciate the charms of a level landscape as you look down upon it, about which I heard her discourse so eloquently in after days. It was her chosen corner, and there she sat silent many and many an hour, with busy fingers and thoughts we could not follow, communing at times with nature, I doubt not, or with her own heart, and thankful to be still.

The road beneath her was one I had to traverse regularly, and it became a habit to look up as I drove past. If she were in her accustomed seat she usually raised her eyes from her work for a moment to smile me a greeting. Once she was standing up, leaning languidly against the window frame, twirling a rose in her fingers, but she straightened herself into momentary energy when she recognised me, and threw the rose at me with accurate aim. It was the youngest and most familiar thing I had known her do—an impulse of pure mischief, I thought, for the rose was *La France*, and the sentiment, as I translated it, was, "You will value it more than I do!" For she hated the French.

There often occurs and recurs to the mind incessantly a verse or an apt quotation in connection with some act or event, a haunting definition of the impression it makes upon us, and Evadne in the wide west window, bending busily over her work, set my mind on one occasion to a borrowed measure of words which never failed me from that time forward when I saw her so engaged—

There she weaves by night and day
A magic web of colour gay.
She has heard a whisper say,
A curse is on her if she stay
To look down to Camelot.
She knows not what the curse may be,
And so she weaveth steadily,
And little other care hath she,
The lady of Shalott.

But where was Camelot? Fountain Towers, just appearing above the tree-tops to the north, was the only human habitation in sight. I had a powerful telescope on the highest tower, and one day, in an idle mood, I happened to be looking through it with no definite purpose, just sweeping it slowly from point to point of the landscape, when all at once Evadne came into the field of vision with such startling distinctness that I stepped back from the glass. She was sitting in her accustomed place, with her work on her lap, her hands clasped before her, leaning forward looking up in my direction with an expression in her whole attitude that appealed to me like a cry for help. The impression was so strong that I ordered my dogcart out and drove over to As-You-Like-It at once. But I found her perfectly tranquil when I arrived, with no trace of recent emotion either in her manner or appearance.

When I went home I had the telescope removed. I had forgotten that we overlooked that corner of As-You-Like-It.

CHAPTER VIII

THE idea that Evadne was naturally unsociable was pretty general, and Colonel Colquhoun believed it as much as anybody. I remember being at As-You-Like-It one afternoon when he rallied her on the subject. He had stopped me as I was driving past to ask me to look at a horse he was thinking of buying. The animal was being trotted up and down the approach by a groom for

our inspection when Evadne returned from somewhere, driving herself.

She pulled up beside us and got out.

"I never see you driving any of your friends about," Colonel Colquhoun remarked. "You're very unsociable, Evadne."

"Oh, well, you see," she answered slowly, "I like to be alone and think when I am driving. It worries me to have to talk to people—as a rule."

"Well," he said, glancing at the reeking pony, "if your thoughts went as fast as Blue Mick seems to have done to-day, you must have got through a good deal of thinking in the time."

Evadne looked at the pony. "Take him round," she said to the groom; and then she remarked that it must be tea-time, and asked us both to go in, and have some.

The air had brought a delicate tinge of colour to her usually pale cheeks, and she looked bright and bonny as she sat beside the tea-table, taking off her gloves and chatting, with her hat pushed slightly up from her forehead. It was an expansive moment with her, one of the rare ones when she unconsciously revealed something of herself in her conversation.

There were some flowers on the tea-table which I admired.

"Ah!" she said, with a sigh of satisfaction in their beauty; "I derive all my pleasure in life from things inanimate. An arrangement of deep-toned marigolds with brown centres in a glass like these, all aglow beneath the maiden-hair, gives me more pleasure than anything else I can think of at this moment."

"Not more pleasure than your friends do," I ventured.

"I don't know," she replied. "In the matter of love, *surgit amari aliquid*. Friends disappoint us. But in the contemplation of flowers all our finer feelings are stimulated and blended, and yet there is no excess of feeling to end in regrets or a painful reaction. When the flowers fade, we cheerfully gather fresh ones. But I hope I do not undervalue my friends," she broke off. "I only mean to say—when you think of all the uncertainties of life, of sickness and death, and other things more dreadful, which overtake our dearest, do what we will to protect them; and then that worst thing whether it be in ourselves or others: I mean change—when you think of it all, surely it is well to turn to some delicate source of delight, like this, for relief—and to forget," and she curved her slender hand round the flowers caressingly, looking up at me at the same time as if she were pleading to be allowed to have her own way.

I did not remonstrate with her. I hardly knew the danger then myself of refusing to suffer.

It was some weeks before I saw her again after that. I had been busy. But one day, as I was driving into Morningquest, I overtook her on the road, walking in the same direction. I was in a close carriage, but I pulled the checkstring as soon as I recognised her, and got out. She turned when she heard the carriage stop, and seeing me alight came forward and shook hands. She looked wan and weary.

"Those are fine horses of yours," was her smileless greeting. "How are you?"

"Have you been having a 'burst'?" I said—she was quite five miles from home. She looked up and down the road for answer, and affected to laugh, but I could see that she was not at all in a laughing mood, and also that she was already over-fatigued. I thought of begging to be allowed

to drive her back; but then it occurred to me that, even if she consented, which was not likely, as she had a perfect horror of giving trouble, and would never have been persuaded that I was not going out of my way at the greatest personal inconvenience merely to pay her a polite attention; but even if she had consented, she would probably have had to spend the rest of the day alone in that great west window, with nothing to take her out of herself, and nothing more enlivening to look at than dreary winter fields under a sombre sky, and that would not do at all. A better idea, however, occurred to me.

"I am going to see Mrs. Orton Beg," I said. "She is not very well."

Evadne had been staring blandly at the level landscape, but she turned to me when I spoke, and some interest came into her eyes.

"Have you seen her lately?" I continued.

"N-no," she answered, as if she were considering; "not for some time."

"Come now," I boldly suggested. "It will do her good. I won't talk if you want to think," I added.

Her face melted into a smile at this, and on seeing her stiffness relax, I wasted no more time in persuasion, but returned to the carriage and held the door open for her. She followed me slowly, although she looked as if she had not quite made up her mind, and got in; but still as if she were hesitating. Once she was seated, however, I could see that she was not sorry she had yielded; and presently she acknowledged as much herself.

"I believe I was tired," she said.

"Rest now, then," I answered, taking a paper out of my pocket. She settled herself more luxuriously in her corner, put her arm in the strap, and looked out through the open window. The day was mild though murky, the sky was leaden grey. We rolled through the wintry landscape rapidly—brown hedgerows, leafless trees, ploughed fields, a crow, two crows, a whole flock home-returning from their feeding ground; scattered cottages, a woman at a door looking out with a child in her arms, three boys swinging on a gate, a man trudging along with a bundle, a labourer trimming a bank; mist rising in the low-lying meadows; grazing cattle, nibbling sheep;—but she did not see these things at first, any of them; she was thinking. Then she began to see, and forgot to think. Then her fatigue wore off, and a sense of relief, of ease, and of well-being generally, took gradual possession of her. I could see the change come into her countenance, and before we had arrived in Morningquest she had begun to talk to me cheerfully of her own accord. We had to skirt the old grey walls which surrounded the palace gardens, and as we did so she looked up at them—indifferently at first, but immediately afterward with a sudden flash of recognition. She said nothing, but I could see she drew herself together as if she had been hurt.

"Do you go there often?" I asked her.

"No—Edith died there; and then that child," she answered, looking at me as if she were surprised that I should have thought it likely.

"She shrinks from sorrowful associations and painful sights," I thought. But I did not know, when I asked the question, that our poor Edith had been a particular friend of hers.

We stopped the next moment at Mrs. Orton Beg's, and she leant forward to look at the windows, smiling and brightening again.

I helped her out and followed her to the door, which she opened as if she were at home there. She waited for me for a moment in the hall till I put my hat down, and then we went to the drawing-room together, and walked in, in the same familiar way.

Mrs. Orton Beg was there with another lady, a stout but very comely person, handsomely dressed, who seemed to have just risen to take her leave.

The moment Evadne saw this lady she sprang forward. "Oh, mother!" she cried, throwing her arms round her neck.

"Evadne—my dear, dear child!" the lady exclaimed, clasping her close and kissing her, and then holding her off to look at her. "Why, my child, how thin you are, and pale, and weak"—

"Oh, mother—I *am* so glad! I *am* so glad!" Evadne cried again, nestling close up to her, and kissing her neck; and then she laid her head on her bosom and burst into hysterical sobs.

I instantly left the room, and Mrs. Orton Beg followed me.

"They have not met since—just after Evadne's marriage," she explained to me. "Evadne offended her father, and there still seems to be no hope of a reconciliation."

"But surely it is cruel to separate mother and child," I exclaimed indignantly. "He has no right to do that."

"No, and he would not be able to do it with one of us," she answered bitterly; "but my sister is of a yielding disposition. She is like Mrs. Beale, one of the old-fashioned 'womanly women,' who thought it their duty to submit to everything, and make the best of everything, including injustice and any other vice it pleased their lords to practise. But for this weakness of good women the world would be a brighter and better place by this time. We see the disastrous folly of submitting our reason to the rule of self-indulgence and self-interest now, however; and, please God, we shall change all that before I die. He will be a bold man soon who will dare to have the impertinence to dictate to us as to what we should or should not do, or think, or say. No one can pretend that the old system of husband and master has answered well, and it has had a fair trial. Let us hope that the new method of partnership will be more successful."

"Yes, indeed!" I answered earnestly.

Mrs. Orton Beg looked up in my face, and her own countenance cleared.

"You and Evadne seem to be very good friends," she said. "I am so glad." Then she looked up at me again, with a curious little smile which I could not interpret. "Does she remind you of anybody—of anything, ever?" she asked.

"Why—surely she is like you," I said, seeing a likeness for the first time.

"Yes," she answered, in a more indifferent tone. "There is a likeness, I am told."

I tried afterward to think that this explained the haunting half-recollection I seemed to have of something about Evadne; but it did not. On the contrary, it re-awakened and confirmed the feeling that I had seen Evadne before I knew who she was, under circumstances which I now failed to recall.

Thinking she would like to be alone after that interview with her mother, I left the carriage for her, and walked back to Fountain Towers; and the state I was in after doing the ten miles warned me that I had been luxuriating too much in

carriages lately, and must begin to practise what I preached again in the way of exercise, if I did not wish to lay up a fat and flabby old age for myself.

I made a point of not seeing Evadne for some little time after that event, so that she might not feel bound to refer to it in case she should shrink from doing so. But the next time we met, as it happened, I had another glimpse of her feeling for her friends, which showed me how very much mistaken I had been in my estimate of the depth of her affections. It was at As-You-Like-It. I had walked over from Fountain Towers, and dropped in casually to ask for some tea, and Colonel Colquhoun arriving at the same moment from barracks, we went up to the drawing-room together, and found Evadne in her accustomed place, busy with her embroidery as usual. She shook hands, but said nothing to show that she was aware of the interval there had been since she saw me last. When she sat down again, however, she went on with her work, and there was a certain satisfied look in her face, as if some little wish had been gratified and she was content. I knew when she took up her work that she liked me to be there, and wanted me to stay, for she always put it down when visitors she did not care for called, and made a business of entertaining them. But we had scarcely settled ourselves to talk when the butler opened the door, and announced "Mr. Bertram Frayling," and a tall, slender, remarkably handsome young fellow, with a strong family likeness to Evadne herself, entered with boyish diffidence, smiling nervously, but looking important too. Evadne jumped up impetuously.

"Bertram!" she exclaimed, holding out her arms to him. "Why, what a big fellow you have grown!" she cried, finding she could hardly reach to his neck to hug him. "And how handsome you are!"

"They say I am just like you," he answered, looking down at her lovingly, with his arm around her waist. Neither of them took any notice of us.

"This is your birthday, dear," Evadne said. "I have been thinking of you the whole day long. I always keep all the birthdays. Did you remember mine?"

"I—don't think I did," he answered honestly. "But this is my twenty-first birthday, Evadne, and that's how it is I am here. I am my own master from to-day."

"And the first thing you do with your liberty is to come and see your sister," said Colonel Colquhoun. "You're made of the right stuff, my boy," and he shook hands with him heartily.

Evadne clung with one hand to his shoulder, and pressed her handkerchief first to this eye and then to that alternately with the other, looking so glad, however, at the same time, that it was impossible to say whether she was going to laugh or cry for joy.

"But aren't there rejoicings?" she asked.

"Oh yes!" he answered. "But I told my father if you were not asked I should not stay for them. I was determined to see you to-day." He flushed boyishly as he spoke, and smiled round upon us all again.

"But wasn't he very angry?" Evadne said.

"Yes," her brother answered, twinkling. "The girls got round him, and tried to persuade him, but they only made him worse, especially when they all declared that when they came of age they meant to do *something*, too! He said that he was afflicted with the most obstinate, ill-con-

ditioned family in the county, and began to row mother as if it were her fault. But I wouldn't stand that!"

"You were right, Bertram," Evadne exclaimed, clenching her hands. "Now that you are a man, never let mother be made miserable. Did she know you were coming?"

"Yes, and was very glad," he answered, "and sent you messages."

But here Colonel Colquhoun and I managed to slip from the room. Evadne sent her brother back that day to grace the close of the festivities in his honour, but he returned the following week, and stayed at As-You-Like-It, and also with me, when he confirmed my first exceedingly good impression of him. Evadne quite awakened up under his influence, but, unfortunately for her, he went abroad in a few weeks for a two years' trip round the world, and I think losing him again so soon made it almost worse for her than if they had never been reunited, especially as another and irreparable loss came upon her immediately after his departure. This was the sudden death of her mother, the news of which arrived one day in a curt note written by her father to Colonel Colquhoun, no previous intimation of illness having been sent to break the shock of the announcement. I can never be thankful enough for the happy chance which brought about that last accidental meeting of Evadne with her mother. But for that, they would not have seen each other again; and I had the pleasure of learning eventually that the perfect understanding which they arrived at during the few hours they spent together on that occasion, afterward became one of the most comforting recollections of Evadne's life—"A hallowed memory," as she herself expressed it, "such as it is very good for us to cherish. Thank Heaven for the opportunity which renewed and intensified my appreciation of my mother's love and goodness, so as to make my last impression of her one which must stand out distinctly for ever from the rest, and be always a joyful sorrow to recall. Do you know what a joyful sorrow is? Ah! something that makes one feel warm and forgiving in the midst of one's regrets, a delicious feeling; when it takes possession of you, you cease to be hard and cold and fierce, and want to do good."

Mrs. Frayling died of a disease for which we have a remedy nowadays—or, to speak plainly, she died for want of proper treatment. Her husband gloried in what he called "a rooted objection to new-fangled notions," and would not send for a modern practitioner even when the case became serious, preferring to confide it entirely to a very worthy old gentleman of his own way of thinking, with one qualification, who had attended his household successfully for twenty-four years, during which time only one other member of his family had ever been seriously ill, and he also had died. But I hope and believe that my poor little lady never knew the truth about her mother's last illness. She was overwhelmed with grief as it was, and it cut one to the quick to see her, day after day, in her black dress, sitting alone, pale and still and uncomplaining, her invariable attitude when she was deeply distressed, and not to be able to say a word or do a thing to relieve her. As usual at that time of the year, everybody whom she cared to see at all was away except myself, so that during the dreariest of the winter months she was shut up with her grief in the most unwholesome isolation. As the spring returned, however, she

began to revive, and then, suddenly, it appeared to me that she entered upon a new phase altogether.

CHAPTER IX

DURING the first days of our acquaintance Evadne's attitude, whatever happened, surprised me. I could anticipate her action up to a certain point, but just the precise thing she would do was the last thing I had expected; I knew her feeling, in fact, but I was ignorant of the material it had to work upon, and by means of which it found expression. I had begun by believing her to be cold and self-sufficing, but even before her illness I had perceived in her a strange desire for sympathy, and foreseen that on occasion she would exact it in large measure from anyone she cared about. It was making much of a cut finger one day that she had led me to expect she would be exacting in illness, languishing, as ladies do, to excite sympathy; and when the illness came I found I had been right in so far as I had believed that she would appreciate sympathy, but entirely wrong about the means she would employ to obtain it. Instead of languishing when she found herself really suffering, she pulled herself together, and bore the trial with heroic calm. As I have said, she never uttered a complaint; and she had the strength of mind to ignore annoyances which few people in perfect health could have borne with fortitude. Certainly her attitude then had excited sympathy, and respect as well. It was as admirable as it was unexpected.

I had also perceived that she could not bear anything disagreeable. She seldom showed the least irritability herself, nor would she tolerate it for a moment in anyone else. Servants who were not always cheerful had to go, and the kind of people who snap at each other in the bosom of their families she carefully avoided, turning from them instinctively as she would have done from any perception revolting to the physical senses; and that she would fly disgusted from sickening sights or sounds or odours I never doubted. But here again I was wrong—or rather the evidence was utterly misleading. I found her one day sitting on the bridge of a little river that crossed a quiet lane near their house, and got down from my horse to talk to her, and as we stood looking over the parapet into the stream, the bloated carcass of a dead dog came floating by. She could only have caught a glimpse of it, for she drew back instantly, but she looked so pale and nauseated that I had to take her to the house, and insist upon her having some wine. And I once took her, at her own earnest request, to visit a children's hospital; but before we had seen a dozen of the little patients she cried so piteously I was obliged to take her away; and she could never bear to speak of the place afterward. And lastly, I had seen how she shrank from going to the palace because of the association with Edith's terrible death, and the chance of seeing her poor repulsive-looking little boy there.

Yet when it came to be a question of facing absolute horrors in the interests of the sufferers, she was the first to volunteer, and she did so with a quiet determination there was no resisting, and every trace of inward emotion so carefully obliterated that one might have been forgiven for supposing her to be altogether callous.

This happened after her mother's death, in the spring, when she had already begun to revive, and

was the first startling symptom she showed of the new phase of interest and energy upon which I suspected she was entering. I hoped at the time that the great grief had carried off the minor ailments of the mind as the great illness did of the body, and that the change would prove to be for the better eventually, although the first outcome of it was not the kind of thing I liked at all—for her.

I had not seen her for a week or so when she was ushered one morning into my consulting room. She had not asked for an appointment, and had been waiting to take her turn with the other patients.

"Well, what can I do for *you*?" I said. I was somewhat surprised to see her. "You don't look very ill."

"No, thank goodness," she answered cheerfully; "and I don't mean to be ill. I have come to be vaccinated."

"Ah, that is wise," I said.

"You have heard, I suppose, that smallpox has broken out in the barracks?" she said, when she was going. "There are fifteen cases, four of them women, and one a child, and they are going to put them under canvas on the common, and I shall be obliged to go and see that they are properly nursed. That is why I am in such a hurry. Military nursing is of the most primitive kind in times of peace. Our doctor is all that he should be, but what can he do but prescribe? It takes all his time just to go round and get through his ordinary duties."

"Did I understand you to say that you are going to look after the smallpox patients?" I asked politely.

"Yes," she answered defiantly. "I am going to be isolated with them out on the common. My tent is already pitched. I shall not take smallpox, I assure you."

"I don't see how you can be so sure," I said.

She gave me one of her most puzzling answers, one of those in which I felt there was an indication of the something about her which I did not understand.

"Oh, because it is such a relief!" she said.

"How a relief?" I questioned.

"Oh—I shall not take the disease," she repeated, "and I shall enjoy the occupation."

But this, I knew, was an evasion. However, I had no time to argue the point with her just then, so I waited until my consultations were over, and then went to see Colonel Colquhoun. I thought if he would not forbid he might at all events persuade her to abandon her rash design. I found him at his own place, walking about the garden with his hands in his pockets and a cigar in his mouth. He was in a facetious mood, the one of his I most disliked.

"Now, you look quite concerned," he said, with an extra affectation of brogue, when I had told him my errand. "Sure, she humbugs you, Evadne does! If you knew her as well as I do, you'd not be troubling yourself about her so much. I tell you, she'll come to no harm in the world. Now what do you think were her reasons for going to live in the smallpox camp?"

"Then she *has* gone?" I exclaimed.

"Oh yes, she's gone," he answered. "The grass never has time to grow under that young woman's feet if she's an idea to carry out, I will say that for her. But what do you think she said when I asked her why she'd be going among the smallpox patients? 'Oh,' she said, 'I want to see what they look like!' And she'd another reason,

too. She'll make herself look like an interesting nurse, you know, and quite enjoy dressing up for the part."

I felt sure that all this was a horrid perversion of the truth, but I let it pass.

"You'll not interfere, then?" I persisted.

"Not I, indeed!" he answered. "She never comes commanding it over me, and I'm not going to meddle with her private affairs, so long as she doesn't come here bringing infection, that's all."

"But she may catch the disease herself, and die of it, or be disfigured for life," I remonstrated.

"And she might catch her death of cold here in the garden, or be burnt beyond all recognition by a spark setting fire to her ball-dress the next time she wears one," he answered philosophically. "When you look at the chances, now, they're about equal."

He smiled at me complacently when he had said this, and something he saw in my face inclined him to chuckle, but he suppressed the inclination, twirling his fair moustache instead, first on one side and then on the other, rapidly. In his youth he must have been one of those small boys who delighted to spear a bee with a pin and watch it buzz round. The boy is pretty sure the bee can't hurt him, but yet half the pleasure of the performance lies in the fact of its having a sting. It would not have been convenient for Colonel Colquhoun to quarrel with me, because there had been certain money transactions between us which left him greatly my debtor; but he thought me secured by my interest in Evadne, and indulged himself on every possible occasion in the pleasure of opposing me. Not that he bore me any ill-will, either. I knew that he would borrow more money from me at any time in the friendliest way, if he happened to want it. I was his honey bee, and he was fond of honey; but it delighted him also to see me buzz.

I was obliged to consider my own patients and keep away from the smallpox camp during the epidemic, for fear of carrying infection, and consequently I saw nothing of Evadne, and only heard of her through the military doctor, for she would not write. His report of her, however, was always the same at first. She was the life of the camp, bright, cheerful, and active, never tired apparently, and never disheartened. This went on for some time, and then, one evening, there came another report. She was just as cheerful as ever, but looking most awfully done.

At daybreak next morning I drove out to the common, and, leaving my dogcart outside the camp, went in to look for her. I knew that she was generally up all night, and was therefore prepared to find her about, and I met her making her way toward her own tent. She was dressed like a French *bonne*, in a short dark blue gown made of some washing material, with a white apron and white cap, and a *châtelaine* with useful implements upon it hanging from her girdle, a very suitable costume for the work; but she wore no wrap of any kind, and the morning air was keen.

I noticed as she walked toward me that her gait was a little uncertain. Once she put out her hand as if seeking something to grasp, and once she staggered and stopped. I hastened to her assistance, and saw as I approached her that she was colourless even to her lips; her eyes were bright and sunken, with large black circles round them, and the lids were heavy. I drew her hand through

my arm without more formal greeting, and she grasped it gratefully for a moment, then dropped it and stepped back.

"I forgot," she said, "it seems so natural to see you anywhere. But don't touch me. I shall infect you."

"I shall have to go home and change in any case," I answered briskly.

"I've been up all night with a poor woman," she said, "and I'm just tired out. Don't look concerned, though. I shall not take smallpox. My own illness, you remember, was a blessing in disguise, and I am sure the absorbing distraction of helping to relieve others"—She stopped short, looked about her confusedly, and then exclaimed, "It is quite time I went to bed. I declare I don't know the hospital tent from the sandy common, nor a rabbit running about from a convalescent child, and the whin bushes are waltzing round me derisively." She swayed a little, recovered herself, tried to laugh, then threw up her hands, and fell forward into my arms.

I carried her to her tent, guided by one of the men. On the way Dr. James joined us. We laid her on her bed and looked anxiously for symptoms of the dreadful disease, but there were none.

"No, you see," Dr. James declared, "it's just what I expected—sheer exhaustion and nothing else. But she'd better be got out of this atmosphere at once."

She was in a semi-unconscious, semi-somnolent state, half syncope, half sleep, and there was nothing to be gained by rousing her just then, so we wrapped her up warmly in shawls, sent for my dogcart, and lifted her on the back seat, where I supported her as best I could while my man drove us to As-You-Like-It.

Colonel Colquhoun was not up when we arrived, but I waited to see her swallow some champagne after she had been put to bed, and in the meantime the bustle had aroused him. When he learnt the occasion of it, his wrath knew no bounds. He could not have abused me in choicer language if I had been one of his own subalterns. But I managed to keep my temper until I could get a word in, and then I mildly suggested that the best thing he could do, as he was so afraid of infection, was to give himself leave, and be off. "Nobody will expect *you* to stay and look after your wife," I said. "You'd better go to town."

It was what he would have done if I had not advised it, but the habit of opposing me was becoming so inveterate that he changed his mind, and, rather than act upon a suggestion of mine, ran the risk of living in barracks until all fear of infection was over.

Happily Evadne suffered from nothing worse than exhaustion, and soon recovered her strength; but I never could agree with Dr. James about the merit of her conduct during the epidemic.

CHAPTER X

It was about this time, that is to say, immediately after the outbreak of smallpox was over, and in the height of the summer, that Mr. and Lady Adeline Hamilton-Wells returned from a prolonged absence abroad, and settled themselves for a few months at Hamilton House. I happened to be in London when they arrived, and saw them there as they passed through. Lady Adeline made particular inquiries about Evadne. "I don't think you, any of you, understand that girl,"

she said. "She is shy, and should be set going. She requires to be *induced* to come forward to do her share of the work of the world; but, instead of helping her, everybody lets her alone to mope in luxurious idleness at As-You-Like-It."

"She is never idle," I protested.

"I know what you mean," Lady Adeline answered. "She sits and sews; but that is idle trifling for a woman of her capacity. She was out of health and good-for-nothing when I saw her last with Mrs. Orton Beg in Paris, and therefore I held my peace; but now I mean to take her out of herself, and show her her mistake."

"I hope you will be able to do so," I said, and I was not speaking ironically; but all the same I scarcely expected that she would succeed. The day after my return home, however, which was only a week later, I called at Hamilton House, and it seemed to me then that she had already made a very good beginning. It was a brilliant afternoon, and I had walked through the fields from Fountain Towers, and found Lady Adeline alone for the moment, sitting out on the terrace under an awning, somewhat overcome by the heat.

"You have arrived at an acceptable time, as you always do," she said, in her decided, kindly way. "I am enjoying a brief period of repose before the racket begins again, and I invite you to share it."

"The racket?" I inquired.

"No, the repose," she replied. "Angelica is staying here, and Evadne"—

"Mrs. Colquhoun and racket!" I ejaculated.

"Well, it is difficult to associate the two ideas, I confess," she answered; "but you will see for yourself. Angelica makes the racket, of course, but Evadne enjoys it. I went to As-You-Like-It as soon as I could, without waiting for her to call upon me, and I found her just as you had led me to expect, all staid propriety and precision, hiding deep dejection beneath an affectation of calm content—at least, that was my interpretation of her attitude—and inclined to be stiff with me; but I approached her as her mother's oldest and dearest friend, and she softened at once."

"And you brought her here?"

"That is quite the proper word for it," she rejoined. "I just brought her. I insisted upon her coming. I gave her no choice. And I also asked Colonel Colquhoun, but he declined. He said he thought Evadne would be all the better for getting away from home, and I agreed with him. He comes over, however, occasionally, and they seem to be very good friends. I don't dislike him at all."

This was said tentatively, but I did not care to discuss Colonel Colquhoun, and therefore, to change the subject, I asked Lady Adeline how she found Angelica.

"Very much improved in every way," she answered. "The happiest understanding has come to exist between herself and her husband since that dreadful occurrence. They are simply inseparable. She said to me the other day that her only chance of ever showing to any advantage at all would be against the quiet background of her husband's unobtrusive goodness. And I think myself that a great many people would never have believed in her if he had not. All her faults are so apparent, alas! while the very real and earnest purpose of her life is so seldom seen."

"She has been working very hard lately, I believe."

"Yes," Lady Adeline answered; "but I am thankful to say she has set up a private secretary,

and who do you think it is? Our dear, good Mr. Ellis!"

"I am heartily glad to hear of it," I said, "both for his sake and hers."

"Yes," she agreed. "It did not seem right that he should ever go away from amongst us, and you know how we all felt the severance after Diavolo went into the service, and there seemed no help for it, as his occupation was over. I am afraid, poor fellow, his experiences since he left us have been anything but happy. All that is over now, however, and it does seem so natural to have him about again!"

"He must make an admirable secretary," I said.

"Admirable!" she agreed—"in every way, for I don't think Angelica would ever have got on quite so well with anybody else. He was always able to make her respect him, and now the habit is confirmed, so that he has more influence with her for good than almost anybody else—a restraining influence, you know. Her great fault still is impatience. She thinks everything should be put right the moment she perceives it to be wrong, and would raise revolutions if she were not restrained. It is always difficult to make her believe that evolution if slower is surer. But here they are."

As Lady Adeline spoke, Angelica, accompanied by Mr. Kilroy and Mr. Ellis, came out of the plantation to the left of the terrace upon which we were sitting, and walked across the lawn toward us, while at the same moment Diavolo and Evadne came round the corner of the house from the opposite direction and went to meet them. Evadne carried a parasol, but wore neither hat nor gloves. She looked very happy listening to Diavolo's chatter.

Angelica carried a fishing rod, and I thought, as she approached, that I had never seen a more splendid specimen of hardy, healthy, vigorous young womanhood.

Evadne looked sickly beside her, and drooping like a pale and fragile flower in want of water. The contrast must have struck Lady Adeline also, for presently she observed, "Evadne was as strong as Angelica once. Do you suppose her health has been permanently injured by that horrid Maltese fever?"

"No," I said positively. "If she would give up sewing, and take a fishing rod, and go out with Angelica in a sensible dress like that, she would be as strong as ever in six months. But I fancy she would be shocked by the bare suggestion."

Angelica hugged Diavolo heartily when they met, and then, being the taller of the two, she put her arm round his neck, and all three strolled slowly on toward us, Mr. Ellis and Mr. Kilroy having already come up on to the terrace and sat down. While greeting the two latter I lost sight of the Heavenly Twins, and when I looked at them again something had evidently gone wrong. Angelica stood leaning on her rod berating Diavolo, who was answering with animation, while Evadne looked from one to the other in amazement, as the strange good child looks at the strange naughty ones. Whatever the difference was it was soon over, and then they came on again, talking and walking briskly, followed by four dogs.

"I am vulgar, decidedly, at times," Angelica acknowledged as she came up the steps. "I shouldn't be half so amusing if I were not." She held out her hand to me, and then threw herself

into the only unoccupied chair on the terrace, but instantly jumped up again. "I beg your pardon, Evadne," she said. "These are my society manners. When I am on the platform or otherwise engaged in *Unwomanly* pursuits outside the *Sphere*, I have to be more considerate."

Some more chairs were brought out, one of which Diavolo placed beside me. "This is for you," he said to Evadne; "I know you like to be near the Don." Evadne flushed crimson.

"Did you ever hear that story?" Angelica asked me.

Evadne's embarrassment visibly increased. "Angelica, don't tell it," she remonstrated; "it isn't fair."

Angelica laughed. "When Evadne first came here," she proceeded, "she sat next you at dinner one night, and didn't know who you were; but it seems you made such a profound and favourable impression upon her that afterward she had the curiosity to ask, when she learnt that you were a doctor. 'A doctor!' she exclaimed, in surprise. 'He is more like a Don than a doctor!' and you have been 'Don' to her intimates ever since."

"Well, I feel flattered," I said.

"I feel as if I ought to apologise," Evadne began—"only I meant no disrespect."

"My dear," Angelica interposed, "he is delighted to be distinguished by you in any way. But, by the pricking of my thumbs, something wicked"—and Colonel Colquhoun came out on to the terrace through the drawing-room behind us. He shook hands with us all, his wife included, and then sat down.

"I say, Evadne"—Diavolo began.

"My dear boy," said Lady Adeline, "you mustn't call Mrs. Colquhoun by her Christian name."

"Christian!" jeered Diavolo. "Now, that is a good one! There's nothing Christian about Evadne. We looked her up in the dictionary ages ago, didn't we, Angelica? The name means Well-pleasing-one, as nearly as possible, and it suits her sometimes. Evadne—classical Evadne—was noted for her devotion to her husband, and distinguished herself finally on his funeral pyre—she ex-pyred there."

We all groaned aloud. "It was a somewhat theatrical exit, I confess," Diavolo pursued. "But, I say, Angelica, wouldn't it be fun to burn the colonel, and see Evadne do suttee on his body—only I doubt if she would!" He turned to Evadne. "Mrs. Colquhoun," he began ceremoniously, "may I have the honour of calling you by your heathen name—as in the days beyond recalling?"

"When you are good," she answered.

"Ugh!" he exclaimed. "I should have had more respect for your honesty if you said 'no' at once. And it is very absurd of you, too, Evadne, because you know you are going to marry me when Colonel Colquhoun is promoted to regions of the blest. She would have married me first, only you stole a march on me, sir," he added, addressing Colonel Colquhoun. "However, I feel as if something were going to happen *now*, at last! There was a banshee wailing about my quarters in a minor key, very flat, last night. She had come all the way from Ireland to warn Colonel Colquhoun, and mistaken the house, I suppose."

"My dear"—

We all looked round. It was Mr. Hamilton-Wells addressing Lady Adeline in his most precise manner. He was standing in the open French

window just behind us, tapping one hand with the *pince-nez* he held in the other.

"My dear, the cat has five kittens."

"My dear!" Lady Adeline exclaimed.

"They have only just arrived, and"—

"Never mind them *now*," she cried hurriedly.

"But, my dear, you were anxious to know."

"I don't want to know in the least," she protested.

"But only this morning you said"—

"Oh, that was upstairs," she interrupted.

"What difference does that make?" he wanted to know. "You don't mean to say you are anxious about the cat when you are upstairs, and not anxious when you come down?"

Lady Adeline sank back in her chair, and resigned herself to a long altercation. Before it ended everybody else had disappeared, and I saw no more of Evadne on that occasion. But during the next few weeks I had many opportunities of observing the wonderful way she was waking up under the influence of the Heavenly Twins.

They gave her no time for reflection; it was the life of action against the life of thought, and it suited her.

The ladies frequently made my house the object of an afternoon walk, and stayed for tea. Lady Adeline declared that the "girls" dragged her over because they wanted a new victim to torment with their superabundant animal spirits. The superabundance was all Angelica's, I knew, but still Evadne was an accomplice, and they neither of them spared me in those days. They would rob my hothouses of the best fruits and flowers, disarrange my books, turn pictures they did not like with their faces to the wall, drape my statues fantastically, criticise what they called my absurd bachelor habits, and give me good advice on the subject of marriage; Lady Adeline sitting by meanwhile, aiding and abetting them with smiles, although protesting that she would not allow them to make me the butt of their idle raillery.

Evadne had a passion for the scent of gorse. She crammed pockets, sleeves, shoes, and the bosom of her dress with the yellow blossoms, and I often found these fragrant tokens of her presence scattered about my house after she had been there. Once, when we were all out walking together, she stopped to pick some from a bush, and as she was putting them into her bodice she made a remark which gave me pause to ponder.

"You will want to know why I do that, I suppose," she said. "You will be looking for a motive, for some secret spring of action. The simple fact that I love the gorse won't satisfy you. You would like to know why I love it, when I first began to love it, and anything else about it that might enable you to measure my feeling for it."

This was so exactly what I was in the habit of doing with regard to many matters that I could not say a word. But what struck me as significant about the observation was the obvious fact, gathered by inference, that, while I had been studying her, she also had been studying me, and I had never suspected it.

She walked on with Angelica after she had spoken, and I dropped behind with Lady Adeline.

"Your Evadne and Colonel Colquhoun's wife are two very different people," I said. "The one is a lively girl the other a sad and bitter woman."

"Sad, not bitter," Lady Adeline corrected.

"I have heard her say bitter things!" I maintained.

"You may, perhaps, have heard her condemn

wrong ones rather too emphatically," Lady Adeline suggested. "But all this is only a phase. She is in rather a deep groove at present, but we shall be able to get her out of it."

"I don't know," I answered dubiously. "I don't think it is that exactly. I believe there is some kind of warp in her mind. I perceive it, but can neither define nor account for it yet. It is something morbid that makes her hold herself aloof. She has never allowed anybody in the neighbourhood to be intimate with her. Even I, who have seen her oftener than anybody, never feel that I know her really well—that I could reckon upon what she would do in an emergency. And I believe that there is something artificial in her attitude; but why? What is the explanation of all that is unusual about her?"

Lady Adeline shook her head, and was silent for some seconds, then she said: "I once had a friend—but her moral nature quite halted. It was because she had lost her faith in men. A woman who thinks that only women can be worthy is like a bird with a broken wing. But I don't say that that is Evadne's case at all. Since she came to us she has seemed to be much more like one of those marvellous casks of sherry out of which a dozen different wines are taken. The flavour depends on the doctoring. Here, under Angelica's influence—why, she has filled your pocket with gorse blossoms!"

It was true. In taking out my handkerchief, I had just scattered the flowers, and so discovered that they were there. "Then you give her credit for less individuality—you think her more at the mercy of her surroundings than I do," I said.

But before she could answer me, Evadne herself had joined us. I suppose I was looking grave, for she asked in a playful tone—

"Did he ever frolic, Lady Adeline, this solemn seeming—*Don*? Was he always in earnest, even on his mother's lap, and occupied with weighty problems of life and death when other babes were wondering with wide-open eyes at the irresponsible action of their own pink toes?"

Which made me reflect. For if I were in the habit of being a dull boor myself it was no wonder that I seldom saw her looking lively.

The following week Evadne went home, and as soon as she was settled at *As-You-Like-It* she seemed to relapse once more into her former state of apathy. I saw her day after day as I passed, sitting sewing in the wide west window above the holly hedge; and so long as she was left alone she seemed to be content; but I began to notice at this time that any interruption at her favourite occupation did not please her. The summer heat, the scent of flowers streaming through open windows, the song of birds, the level landscape, here vividly green with the upspringing aftermath, there crimson and gold where the poppies gleamed amongst the ripening corn—all such sweet sensuous influences she looked out upon lovingly, and enjoyed them—so long as she was left alone. On hot afternoons, Diavolo would go and lie at her feet sometimes, with a cushion under his head; and him she tolerated; but only, I am sure, because he always fell asleep.

I had to go to *As-You-Like-It* one day to transact some business with Colonel Colquhoun, and when we had done he asked me to go up into the drawing-room with him. "Come, and I'll show you a pretty picture," he said.

It was a pretty picture. They had both fallen asleep on that occasion. It was a torrid day outside, but the deep bay where they were was cool

and shady. The windows were wide open, the outside blinds were drawn down low enough to keep out the glare, but not so far as to hide the view. Behind Evadne was a stand of flowers and foliage plants. Diavolo was lying on the floor in his favourite attitude, with a black satin cushion under his head, and was, with his slender figure, refined features, thick, curly fair hair, and fine, transparent skin, slightly flushed by the heat, a perfect specimen of adolescent grace and beauty. He looked like a young lover lying at the feet of his lady. Evadne was sitting in a low easy-chair, with a high back, against which her head was resting. Half her face was concealed by a fan of white ostrich feathers which she held in her left hand, and the moment I looked at her the haunting certainty of having seen her in exactly that position once before recurred to me. She was looking well that afternoon. Her glossy dark brown hair showed bright as bronze against the satin background of the chair. She was dressed in a gown of silver grey cashmere lined with turquoise blue silk, which showed between the folds; cool colours of the best shade to set off the ivory whiteness of her skin.

Colonel Colquhoun considered the group meditatively. "She keeps her looks," he observed in an undertone; "and Diavolo's catching her up."

I looked at him inquiringly.

"She's six or eight years older than he is, you know," he explained; "but you wouldn't think it now."

I wondered what he had in his mind.

"Times are changing," he proceeded. "Now, when I was a lad, if a lady had liked me as well as Evadne likes that boy, I'd have taken advantage of her preference."

"Not if the lady had been of her stamp," I said drily.

"Well, true for you," he acknowledged. "But it isn't the lady only in this case. It's that young sybarite himself. He's as particular as she is. He said the other day at mess—it was a guest night, and there was a big dinner on, and somebody proposed 'Wine and Women' for a toast, but he wouldn't drink it: 'Oh, spare me,' he said, in that slow way he has, something like his father's; 'wine and women, as you take them, are things as coarse in the way of pleasure as pork and porter are for food.' We asked him then to give us his own ideas of pleasure; but he said he didn't think anybody there was educated up to them, even sufficiently to understand them!—and he wasn't joking altogether, either," Colonel Colquhoun concluded.

At that same moment Evadne opened her eyes wide, and looked at us a second before she spoke, but showed no other sign of surprise.

"I am afraid I have been asleep," she said, rising deliberately, and shaking hands with me across the prostrate Diavolo. "Do sit down."

She sank back into her own chair as she spoke, and fanned a fly from Diavolo's face. "I never knew anyone sleep so soundly," she said, looking down at him lovingly. "He rides out here nearly every day when he is not on duty, simply for his siesta. Angelica is jealous, I believe, because he will not go to her. He says there is no repose about Angelica, and that it is only here with me that he finds the dreamful ease he loves."

There was a sound of talking outside just then, and a few minutes later Angelica herself came in with her father.

"Oh, you *darling!* you *are* a pretty boy!" she

exclaimed, when she saw Diavolo, and then she went down on her knees beside him, put her arms round his neck, pulled him up, and hugged him roughly, an attention which he immediately resented. "Ah, I thought it was you!" he said, opening his eyes. "Good-bye, sweet sleep, good-bye!" Then he sat up, and, turning his back to Evadne, coolly rested himself against her knee. "I suppose we can have tea now," he said. "There's always something to look forward to. Papa dear, touch the bell, to save the colonel the trouble."

Colonel Colquhoun laughed, and rang it himself good-naturedly.

"Diavolo!" Evadne exclaimed, pushing him away, "I am not going to nurse a great boy like you."

"Well, Angelica must, then," he said, changing his position so as to lean against his sister. Angelica laid her hand on his head, and her face softened. "Evadne *used* to like to nurse me," he complained. "She's not nearly so nice since she married. I say, Angelica, do you remember the wedding breakfast, when we agreed to drink as much champagne as the bridegroom? I swore I would never get drunk again, and I never have."

"Faith," said Colonel Colquhoun, "there are some who'd like to be able to say the same thing."

Some dogs had followed Angelica in, and had now to be turned out, because Evadne would not have dogs indoors. She said she liked a good dog's character, but could not bear the smell of him.

"And how are the children?" Mr. Hamilton-Wells asked affably, when this diversion was over.

"There are no children!" Evadne exclaimed, in surprise.

"Are there not, indeed. Now, that is singular," he observed. Then he looked at me as if he were about to say something interesting, but I hastily interposed. I was afraid he was going to speculate about the natural history of the phenomenon which had just struck him as being singular. He knew perfectly well that Evadne had no children, but he was subject, or affected to be subject, to moments of obliviousness, in which he was wont to ask embarrassing questions.

"The weather is quite tropical," was the original observation I made. Mr. Hamilton-Wells felt if the parting of his smooth, straight hair was exactly in the middle, patted it on either side, then shook back imaginary ruffles from his long white hands, and interlaced his jewelled fingers on his lap.

"You were never in the tropics, I think you told me?" he said to Evadne, with exaggerated preciseness. "Ah! now, I have been, off and on, several times. The heat is very trying. I knew a lady, the wife of a Colonial Governor, who used to be so overcome by it that she was obliged to undo all her things, let them slip to the ground, and step out of them, leaving them looking like a great cheese. She told me so herself, I assure you, and she was an exceedingly stout person."

The Heavenly Twins went into convulsions suddenly.

"Is that tea at last?" Evadne asked.

Colonel Colquhoun and I both gladly moved to make room for the servants who were bringing it in, and the conversation was not resumed until they had withdrawn. Then Angelica began; "I

came to make a last appeal to you, Evadne. I want to tell you about a poor girl"—

"Oh, don't break this lovely summer silence with tales of woe!" Evadne exclaimed, interrupting her. "I cannot do anything. Don't ask me. You harrow my feelings to no purpose. I will not listen. It is not right that I should be forced to know."

"Well, I think you are making a mistake, Evadne," Angelica replied. "Don't you think so?" looking at me. "She is sacrificing herself to save herself. She imagines she can secure her own peace of mind by refusing to know that there is a weary world of suffering close at hand which she should be helping to relieve. Suffering for others strengthens our own powers of endurance; we lose them if we don't exercise them—and that is the way you are sacrificing yourself to save yourself, Evadne. When some big trouble of your own, one of those which cannot be denied, comes upon you, it will crush you. You will have lost the moral muscle you should be exercising now to keep it in good working order and develop it well for your own use when you require it. It would not be worse for you to take a stimulant or a sedative to wind yourself up to an artificially pleasurable state when at any time you are not naturally cheerful—and that is what a too great love of peace occasionally ends in."

Evadne waved her ostrich feather fan backward and forward slowly, and looked out of the window. She would not even listen to this friendly counsel, and I felt sure she was making a mistake.

I only saw her once again that summer under Lady Adeline's salutary influence. It was a few days later, and Evadne was in an expansive mood. She had been spending the day with Lady Adeline, and the two had been for a drive together, and had overtaken me on the road and picked me up on their way back to Hamilton House. I had been for a solitary ramble, and was then returning to work, but Evadne said I must go back to tea with them: "For your own sake, because it is a shame to waste a summer day in work—a glorious summer day so evidently sent for our enjoyment."

"The greatest pleasure in life is to be in perfect condition for the work one loves," I answered; but I was settling myself comfortably in the carriage as I spoke, such is the consistency of man. But indeed it was not very difficult to persuade me to idle that afternoon. I had been inclining that way for weeks, under the influence of the intoxicating heat doubtless; and presently, when I found myself comfortably seated on the wide stone terrace outside the great drawing-room at Hamilton House, under a shady awning, looking down upon lawns vividly green and lovely gardens all aglow with colour and alive with perfume, which is the soul of the flowers, I yielded sensuous service to the hour, and gave myself up to the enjoyment of it unreservedly.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells was there, making tea in the precisest manner, and looking more puritanical than ever. How to reconcile his coldly formal exterior with the interior from which emanated his choice of subjects in conversation is a matter which I have not yet had time to study, although I am convinced that the solution of the problem would prove to be of great scientific value and importance. I was not in the habit of thinking of him as either a man or a woman myself, however, but as a specimen of humanity broadly, and domestically as a husband whom I always suspected of being a sharp sword of the law, although

I had never obtained the slightest evidence of the fact.

Lady Adeline was lolling in a low cane chair, fatigued by her drive, and longing aloud for tea; and Evadne was flitting about with her hat in her hand, laughing and talking more than any of us. She was wearing an art gown, very becoming to her, and suitable also for such sultry weather, as Mr. Hamilton-Wells remarked.

"I suppose you are a strong supporter of the æsthetic dress movement," he said, doubtless alluding to the graceful freedom of her delicate primrose draperies.

"Not at all," she answered, seating herself on the arm of a chair near Lady Adeline, and opening her fan gently as she spoke.

I was inspired to ask for more tea just then. Mr. Hamilton-Wells poured it out and handed it to me. "You take milk," he informed me, "but no sugar." Then he folded his hands and recommenced. "To return to the original point of departure," he began, "which was modern dress, if I remember rightly"—he smiled round upon us all, knowing quite well that he remembered rightly—"that brings us by an obvious route to another question of the day; I mean the position of women. How do you regard their position at this latter end of the nineteenth century, Evadne?"

"I do not regard it at all, if I can help it," she answered incisively.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells dropped his outspread hands upon his knees.

"If I remember rightly," he said, "you take no interest in politics either. That is quite a phenomenon at this latter end of the nineteenth century."

"I have my duties—the duties of my social position, you know," she answered, "and my own little pursuits as well, neither of which I can neglect for the affairs of the world."

"But are they enough for you?" Lady Adeline ventured.

Evadne glanced up to see what she meant, and then smiled. "The wisdom of ages is brought to the training of each little girl," she said; "and to fit her for her position, she is taught that a woman's one object in life is to be agreeable."

"You mean that a woman of decided opinions is not an agreeable person?" Lady Adeline asked.

"Decided opinions must always be offensive to those who don't hold them," Evadne rejoined.

"A woman must know that the future welfare of her own sex, and the progress of the world at large, depend upon the action of women now, and the success attending it," Angelica observed comprehensively.

"Yes, but she knows also that her own comfort and convenience depend entirely on her neutrality," Evadne answered. "It is not high-minded to be neutral, I know, when it is put in that way; but a woman who is so becomes exactly what the average man, taken at his word, would have her be, and he is, we are assured, the proper person to legislate."

She looked at us all defiantly as she spoke, and furred her fan; and just at that moment Colonel Colquhoun joined us. He had come to fetch her, and his entrance gave a new turn to the conversation.

"It has been oppressively hot all day," he observed.

"Yes," Lady Adeline answered, "and I do so long for the mountains in weather like this."

"Oh, do you?" said Evadne, "Are you

subject to the magnet of the mountains? I am not. I do not want to feel the nothingness of man; I like to believe in his greatness, in his infinite possibilities. I like to think of life as a level plain over which we can gallop to some goal—I don't know what, but something desirable; and the actual landscape pleases me best so. The great tumbled mountains make me melancholy, they are always foreboding something untoward, even at the best of times; but the open spaces, windswept and evident—I love them. I am at home on them. I can breathe there—I am free."

This was the natural woman at last, in her aspirations unconsciously showing herself superior to the artificial creature she was trying to be.

"I hate the melancholy mountains," the ever-ready Angelica burst forth. "I loathe the inconstant sea. The breezy plain for a gallop! It is there that one feels free!"

Colonel Colquhoun looked at Evadne meditatively, and slowly twisted each end of his heavy blond moustache. "I haven't seen you riding for some time now," he said, "and it's a pity, for you've a fine seat on a horse."

I was obliged to make up that night for the time lost in the afternoon, and the dawn had broken when at last I put my work away. I opened the study windows wider to salute it. A lark was singing somewhere out of sight—

Die Lerche, die im auge nicht,
Doch immer in den ohren ist—

and the ripples of undecipherable sound struck some equally inarticulate chord of sense, and fell full-fraught with association. The breeze, murmurous amongst the branches, set the leaves rustling like silk attire. Did I imagine it, or was there really a faint sweet perfume of yellow gorse in the air? A thrush on a bough below began to flute softly, trying its tones before it burst forth, giving full voice to its enthusiasm in one clear call, eloquent of life and love and longing, and all expressed in just three notes—crotchet, quaver, crotchet and rest—which shortly shaped themselves to a word in my heart, a word of just three syllables, the accent being on the penultimate—"E-vad-ne! E-vad-ne!"

Good heavens!

I roused myself. Not a proper state of mind certainly for a man of my years and pursuits. Why, how old was I? Thirty-five—not so old in one way, yet ten years older at least than—stop—sickly sentimentality. "Life is real, life is earnest," and there must be no dreams of scented gorse, of posing in daffodil draperies, for me. Must take a holiday and rest—take my "agreeable ugliness" off (I was amused when the Heavenly Twins told me their mother talked of my "agreeable ugliness"; but, now, did I like it? No. I was cynical when I said it), take my "agreeable ugliness" off to the mountains—"Turn thine eyes unto the mountains"—the magnet of the mountains. Yes, I felt it. I delighted to do so. I was not morbid. To the mountains! to the cold which stays corruption, the snows which are pure, and the eternal silence! By ten o'clock that night I was well on my way.

CHAPTER XI

I WENT abroad that year for my holiday, but spent the last week of it in London on my way home. All the vapours of sentimentality had

disappeared by that time. My nerves had been braced in the Alps, my mind had been calmed and refreshed by the warm blue Mediterranean, my sense of comparison emphasised in Egypt, where I perceived anew the law of mutability, the inevitable law, by the decree of which the human race is eternal, while we, its constituent atoms, have but a moment of intensity to blaze and burn out. Perishable life and permanent matter are we, with a limit that may be prolonged in idea by such circumstances as we can dwell on with delight, one love-lit day being longer in the record than whole monotonous years. It is good to live and love, but if we possess the burden of life unrelieved by the blessing of love, or the hope of it, well—why despair? Man is matter animated by a series of emotions, the majority of which are pleasurable. Disappointment ends like success, and the futile dust of nations offers itself in evidence of the vanity of all attributes except wisdom, the wisdom that teaches us to accept the inevitable silently, and endure our moment with equally undemonstrative acquiescence, whether it comes full-fraught with the luxury of living, or only brings us that which causes us to contemplate of necessity, and without shrinking, the crowning dignity of death.

I had come back ready for work, and could have cheerfully dispensed with that week's delay in London; but I had promised it to an old friend, in failing health, whom I would not disappoint.

The people at Morne, the Kilroys, the Hamilton-Wellses, the Colquhouns, all my circle of intimate friends, had fallen into the background of my recollection during my tour abroad; but, now again, when I found myself so near them, the old habitual interests began to be dominant. I had sent notes to apologise for not wishing them good-bye before my sudden departure, but I had not written to any of them or heard from them during my absence, and did not know where they might all be at the moment; and I was just wondering one night as I walked toward Piccadilly from the direction of the Strand—I was just wondering if they were all as I had left them, if the civil war, as Angelica called it, was being waged as actively as ever between herself and Evadne upon the all-important point—and that made me think of Evadne herself. I had banished her name from my mind for weeks, but now some inexplicable trick of the brain suddenly set her before me as I oftenest saw her, sitting at work in the wide west window overlooking the road, and glancing up brightly at the sound of my horse's hoofs or carriage wheels as I rode or drove past, to salute me. A lady might wait and watch so at accustomed hours for her lover; but he would stop, and she would open the window, and lean out with a flower in her hand for him, and perhaps she would kiss it before she tossed it to him, and he would catch it and go on his way rejoicing—a pretty poetical dream and easy of fulfilment, if only one could find the lady, suitably circumstanced.

I had arrived at Piccadilly Circus by this time, at the turn into Regent Street where the omnibuses stop, and was delayed for a moment or two by the casual crowd of loiterers and people struggling for places, and by those who were alighting from the various vehicles. Not being in any hurry myself, it amused me to observe the turmoil, the play of human emotion which appeared distinctly on the faces of those who approached me and were lost to sight again as

soon as seen in the eddy and whirl of the crowd. There was temper here, and tenderness there; this person was steadily bent on business, that on pleasure, and one fussy little man escorting his family somewhere was making the former of the latter. There were two young lovers alone with their love so far as any outward consciousness of the crowd was concerned; and there was a young wife silent and sad beside a neglectful elderly husband. It was the 'buses from the West End I was watching. One had just moved off toward the Strand, and another pulled up in its place, and the people began to alight—a fat man first in a frenzy of haste, a sallow priest whose soul seemed to sicken at the sight of the seething mass of humanity amongst which he found himself, for he hesitated perceptibly on the step, like a child in a bathing machine who shrinks from the water, before he descended and was engulfed in the crowd. A musician with his instrument in a case, two fat women talking to each other, a little Cockney work-girl and her young man, and then—a lady. There could be no mistake about her social status. The conductor, standing by the step, recognised it at once, and held out his arm to assist her. The gaslight flared full upon her face, the expression of which was somewhat set. She wore no veil, and if she did not court observation, she certainly did not shun it. She was quietly but richly dressed, and had one seen her there on foot in the morning, one would have surmised that she was out shopping, and looked for the carriage which would probably have been following her; but a lady, striking in appearance and of distinguished bearing, alighting composedly from an omnibus at Piccadilly Circus between nine and ten at night, and calmly taking her way alone up Regent Street, was a sight which would have struck one as being anomalous even if she had been a stranger. But this lady was no stranger to me. I should have recognised her figure and carriage had her countenance been concealed. I had turned hot and cold at the first foreshadowing of her presence, and would fain have found myself mistaken, but there was no possibility of a doubt. She passed me without haste and so close that I could have laid my hand upon her shoulder. But I let her go in sheer astonishment. What, in the name of all that is inexplicable, was Evadne doing there alone at that time of night? Such a proceeding was hardly decent, whatever her excuse, and it was certainly not safe. This last reflection aroused me, and I started instantly to follow her, intending to overtake her, and impose my escort upon her. She was out of sight, because she had turned the corner, but she could not have gone far, and I hurried headlong after her, nearly upsetting a man who met me face to face as I doubled into Regent Street. It was Colonel Colquhoun himself, in a joyful mood evidently, and for once I could have blessed his blinding potatoes. He recognised me, but had apparently passed Evadne.

"Ah, me boy, you here!" he exclaimed, with an assumption of facetious *bonhomie* particularly distasteful to me. "All the world lives in London, I think! It's where you'll always come across anyone you want. Sly dog! Following a lady, I'll be bound! By Jove! I wouldn't have thought it of you, Galbraith! But you'll not find anything choice in Regent Street. Come with me, and I'll introduce you"—

"Excuse me," I interrupted, and hurried away from the brute. How had he missed Evadne? Perhaps he was looking the other way. But what

a position for her to be in. Supposing he had recognised her, my being so close would have made it none the better for her. And could I be sure that he had not seen her? I did not think he was the kind of man, with all his faults, to lay a trap even for an enemy whom he suspected; but still, one never knows.

Evadne was far ahead by this time, but the places of amusement were still open, and therefore there were few people in Regent Street. It is not particularly well-lighted, but I was soon near enough to make her out by her graceful, dignified carriage, which contrasted markedly with that of every other woman and girl I saw. In any other place her bearing would have struck me as that of a person accustomed to consideration, even if I had not known her; but here, judging by the confident way she held her head up, I should have been inclined to set her down either as a most abandoned person, or as one who was quite unconscious of anything peculiar in her present proceedings. In another respect, too, she was very unlike the women and girls who were loitering about the street, peering up anxiously into the face of every man they met. Evadne seemed to see no one, and passed on her way, superbly indifferent to any attention she might be attracting. The distance between us had lessened considerably, and I could now have overtaken her easily, but I hesitated. I could not decide whether it would be better to join her, or merely to keep her in sight for her own safety. I was inclined to blame her severely for her recklessness. She had already passed her husband, and might meet half the *depôt*, or be recognised by Heaven knows whom, before she got to the top of the street; and, as it was, she was attracting considerable attention. Scarcely a man met her who did not turn when he had passed, and look after her; and any one of these might be an acquaintance. My impulse had been to insist upon her getting into a hansom, and allowing me to see her safe home; but it had occurred to me, upon reflection, that I might compromise her more fatally by being seen with her under such circumstances than could happen if she went alone.

While I hesitated, a tall thin man with a grey beard, whom I thought I recognised from photographs seen in shop windows, met her, stared hard as he passed, stood a minute looking after her, and then turned and followed her. If he were the man I took him to be, he would probably know her, and my first impression was that he did so, and had recognised her, and been, like myself, too astonished to speak. If so, he quickly recovered himself, and, as he evidently intended to address her now, I was half inclined to resign my responsibility to him. Then I thought that if I joined her also nothing could be said. Two men of known repute may escort a lady anywhere and at any time. I quickened my steps, but purposely let him speak first.

Coming up with her from behind, he began in a tone which was more caressing than respectful. "It is a fine night," he said.

Evadne started visibly, looked at him, and shrank two steps away; but she answered, in a voice which I could hardly recognise as hers, it was so high and strident, "I should call it a chilly night," she said.

"Well, yes, perhaps," he answered, "for the time of the year. Are you going for a walk?"

"I—I don't know," she replied, looking doubtfully on ahead.

She was walking at a pretty rapid rate as it was,

and her elderly interlocutor had some difficulty in keeping up with her.

"Perhaps if we turned down one of these side streets to the left, it would be quieter, and we could talk," he suggested.

"I don't think I want either to be quiet or to talk," she said, suddenly recovering her natural voice and tone.

"Well, what do you want, then?" he asked.

She looked up at him, and slackened her speed. "Perhaps, since you are so good as to trouble yourself about me at all," she said, "I may venture to ask if you will kindly tell me where in London I am?"

His manner instantly changed. "You are in Regent Street," he answered.

"And that lighted place behind us, where the crowd is—what is that?"

"You must mean Piccadilly Circus."

"And if I walk on what shall I come to?"

"Oxford Street. You don't seem to know London. Don't you live here?"

"I do not live in London."

"You have lost your way, perhaps; can I direct you anywhere?"

"No, thank you," she answered. "I can get into a hansom, you know, when I am tired of this."

"If I might venture to advise, I should say do so at once," he rejoined, slightly raising his hat as he spoke, and then he slipped behind her, and furtively hurried across the street, a considerably perplexed man, I fancied, and, judging by the way he peered to right and left as he went, one who was suffering from some sudden dislike to being recognised.

Evadne paid as little heed to his departure as she had done to his approach. A few steps farther brought her to a stand of hansom cabs. She hesitated a moment, and then got into one. I took the next, and directed the driver to follow her, being determined either to see her back to her friends, or to interfere if I found that she meant to continue her ramble. Her driver struck into Piccadilly at the next turn, and then drove steadily west for about half an hour. By that time we had come to a row of handsome houses, at one of which he stopped, and my man stopped also at an intelligent distance behind, but Evadne never looked back. She got out and ascended the steps with the leisurely air peculiar to her. The door was opened as soon as she rang, and she entered. A moment later a footman came out on to the pavement and paid the driver, with whom he exchanged a remark or two. As he returned, the light from the hall streamed out upon him, and I saw, with a sense of relief which made me realise what the previous tension had been, that he wore the Hamilton-Wells livery, and then I recognised the Hamilton-Wells' town house. The driver of the now empty hansom turned his horse, and walked him slowly back in the direction from which he had come. The incident was over; but what did it all mean? The whole thing seemed so purposeless. What had taken her out at all? Was it some jealous freak? Women have confessed to me that they watch their husbands habitually. One said she did it for love of excitement: there was always a risk of being caught, and nothing else ever amused her half so much. Another declared she did it because she could not afford to employ a private detective, and she wanted to have evidence always ready in case it should suit her to part from her husband at any time. Another said she loved

her husband, and it hurt her less to know than to suspect. But I could not really believe that Evadne would do such a thing for any reason whatever. She was fearlessly upright and honest about her actions; and her self-respect would have restrained her if ever an isolated impulse had impelled her to such a proceeding. But still—

"Will you wait until the lady returns, sir?" the driver asked at last, peeping down upon me through the trap in the roof. If he had not spoken I might have sat there half the night, puzzling out the problem. Now, however, that he had roused me, I determined to leave it for the present. I remembered my duty to the friend with whom I was staying, and hurried back, resolving to go to Evadne herself next day, and ask her point blank to explain. I believed she would do so, for in all that concerned her own pursuits—the doings of the day—I had always found her almost curiously frank. After this wise determination, I ought to have been philosopher enough to sleep upon the matter, but her ladyship's escapade cost me my night's rest, and took me to her early next morning, in an angry and irritable mood.

I sent up my card, and Evadne received me at once in Lady Adeline's boudoir.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," she said. "How did you know I was in town?"

"I saw you in Regent Street last night," I answered bluntly. "What were you doing there?"

"What were you doing there yourself?" she said.

The question took me aback completely, and the more so as it was asked with an unmistakable flash of merriment.

"Answer me my question first," I said. "You could have no business out alone in London at that time of night, laying yourself open to insult."

"I don't recognise your right to question me at all," she answered, unabashed.

"I have the right of any gentleman who does his duty when he sees a lady making"—

"A fool of herself? Thanks," she said, laughing. "The privilege of protecting a woman, of saving her even in spite of herself from the effects of her own indiscretion, is one of which a man seldom avails himself, and I did not understand you at first. Excuse me. But how do you know I could have no business out at that time of night? Do you imagine that you know all my duties in life?"

I was bewildered by her confidence—by her levity, I may say, but I persisted.

"I cannot believe that you had any business or duty which necessitated your being in a disreputable part of London alone late at night," I said. "But I hope you will allow me the right of an intimate friend to warn you if you run risks—in your ignorance."

"Or to reprove me if I do so with my eyes open?" she suggested.

"To ask for an explanation, at all events, if I do not understand what your motive could be."

"You are very kind," she said. "You want me to excuse myself if I can, otherwise you will be forced to suspect something unjustifiable."

"That is the literal truth," I answered.

She laughed. "But you have not answered my question," she said. "What were you doing there yourself?"

"I had been dining at the Charing Cross Hotel with a friend who had just returned from India,"

I told her, "and I was walking back to the house of the friend with whom I am staying. He lives in a street off Piccadilly."

"But what were you doing in Regent Street?"

"Following you."

She laughed again. "Did you see that old man speak to me?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Horrid old creature, is he not? He gave me such a start! Did you recognise him?"

"Yes."

"I did not at first, but when I did, I thought I would make him useful." She meditated for a little, then she said, "It did me good."

"What?" I asked.

"That start," she replied. "It quite roused me. But, now, tell me. I should never have supposed that you had no business anywhere at any time; why are you not equally charitable?"

I was silent.

"Tell me what you think took me there?"

"An unholy curiosity," I blurted out.

"That is an unholy inspiration which has only just occurred to you, and you cannot entertain the suspicion for a moment," she said.

This was true.

"But, after all," she pursued, "what business have you to take me to task like this? It is not a professional matter."

"I don't know that," I answered. This was another inspiration, and it disconcerted her, for she changed countenance.

"You have a nice opinion of me!" she exclaimed.

"I have the highest opinion of you," I answered, "and nobody knows that better than yourself. But what am I to think when I find you acting without any discretion whatever?"

"Think that I am at the mercy of every wayward impulse."

"But I know that you are not," I replied; "and I am unhappy about you. Will you trust me? Will you explain? Will you let me help you if I can? I believe there is some trouble at the bottom of this business. Do tell me all about it."

"Well, I *will* explain," she said, still laughing. "I was driving past, and seeing you there, I thought I would horrify you, so I stopped the carriage"—

"You got out of an omnibus!" I exclaimed.

"Well, that was my carriage for the time being," she answered, in no way disconcerted. "You do not expect me to own that I was in an omnibus, do you?"

"I wish you would be serious for a moment," I remonstrated. "I wish you would tell me the truth."

"As I always do tell the truth if I tell anything, I think we had better let the subject drop," she said, with a sigh, as if she were tired of it.

"You mean you cannot tell me?"

"That is what I mean."

I reflected for a moment. "Does Lady Adeline know that you were out last night?" I asked.

"No," she replied. "She was out herself, and I returned before she did."

"Then you have not told her either?"

She shook her head.

"I would really rather you confided in her than in me, if you can."

"Thank you," she answered drily.

"Can you?" I persisted.

"No, I cannot," was the positive rejoinder.

I rose to go. "Forgive my officiousness," I

said. "I ventured to hope you would make use of me, but I am afraid I have been forcing my services upon you too persistently."

She rose impulsively, and held out both hands to me. "I wish I could thank you," she said, looking up at me frankly and affectionately. "I wish I could tell you how much I appreciate your goodness to me, and all your disinterestedness. I wish I deserved it!" She clasped my hands warmly as she spoke, then dropped them; and instantly I became conscious of an indescribable sense of relief, and prepared to depart at once; but she stopped me again with a word as I opened the door.

"Dr. Galbraith," she began, with another flash of merriment, "tell me, you *were* horrified, now, were you not?"

I jammed my hat on my head and left her. I did not mean to slam the door, but her levity had annoyed me. I fancied her laughing as I descended the stairs, and wondered at her mood, and yet I was reassured by it. She would not have been so merry if there had been anything really wrong, and it was just possible that the half-explanation she had given me and withdrawn was the true one. She might have been in an omnibus for once for some quite legitimate reason, and while it waited at Piccadilly Circus she might have seen me as she had described, and got out in a moment of mischief to astonish me. If that were her object, she had certainly succeeded, and it seemed to me more likely than that she should just have gone and returned for the sake of doing an unusual thing, which was the only other explanation that occurred to me.

I saw Lady Adeline before I left the house, and found that Colonel Colquhoun was not staying with them, nor did she seem to know that he had been in town.

CHAPTER XII

A CRUEL misfortune robbed me of a near relation at this time, and added the rank of baronet, with a considerable increase of fortune, to my other responsibilities. The increase of fortune was welcome in one way, as it enabled me to enlarge a small private hospital which I had established on my Fountain Towers estate, for the benefit of poor patients. Attending to these, and to the buildings which were at once put in progress, was the one absorbing interest of my life at that time.

During the next three months I only called once on Evadne, and that was a mere formal visit which I felt in duty bound to pay her. I did not drive past the house, either, oftener than I could help; but when I was obliged to go that way I saw her, sitting sewing in her accustomed place, and she would smile and bow to me—brightly at first, but after a time with a wistful, weary expression, or I fancied so. It was of necessity a hurried glimpse that I had, although my horse would slacken his speed of his own accord as we approached the holly hedge that bounded her bower; but I began to be uneasily aware of a change in her appearance. I might be mistaken, but I certainly thought her eyes looked unnaturally large, as if her cheeks had fallen away, and the little patient face was paler. In the early summer, when she was well, she had been wont to flush upon the least occasion, but now her colour did not vary, and I suspected that she was again shutting herself up too much. Mrs. Orton Beg was at Fraylingay,

Diavolo was keeping his grandfather company at Morne, the Kilroys were in town, the Hamilton-Wellses had gone to Egypt, and Colonel Colquhoun had taken two months' leave and gone abroad also, so that she had no one near her for whom she had any special regard. Colonel Colquhoun had called on me before he left, and told me he was sure Evadne would hope to see a good deal of me during his absence, and he wished I would look after her—professionally I inferred, and of course I was always prepared to do so. But, so far, she had not required my services, happily, and for the rest—well, my time was fully occupied, and I found it did not suit me to go to As-You-Like-It. When I noticed the change in her appearance, however, I began to think I would look in some day, just to see how she really was; but before I could carry out the half-formed intention she came to me. It was during my consulting hours, and I was sitting at my writing table, seeing my patients in rotation, when her name was announced. She sauntered in in her usual leisurely way, shook hands with me, and then subsided into the easy-chair on my right, which was placed facing the window for my patients to occupy.

"I have a cold," she said, "and a pain under my right clavicle, and the posterior lobe of my brain—oh dear, I have forgotten it all!" she broke off, laughing. "How *shall* I make you understand?"

"You are in excellent spirits," I observed, "if you are not in very good health."

"No, believe me," she answered. "The pleasure of seeing you again enlivened me for a moment; but I am really rather down."

I had been considering her attentively from a professional point of view while she was speaking, and saw that this was true. The brightness which animated her when she entered faded immediately, and then I saw that her face was thin and pale and anxious in expression. Her eyes wandered somewhat restlessly; her attitude betokened weakness. She had a little worrying cough, and her pulse was unequal.

"What have you been doing with yourself lately?" I asked, turning to my writing table and taking up a pen, when I had ascertained this last fact.

"Dreaming," she said.

The answer struck me. "Dreaming," I repeated to myself, and then aloud to her, while I affected to write. "Dreaming?" I said. "What about, for example?"

"Oh! the Arabian Nights, the whole thousand and one of them, would not be long enough to tell you," she replied. "I think my dreams have lasted longer already."

"Are you speaking of day-dreams?" I asked.

"Yes."

"You imagine things as you sit at work, perhaps?"

"Yes." She spoke languidly, and evidently attached no special significance either to my questions or her own answers, which was what I wished. "Yes, that is my best time. While I work, I live in a world of my own creating; in a beautiful happy dream—at least it was so once," she added, with a sigh.

"I have heard you say you did not care to read fiction. You prefer to make your own stories, is that the reason?"

"I suppose so," she said; "but I never thought of it before."

"And you never write these imaginings?"

"Oh no! That would be impossible. It is in the tones of voices as I hear them; in the expression of faces as I see them; in the subtle, indescribable perception of the significance of events, and their intimate relation to each other and influence on the lives of my dream friends, that the whole charm lies. Such impressions are too delicate for reproduction, even if I had the mind to try. Describing them would be as coarse a proceeding as eating a flower after inhaling its perfume."

"Did I understand you to say that this is the habit of years? Has your inner life been composed of dreams ever since you were a child?"

"No," she replied. "I don't think as a child I was at all imaginative. I liked to learn, and when I was not learning I lived an active, outdoor life."

"Ah! Then you have acquired the habit since you grew up?"

"Yes. It came on by degrees. I used to think of how things might be different; that was the way it began. I tried to work out schemes of life in my head, as I would do a game of chess; not schemes of life for myself, you know, but such as should save other people from being very miserable. I wanted to do some good in the world,"—she paused here to choose her words,—“and that kind of thought naturally resolves itself into action, but before the impulse to act came upon me I had made it impossible for myself to do anything, so that when it came I was obliged to resist it, and then, instead of reading and reflecting, I took to sewing for a sedative, and turned the trick of thinking how things might be different into another channel."

She was unconsciously telling me the history of her married life, showing me a lonely woman gradually losing her mental health for want of active occupation and a wholesome share of the work of the world to take her out of herself. To a certain extent, then, I had been right in my judgment of her character. Her disposition was practical, not contemplative; but she had been forced into the latter attitude, and the consequence was, perhaps—well, it might be a diseased state of the mind; but that I had yet to ascertain.

"And are you happy in your dreams?" I inquired.

"I was," she said; "but my dreams are not what they used to be."

"How?" I asked.

"At first they were pleasant," she answered. "When I sat alone at work, it was my happiest time. I was master of my dreams then, and let none but pleasant shapes present themselves. But by degrees—I don't know how—I began to be intoxicated. My imagination ran away with me. Instead of indulging in a day-dream now and then, when I liked, all my life became absorbed in delicious imaginings, whether I would or not. Working, walking, driving; in church; anywhere and at any time, when I could be alone a moment, I lived in my world apart. If people spoke to me, I awoke and answered them; but real life was a dull thing to offer, and the daylight very dim compared with the movement and brightness of the land I lived in—while I was master of my dreams."

"Then you did not remain master of them always?"

"No. By degrees they mastered me; and now I am their puppet, and they are demons that torment me. When I awake in the morning, I wonder what the haunting thought for the day will be; and before I have finished dressing it is

upon me as a rule. At first it was not incessant, but now the trouble in my head is awful."

I thought so! But she had said enough for the present. The confession was ingenuously made, and evidently without intention. I merely asked a few more questions about her general health, and then sent her home to nurse her cold, promising to call and see how it was the next day.

When I opened my case book to make a note of her visit and a brief summary of the symptoms she had described and betrayed, I hesitated a moment about the diagnosis, and finally decided to write provisionally for my guidance, or rather by way of prognosis, the one word, "Hysteria!"

CHAPTER XIII

NEXT day I found that Evadne's cold was decidedly worse, and as the weather was severe I ordered her to stay in her own rooms.

"Am I going to be ill?" she asked.

"No," I answered, pooh-poohing the notion.

"Doctor, you dash my hopes!" she said. "I am always happy when I am ill. It *is* such a relief."

I had heard her use the phrase twice before, but it was only now that I saw her meaning. Physical suffering was evidently a relief from the mental misery, and this proved that the trouble was of longer standing than I had at first suspected. She had used the same expression, I remembered, when I first attended her during that severe attack of pneumonia.

Colonel Colquhoun had returned, she told me, but I did not see him that day, as he was out. Next morning, however, I came earlier on purpose, and encountered him in the hall. He was not in uniform, I was thankful to see, for he was very apt to assume his orderly room manners therewith, and they were decidedly objectionable to the average civilian, whatever military men might think of them.

"Ah, how do you do?" he said. "So you've been having honours thrust upon you? Well, I congratulate you, I'm sure, sincerely, in so far as they are a pleasure to you; but I condole with you from the bottom of my heart for your loss. I'm afraid Mrs. Colquhoun is giving you more trouble. Now, don't say the trouble's a pleasure, for I'll not believe a word of it, with all you have to occupy you."

"It is no pleasure to see her ill," I answered.

"How is she to-day?"

"On my word I can't tell you, because I haven't seen her. I haven't the *entrée* to her private apartments. But come and see my new horse," he broke off—he was in an exceedingly good humour—"I got him in Ireland, and I'm inclined to think him a beauty, but I'd like to have your opinion. It's worth having."

The horse was like Colonel Colquhoun himself, showy; one of those high steppers that put their feet down where they lift them up almost, and get over no ground at all to speak of. Having occupied, without compunction, in inspecting this animal, half an hour of the time he considered too precious to be wasted on his wife, Colonel Colquhoun summoned Evadne's maid to show me upstairs, and cheerfully went his way.

But that remark of his about the *entrée* to his wife's apartments had made an impression. I was in duty bound to follow up any clue to the

cause of her present state of mind, and here was perhaps a morbid symptom.

"Why have you quarrelled with your husband?" I asked in my most matter-of-course tone, as soon as I was seated, and had heard about her cold.

"I have not quarrelled with my husband," she answered, evidently surprised.

"Then what does he mean by saying that he hasn't the *entrée* to your private apartments?"

"I am sure he made no complaint about that," she answered tranquilly.

This was true. He had merely mentioned the fact casually, and not as a thing that affected his comfort or happiness in any way.

"Colonel Colquhoun and I are better friends now, if anything, than we have ever been," she added of her own accord, with inquiry in her eyes, as if she wanted to know what could have made me think otherwise.

I should have said myself that they were excellent friends, but what precisely did "friends" mean? I scented something anomalous here. However, it was not a point that I considered it advisable to pursue. I had ascertained that there was no morbid feeling in the matter, and that was all that I required to know. I only paid her a short visit that morning, and did not return for two days; but I had been thinking seriously about her case in the interval, and carefully prepared to inquire into it particularly; and an evident increase of languor and depression gave me a good opening.

"Tell me how you are to-day," I began.

"Any trouble?"

"The worry in my head is awful!" she exclaimed. "Let me go downstairs. I am better there."

She was essentially a child of light and air and movement, requiring sunshine indoors as well as out to keep her in health. An Italian proverb says where the sun does not come, the doctor does, and this had been only too true in her case. It was pure animal instinct which had made the west window of the drawing-room her favourite place. Nature, animal and vegetable, is under an imperative law to seek the sun, and she had unconsciously obeyed it for her own good. But she required more than that transient gleam in the western window; a sun bath daily, when it could be had, is what I should have prescribed for her; and from her next remark I judged that she had discovered for herself the harm which the deprivation of light was doing her.

"I can see the sun all day long beyond the shadow of the house," she continued, "but I want to feel it too. I would like it to shine on me in the early morning and wake me up and warm me. There is no heat so grateful; and I only feel half alive in these dark, damp rooms. I never had bronchitis or was delicate at all in any way until we came here. Let me go down, won't you?"

"Well, as your cold is so much better, you may go downstairs if you like. But you mustn't go out," I answered. "How are you going to amuse yourself?"

"Oh!"—she looked around the room as if in search of something—"I don't know exactly. Work, I suppose."

"You don't read much?"

"No, not now," she answered, leaning forward with her hands clasped on her lap, and looking dreamily into the fire.

"Does that mean that you used to read

once?" I pursued. "You have plenty of books here."

She looked toward the well-filled cases. "Yes," she said, "old friends. I seldom open any of them now."

"Do you never feel that they reproach you for losing interest in them?"

She smiled. "I think perhaps they are relieved because I have ceased from troubling them—from requiring more of them than they could give me," she answered, smothering a sigh.

"May I look at them?" I asked, anticipating her permission by rising and going toward them.

"Yes, certainly," she answered, rising herself, and following me languidly. The books were arranged in groups—science, history, biography, travels, poetry, fiction; with bound volumes of such periodicals as the *Contemporary Review*, the *Nineteenth Century*, and the *Westminster*. I read the titles of the volumes in the science divisions with surprise, for she had never betrayed, nor had I ever suspected, that she had added the incident of learning to the accident of brains. But if she knew the contents of but half of these books well she must be a highly educated woman. I took out several to see how they had been read, and found them all carefully annotated, with marginal notes very clearly written, and containing apposite quotations from and references to the best authorities on the various subjects. This was especially the case with books on the natural sciences; the physical ones having apparently interested her less.

"These are not very elegant books for a lady's boudoir," she said, referring to the plain dark bindings. "I dislike gorgeously bound books, and could never make a pet of one. They are like over-dressed people; all one's care is concentrated upon their appearance, and their real worth of character, if they have any, escapes one."

"Were you ever an omnivorous reader?" I asked.

"No, I am thankful to say," she answered, her natural aptitude for intellectual pursuits overcoming her artificial objection to them, as she looked at her books and became interested in them in spite of herself; "for I notice that the average reader who reads much remembers little, and is absurdly inaccurate. It is as bad to read everything as to eat everything; the mind, when it is gorged with a surfeit of subjects, retains none of them."

She had a fairly representative collection of French, Italian, and German books, all equally well read and annotated, each in its own language, the French and Italian being excellent, but the German imperfect, although, as she told me, she liked both the language and the literature very much the best of the three. "German suggested ideas to me," she said, "and that is why I paid less attention to the construction of the language, I think. But I am afraid you will find no elegancies in any tongue I use, for language has always been to me a vehicle of thought, and not a part of art to be employed with striking effect. Now, here is Carlyle, the arch phrasemaker. I always admired him more than I loved him; but his books are excellent for intellectual exercise. He forced those phrases from his brain with infinite pains, and, when you take them collectively, you find yourself obliged to force them into yours in like manner."

She had become all interest and animation by this time, and I had never known her so delightful

as she was that morning while showing me her books. She had no objection to lending me any that I chose, although I told her that I only wanted them to read her notes. I took a variety, but found no morbid tendency in any remark she had made upon them.

I paid my visit late in the afternoon next day, and found Evadne in the drawing-room. She was standing in the window when I entered, but came down the room to greet me.

"I have been watching for you," she said. "I hoped you would come early. And I have also been watching that party of jubilant ducks waddling down the road. Come and see them. I believe they belong to us. They must have escaped from the yard. But aren't they enjoying the ramble! That old drake is quite puffed up with excitement and importance! He goes along nodding his head, and saying again and again to the ducks, 'Now, didn't I tell you so! and aren't you glad you took my advice and came?' And all the ducks are smiling and complimenting him upon his wisdom and courage. They ought to be driven back, but I haven't the heart to spoil their pleasure just yet by informing against them."

I was standing beside her in the window now, and she looked up at me, smiling as she spoke. She was brighter under the immediate influence even of the watery winter sun, now a red ball, glowing behind the brown branches of the leafless trees, than she had been in her gloomy north room; and I took this lively interest in the adventurous ducks to be a glimpse of the joyous, healthy mind, seeing character in all things animate, and gifted with sympathy as well as insight, which must naturally have been hers.

"When am I to go out?" she asked. "I begin to long for a sight of my fellow-creatures. I don't want to speak to them. I only want to see them. But I am sociable to that extent—when I am in my right mind."

"Tell me about this mental malady," I begged.

"Ah," she began, laughing up at me, but with a touch of bitterness. "I interest you now! I am a case! You do not flatter me. But I mean to give you every help in my power. If only you could cure me!" She clasped her hands and held them out to me, the gesture of an instant, but full of earnest entreaty.

"Come from the window," I said. "It is chilly here."

"Yes, come to the fire," she rejoined, leading the way; "and sit down, and let us have tea, and talk, and be cosy. You want me to talk about myself, and I will if I can. I was happy just now, but you see I am depressed in a moment. It is misery to me to be so variable. And I constantly feel as if I wanted something—to be somewhere, or to have something; I don't know where or what; it is a sort of general dissatisfaction, but it is all the worse for not being positive. If I knew what I wanted, I should be cured by the effort to obtain it."

She rang the bell, and began to make up the fire; and I sat down and watched her because she liked to do those things in her own house. "Strangers wait upon me," she said; "but my friends allow me to wait upon them."

When the servant had brought tea and retired, she began again.

"Now question me," she said, "and make me tell you the truth."

"I am sure you will tell me the truth," I asserted.

"I am sure I shall try," she replied; "but I

am not so sure that I shall succeed. If you provoke me, I shall fence with you; if you confuse me, I shall unwittingly say 'yes' when I mean 'no.' In fact, I am surprised to find myself confiding this trouble to you at all! It has come about by accident, but I am very glad; it is such a relief to speak. But how *has* it come about?" she broke off. "Did you suspect?"

"Suspect what?"

"That I am insane."

"You are not insane," I answered harshly.

She looked at me as if my words or manner amused her. "I remember now," she said. "I complained of the worry in my head, and then you questioned me."

"It is not an uncommon complaint," I rejoined.

"Is it not?" she answered. "Well, I don't know whether to be sorry for the other sufferers, or relieved to think that I am not the only one, which is what you intend, I believe. But, doctor, the misery is terrible, especially now that it has become almost incessant. It drives me—fills my mind with such dreadful ideas. I have actually meditated murder lately."

"Murder in the abstract, I suppose?"

"No, murder actually, murder for my own benefit, or what I fancy in that mood would be for my benefit; the murder of one poor miserable creature whom I pity with all my heart and really care for—when I am in my right mind."

My heart sank. It was not necessary for me to know, and I had no inclination to ask, who the "one poor miserable creature" was.

"And when the impulse is on you, what do you do?" I said.

"It is not an impulse exactly," she answered; "at least, it is nothing which I have ever had the slightest inclination to act upon. I am just possessed by the idea—whatever it may be—and then I cannot sit still. I have to rush out."

"Into Regent Street, for example?" I suggested, her last remark having thrown a sudden side-light upon that occurrence.

"Yes," she said. "But I didn't know I was going to Regent Street. I had read of Dickens prowling about the streets of London late at night when he was suffering from the effects of overwork, and recovering his tranquillity and power in that way, and I thought I would try the experiment; so I went out and just walked on until I was tired, and then I got into an omnibus, so as to be with the people, and when it stopped and they all got out, I got out too, and walked on again, and then that horrid old man spoke to me. It was a great shock, but it had the happiest effect. I woke up, as it were, the moment I got rid of him, and felt quite myself again; and then I hurried back, as you know. You still disapprove? Well, in one way, perhaps you are right; but still it did me good." She stopped, and looked into the fire thoughtfully; and then she smiled. "Forgive me, do!" she said. "I know I behaved badly next day, I could not help it. The sudden relief to my mind had sent my spirits up inordinately for one thing; and then your face! Your consternation was really comical! If I had injured you irreparably in your estimation of the value of your own opinion of people, you could not have cared more. But I am sorry, very, very sorry," she added, with feeling, "that you should have lost your respect for me."

"What could make you think that I had lost my respect for you?" I asked, in surprise.

"Because, you know, you have never come to see me since, as you used to do." She looked at

me a moment wistfully, and I knew she half expected me to explain or make some excuse; but I could not, unfortunately, do either without making bad worse. I could assure her, however, honestly, that I had not lost my respect for her.

"And I came to see you when you required me," I added.

But she was not satisfied. "I know your philanthropy," she said. "But I would rather have you come as of old because you believe in me, and like and respect me. I value your friendship, and it pains me to find that you can only treat me now like any other suffering sinner. Is it going to be so always?"

("Will the child kill me with her innocent talk?")

She had not alluded to the discontinuance of my visits before. I thought she had not missed me, and, being in a double mood, had been somewhat hurt by the seeming indifference, although I would not have had her want me when I could not come. Now, however, I was greatly distressed to find the construction she had put upon my absence, and all the more so because I could not explain.

"Do not say that!" I exclaimed. "You have always had, you always will have, my most sincere respect. It is part of an unhealthy state of mind which makes you doubt the attachment of your friends."

She was glad to accept this assertion. "Ah, yes!" she said. "I know the symptoms, but I had forgotten for the moment. Thank you. I *am* so glad to see you again!" She sighed, leaned back in her chair, folded her hands on her lap, and looked at me—"if only as a doctor," she added slowly. "You have some mysterious power over my mind. All great doctors have the power I mean; I wonder what it is. Your very presence restores me in an extraordinary way. You dispel the worry in my head without a word, by just being here, however bad it is. I used to long for you so on those days when you never came, and I used to watch for you and be disappointed when you drove past; but then I always said, 'He will come to-morrow,' and that was something to look forward to. I used to think at first you would get over my escapade, or learn to take another view of it; but then, when you never came, I gradually lost heart and hope, and that is how it was I broke down, I think."

This guileless confidence affected me painfully.

"But I want to discover the secret of a great doctor's success," she pursued. "What is your charm? There is something mesmeric about you, I think, something inimical to disease at all events. There is healing in your touch, and your very manners make an impression which cures."

"Knowledge, I suppose, has nothing to do with it?" I suggested, smiling.

"No, nothing," she answered emphatically. "I have carried out directions of yours successfully which had been previously given to me by another doctor and tried by me without effect. You alter the attitude of one's mind somehow—that is how you do it, I believe."

"Well, I hope to alter the present attitude of your mind completely," I answered. "And to resume. I want you to tell me how you feel when one of those tormenting thoughts has passed. Do you suffer remorse for having entertained it?"

"Only an occasional pang," she said. "I do not allow myself to sorrow or suffer for thoughts which I cannot control. I am suffering from a

morbid state of mind, and it is my duty to fight against the impulses which it engenders. But my responsibility begins and ends with the struggle. And I am quite sure that it is wiser to try and forget that such ideas ever were than to encourage them to haunt me by recollecting them even for purposes of penitential remorse."

"And when it is not a criminal impulse that affects you"—

"*Criminal!*" she ejaculated, aghast at the word.

I had used it on purpose to see its effect upon her, and was satisfied. The moral consciousness was still intact.

"Yes," I persisted. "But when it is not an impulse of that kind, what is it that disturbs your mind?"

"Thoughts of the suffering, the awful, needless suffering that there is in the world. The perception of it is a spur which goads me at times so that I feel as if I could do almost anything to lessen the sum of it. But then, you see, my hands are tied, so that all I can do is think, think, think."

"We must change that to work, work, work," I said.

"It is too late," she answered despondently. "Body and mind have suffered—mind and body. All that is not wrong in me is weak. I would have it otherwise, yes. But give me some anodyne to relieve the pain; that is all you can do for me now."

"I will give you no anodyne, either actual or figurative," I answered, rising to go. "If you had no recuperative force left in you there would be less energy in your despair. It rests with yourself now entirely to be as healthy-minded as ever again if you like."

I never could remember whether I said good-bye to her that day, or just walked out of the room, like the forgetful boor I sometimes am, with the words on my lips.

CHAPTER XIV

A MEDICAL man who does not keep his moral responsibility before him in the consideration of a case must be a very indifferent practitioner, and, with regard to Evadne, I felt mine to such an extent that, before the interview was over, I had decided that I was not the proper person to treat her. I doubted my judgment for one thing, which showed that for once my nerve was at fault; and I had other reasons which it is not necessary to give. I therefore determined to run up to town to consult Sir Shadwell Rock about her. He was a distinguished colleague and personal friend of mine, a man of vast experience, and many years my senior; and I knew that if he would treat her, she could not be in better hands.

When I left As-You-Like-It I found that I had just time to drive to Morningquest and catch the last train to town. It was a four hours' journey, but fortunately there was a train in the early morning which would bring me back in time for my own work.

I knew Sir Shadwell was in town, and telegraphed to him to beg him to see me that night at half-past eleven if he possibly could, and, on arriving, I found him at home—very much at home, indeed, in a smoking jacket and slippers over a big fire in his own private sanctum, enjoy-

ing his bachelor ease with a cigarette and the last shilling shocker.

I apologised for my untimely visit, but he put me at my ease at once by cordially assuring me that I had done him a favour. "I was going to a boring big dinner this evening when your telegram arrived, and your coming in this way suggested something sufficiently important to detain me, so I sent an excuse, and have had a wholesome chop, and—eh—a *real good time*," he added confidentially, tapping the novelette. "Extraordinary production this, really. Most entertaining. I can't guess who did it, you know, I can't indeed—but, my dear boy, to what do I owe the pleasure? What can I do for you?"

"First of all give me a wholesome chop if you have another in the house, for I'm famishing."

"Oh, a thousand pardons for my remissness!" he exclaimed, ringing the bell vehemently. "Of course you haven't dined. I ought to have thought of that. Something very important, I suppose?"

"A most interesting case."

"Mental?"

"Yes. A lady."

"Well, not another word until you've had something to eat. Suitable surroundings play an important part in the discussion of such cases, and suitable times and seasons also. Just before dinner one isn't sanguine, and just after one is too much so. When you have eaten, take time to reflect—and a cigarette if you are a smoker." He had been holding his book in his hand all the time, but now he pattered to a side-table with an old man's stiffness, peeped at the paragraph he had been reading, marked his place with a paper cutter, and muttered—"Very strange, for if she didn't steal the jewels, who did? Mustn't dip, though; spoils it." He put the book down, and returned to me, taking off his spectacles as he came, and smoothing his thick white hair. "Now don't say a word if you've read it," he cautioned me. "I always owe everybody a grudge who tells me the plot of a story I'm interested in. But, let me see, what was I saying? Oh! Take time, that was it! There is nothing like letting yourself settle if you are at all perplexed. When the memory is crowded with details the mind becomes muddy, and you must let it clear itself. That is the secret of my own success. In any difficulty I have always waited. Don't try to think. Much better dismiss the matter from your mind altogether, make yourself comfortable in the easiest chair in the room, get a rousing book—the subject is of no importance, so long as it interests you—and in half an hour, if the physical well-being is satisfactory, you will find the mental tension gradually relax. Your ideas begin to flow, your judgment becomes clear, and you suddenly see for yourself in a way that astonishes you."

"Then pray oblige me by resuming your seat and cigarette," I answered, "and let me transfer my difficulty to you while the moment lasts—*your* moment!"

"When you have dined," he said good-humouredly. "I won't hear a word while you are famishing. Tell me how you are yourself, and what you are doing. My dear boy, it is really a pleasure to see you! Why aren't you married?"

"Now, really, do you expect me to answer such an important question as that with my mind in its present muddy condition!" I retorted upon him. "My many reasons are all rioting in my recollection, and I can't see one clearly."

The old gentleman smiled, and sat patting the arms of his chair for a little. "You're looking fagged," he remarked presently. "Work won't hurt you, but beware of worry!"

My dinner was brought to me on a tray at this instant, and the dear old man got up to see that it was properly served. He tried the champagne himself, to be sure it was right, and gave careful directions about the coffee. His interest in everything was as fresh as a boy's, and nothing he could do in the way of kindness was ever a trouble to him.

"You have been coming out strong in defence of morality lately," I remarked, when I had dined. "You have somewhat startled the proprieties."

"Startled the pruderies, you mean," he answered, bridling. "The proprieties face any necessity for discussion with modest discretion, however painful it may be."

"Well, you've done some good, at all events," I answered. I did not tell him, but only that very day I had heard it said that his was a name which all women should reverence for what he had done for some of them.

"Well," he said, "the clergy have had a long innings. They have been hard at it for the last eighteen hundred years, and society is still rotten at the core. It is our turn now. But come, draw up your chair to the fire and be comfortable. Well, yes," he went on, rubbing his hands, "I suppose eventually morality will be taught by medical men, and when it is, much misery will be saved to the suffering sex. My own idea is that a woman is a human being; but the clerical theory is that she is a dangerous beast, to be kept in subjection, and used for domestic purposes only. Married life is made up to a great extent of the most heartless abuse of a woman's love and unselfishness. Submission, you know!"—

When I had given him the details of Evadne's case, so far as I had gone into it, he asked me what my own theory was.

"I feel sure it is the old story of these cases in women," I answered. "The natural bent has been thwarted to begin with."

"Yes," he commented, "that is a fruitful source of mischief even in these days, when women so often listen to the voice of the Lord Himself speaking in their own hearts, and do what He directs in spite of the Church. The restrictions imposed upon women of ability warp their minds, and the rising generation suffers. But how has the natural bent been thwarted in this case?"

"I have not ascertained," I said. "She is a woman of remarkable general intelligence, but she makes no use of it, and she does not seem to have any one decided talent that she cares to cultivate, and consequently she has no absorbing interest to occupy her mind, no purpose for which to live and make the most of her abilities. She attends punctually to her social duties, but they do not suffice, and she has of necessity many spare hours of every day on her hands, during which she sits and sews alone. I suppose a woman's embroidery answers much the same purpose as a man's cigarette. It quiets her nerves, and helps her to think. If she is satisfied and happy in her surroundings her reflections will probably be tranquil and healthy, but if her outward circumstances are not congenial, she will banish all thoughts of them in her hours of ease, and her mind will gradually become a prey to vain imaginings—pleasant enough to begin with, doubtless, but likely to take a morbid tone at any

time if her health suffers. This has been the case with Evadne"—

"With whom?" Sir Shadwell interrupted.

"With my patient," I stammered. "I have been accustomed to hear her spoken of by her Christian name."

"Humph!" the old gentleman grunted enigmatically.

"She has one of those minds which should be occupied by a succession of lively events, all helping on some desirable object," I proceeded—"the mind of a naturally active woman."

"Well," he answered, "it seems to be another instance of the iniquitous folly of allowing the one sex to impose galling limitations upon the other. It is not an uncommon case so far as the mental symptoms go. How does she get on with her husband? Does she contradict him?"

"No, never," I answered. "She is always courteous and considerate."

"Ah, now, I thought so," he chuckled. "A happily married woman contradicts her husband flatly whenever she thinks proper. She knows she is safe from wrangling and bitterness. I think you will find that the domestic position is the difficulty here. You don't seem to have inquired into that very carefully."

I made no answer, and he looked at me sharply for a moment, then asked me how old my patient was.

"Twenty-five," I told him.

"Twenty-five," he repeated; "and you are intimate with both her and her husband. Now, have you ever had any reason to doubt her honesty—her verbal honesty of course, I mean?"

"Quite the contrary," I answered. "I have always found her almost peculiarly frank."

"A woman may be accurate, you know, in all she says of other people," he observed; "but that is no proof that she will be so concerning herself."

"I know," was my reply; "but I feel quite sure of this lady's word."

"And during the time that you have known her she now confesses that she has suffered more or less?"

"Yes. She mentioned one interval during which she said a new interest in life took her completely out of herself."

"What was the interest?"

"I did not ask her."

"She fell in love, I suppose, and you happened to know the fact."

"I neither know nor suspected such a thing."

"That was it, you may be sure," Sir Shadwell decided. "When a young and attractive woman, who speaks to her husband with marked courtesy and consideration, instead of treating him familiarly, talks of having an interest in life which takes her completely out of herself, you may take it for granted almost always that the new interest is love."

"It is more likely to have been the smallpox epidemic," I rejoined, and then I gave him an account of that episode.

"Ah, well, perhaps," he said. "We are evidently dealing with a nature full of surprises." He pursed up his mouth and eyed me attentively. "My dear boy," he said at last, "I think I see your difficulty. You had better turn this case over to me altogether."

"Thank you," I answered. "That is what I should like to have suggested."

"Then send the lady up to town, and I will do my best for her."

CHAPTER XV

SIR SHADWELL ROCK was exactly the kind of man Evadne had had in her mind, I felt sure, when she spoke of the peculiar influence which distinguished men of my profession exercise upon their patients. He was a man of taking manners to begin with, sympathetic, cultivated, humane; and, I need hardly add, scrupulously conscientious and exact. I could confide her to his care with the most perfect reliance upon his kindness, as well as upon his discretion and skill — if she would consent to consult him at all; but that was a little difficulty which had still to be got over. I anticipated some opposition, because I felt sure she had not realised that there was anything threatening to be serious in her case, and would therefore see no necessity for further advice. This made the arrangement difficult. It would not do to arouse any apprehension about her own state of mind; but how to induce her to go to London to consult an eminent specialist without doing so was the question. Had Lady Adeline been at home the suggestion would have come best from her, but in her absence there was nobody to make it except that impossible Colonel Colquhoun. If he chose to order Evadne to consult Sir Shadwell Rock, I knew she would do so at once, for she never opposed him, and he was so apt to be unreasonable and capricious that she would probably not think that the order signified much. But the further question was, would he give it? After I had finished my morning's work, I drove to the dépôt to see. The men were on parade when I entered the barrack square. They were drawn up in line, and the first thing I saw was Colonel Colquhoun himself prancing about on his charger, and not in the most amiable mood possible, I imagined, from the way he was blackguarding the men. He sat his horse well, and was a fine soldierlike man in uniform, and a handsome man, too, of the martial order, when his bald head was hidden by his cocked hat, and his blond moustache had a chance; the sort of man to take a woman's fancy if not the kind of character to keep her regard.

An unhappy old mounted major had got into trouble just as I came up. His palfrey was an easy ambler, but he was the sort of old gentleman who would not have been safe in a rocking-chair with his sword drawn and his chief complimenting him.

"You ride like a damned tailor, sir," Colonel Colquhoun was thundering at him just as I drove up.

An officer in undress uniform, Captain Bartlet, and Brigade Surgeon James, who was in mufti, were standing at an open window in the ante-room, and I joined them there, and looked out at the parade.

"I don't know how you fellows stand that kind of thing, and before the men, too," I remarked, *à propos* of a fresh volley of abuse from Colonel Colquhoun.

"Oh, by Jove! we've got to stand it, many of us, for weighty considerations quite apart from our personal dignity," Captain Bartlet rejoined. "A man with a wife and five children depending upon him will swallow a lot for their sake. It would be easy enough to answer him, but self-interest keeps us quiet—a deuced sight oftener than discipline, by the way. However," he added cheerfully, "all C. O.'s are not so bad as that brute out there, nor the half of them, for the matter of that."

"But still, it's a wonder what you stand, you combatants," Dr. James observed.

"Shut up, doctor," Captain Bartlet rejoined good-naturedly. "Don't presume upon your superior position. *Your* promotion doesn't depend upon the colonel's confidential report, nor your peace in life upon his fancy for you. You can disagree with him in your own line, but we can't in ours."

"Is Colonel Colquhoun often so?" I asked. He had just been assuring that unfortunate major that a billet in the Commissariat department, with a pound of beef on one spur and a loaf of bread on the other to prevent accidents, was the thing for him.

"More or less," was the answer. "He's notorious all through the service. He brought his own regiment up to a high state of efficiency, I must say that for him, and led it into action like a man; but, between ourselves, I expect there's never been a time since he got his company when there wasn't a bullet ready for him. You remember, James, in India? Of course it was an accident!"

The doctor nodded. "The men call him Bully Colquhoun," he supplemented.

"But surely his character is known at the Horse Guards?" I said.

"Ah, you see he's a smart officer," Captain Bartlet rejoined; "and what are officers for? To knock about and to be knocked about. Just look at him now! See how he's bucketing those men about! He was a militiaman, and that's a militiaman all over! A man who's been through Sandhurst has carried a rifle for a year himself, and he knows what it is, and gives his men their stand easy; but a militiaman has no more feeling for them than a block."

"Well, I can't see why you seniors don't remonstrate," I rejoined. "The War Office is bound to support you if you show good cause."

"Yes, and cashier you too for very little, if you make yourself obnoxious by giving them trouble," Bartlet replied. "Roylance was the only fellow that ever really stood up to Colquhoun. He was a young subaltern that had just joined, but an awful devil when he was roused, and he swore in the anteroom that if the colonel ever blackguarded him before the men, or anywhere else, or presumed upon his position to address him in terms which one gentleman is not permitted to use to another, he'd give him as much as he got. Well, the very next day, on parade, Roylance got the men into a muddle. Colquhoun's a good soldier, you know, and nothing riles him like inefficiency; and, by Jove! he was down on the lad like shot! He poured his whole vocabulary on him, and then, for want of a worse word, he called him 'a damned dissipated subaltern.' Well, Roylance just stepped back so as to make himself heard, and shouted coolly, 'Dissipated! that comes well from you, sir, considering the reason for the singular arrangement of your own *ménage!*' with which he handed his sword to the adjutant, and walked off to his quarters! You should have seen Colquhoun's face! He went on leave immediately afterward, and of course the matter was hushed up. Roylance exchanged. He'd lots of money. It's the men without means that have to stand that kind of thing."

My voice was husky and I could scarcely control it, but I managed to ask, "What was the insinuation?"

"What, about Roylance? Just a lie! The lad's life was as clean as a lady's."

"I meant about the marriage?"

"Oh, don't you know? Colquhoun himself told us all about it in his cups one night. Just as they were starting on their wedding trip she got a letter containing certain allegations against him, and she gave him the slip at the station, and went off by herself to make inquiries, and in consequence of what she learnt she declined to live with him at all at first. But he has a great horror of being made the subject of gossip, you know, and her people were also anxious to save scandal, and so, between them, they managed to persuade her just to consent to live in the house, he having given his word of honour as a gentleman not to molest her; and that has been the arrangement ever since. Funny, isn't it? 'Truth stranger than fiction,' you know, and that kind of thing. Yet it seems to answer. They're excellent friends."

The parade had been dismissed by this time, but I had changed my mind, and did not wait to see Colonel Colquhoun. I had to hurry back to make arrangements with regard to my patients in the hospital, and then I returned to town, and midnight saw me closeted once more with Sir Shadwell Rock.

CHAPTER XVI

THE revolting story I had heard in the barracks haunted me. I had thought incessantly of my poor little lady taken out of the schoolroom to face a position which would be horrifying, even in idea, to a right minded woman of the world. What the girl's mental sufferings must have been only a girl can tell. And ever since—the incubus of that elderly man of unclean antecedents! All that had been incomprehensible about Evadne was obvious now, and also the mistake she had made.

During the most important part of the time when a woman is ripe for her best experiences, when she should be laying in a store of happy memories to fall back upon, when memory becomes her principal pleasure in life, Evadne had lived alone, shut up in herself, her large intelligence idle or misapplied, and her hungry heart seeking such satisfaction as it could find in pleasant imaginings. As she went about, punctually performing her ineffectual duties, or sat silently sewing, she had been to all outward seeming an example to be revered of graceful wifedom and womanliness; but when one came to know what her inner life had become in consequence of the fatal repression of the best powers of her mind, it was evident that she was in reality a miserable type of a woman wasted. The natural bent of the average woman is devotion to home and husband and children; but there are many women to whom domestic duties are distasteful, and these are now making life tolerable for themselves by finding more congenial spheres of action. There are many women, however, above the average, who are quite capable of acquitting themselves creditably both in domestic and public life, and Evadne was one of these. Had she been happily married she would undoubtedly have been one of the first to distinguish herself, one of the foremost in the battle which women are waging against iniquity of every kind. Her keen insight would have kept her sympathies actively alive, and her disinterestedness would have made her careless of criticism. That was

her nature. But Nature thwarted ceases to be beneficent. She places us here fully equipped for the part she has designed us to play in the world, and if we, men or women, neglect to exercise the powers she has bestowed upon us, the consequences are serious. I did not understand at the time what Evadne meant when she said that she had made it impossible for herself to act. I thought she had deliberately shirked her duty under the mistaken idea that she would make life pleasanter for herself by doing so; but I learnt eventually how the impulse to act had been curbed before it quickened, by her promise to Colonel Colquhoun, which had, in effect, forced her into the disastrous attitude which we had all such good reason to deplore. It seemed cruel that all the most beautiful instincts of her being—her affection, her unselfishness, even her modest reserve and womanly self-restraint—should have been used to injure her; but that is exactly what had happened. And now the difficulty was: how to help her. How to rouse her from the unwholesome form of self-repression which had brought about her present morbid state of mind.

I was sitting up late the night after my second visit to Sir Shadwell Rock, considering the matter. Sir Shadwell's advice was still the same: "Send her to me." But the initial difficulty, how to get her to go, remained. How to draw her from the dreary seclusion of her *Home in the Woman's Sphere*, and persuade her that hours of ease are only to be earned in action. I thought again of Lady Adeline, and sat down to write to her.

The household had retired, and the night was oppressively silent. I felt overcome with fatigue, but was painfully wide awake, as happens very often when I am anxious about a bad case. But this was the third night since I had been in bed, and I thought now I would go when I had finished my letter to Lady Adeline, and do my best to sleep. As I crossed the hall, which was in darkness save for the candle I carried in my hand, I fancied I heard an unaccountable sound, a dull thud, thud, coming from I could not tell whence for the moment. The senses are singularly acute in certain stages of fatigue, and mine were all alive that night to any impression, my hearing especially so; and there was no mistake. I had stopped short to listen, and, impossible as I knew it would have been at any other time, I was sure that I could distinctly hear a horse galloping on the turf of the common more than a mile away, a mounted horse with a rider who was urging him to his utmost speed; and in some inexplicable manner I also became conscious of the fact that the horseman was a messenger sent in all haste for me.

Mechanically I put my candle down and opened the hall door. It was a bright night. The fresh, invigorating, frosty air seemed to clear my mental vision still more strongly as it blew in upon me. Diavolo in mess dress, his cap gone, his fair hair blown back by the wind, breathless with excitement and speed, with thought suspended, but dry lips uttering incessantly a cry for help—"Galbraith! Galbraith! Galbraith!" My pulses kept time to the thud of the horse's hoofs on the common. I waited. I had not the shadow of a doubt that I was wanted. But I did not ask myself by whom.

The sound only ceased for a perceptible second or so at the lodge gates. Were they open? Had he cleared them? What a jump! Thud! He must be well mounted! On the drive now! The gravel is flying! Across the lawn—Diavolo, Good speed indeed!

Scarcely five minutes since I heard him first till he stopped at the steps in the starlight, hoarsely panting, "Galbraith! Galbraith!"

"I am here, my boy! What is it?"

"Come! Come to her at once! Colonel Colquhoun is dead."

The mind, quickened by the shock of a startling piece of intelligence, suddenly sums up our suspicions for us sometimes in one crisp homely phrase. This is what mine did. "The murder is out!" I thought, the moment Diavolo spoke. Evadne—was this the end of it? Such a state of mind as hers had been lately, might continue for the rest of her life, to her torment, without influencing her actions; but, on the other hand, an active phase might supervene at any moment.

Diavolo had dismounted and sat down on one of the steps, utterly exhausted. "Here, take the reins," he said, "and mount. I'm done. I'll look after myself. Don't waste a moment."

I needed no urging.

"I have actually meditated murder lately. Murder—murder for my own benefit."

The horrible phrases, in regular succession, kept time to the rhythmical ring of the iron shoes on the frozen ground as the horse returned with me, still at a steady gallop, to As-You-Like-It.

I had recognised the animal. It was the same fine charger which Colonel Colquhoun himself had been riding so admirably on parade the last time I saw him. Only yesterday morning! "Murder actually, murder for my own benefit." No! no!—stumble. Hold up! only a stone. Shall we ever be there? Suspense—"Murder actually"—no, it shall not be that! Hope is the word I want. Beat it out of the hardened earth! Hope, hope, hope, hope, nothing, nothing but hope!

We had arrived at last. No one about. Doors open, lights flaring, and a strange silence.

Leaving the horse to do as he liked, I walked straight upstairs, and on the first landing I met Evadne's maid.

"I hoped it was you, sir. Come this way," she whispered, and pushed open a door which stood already ajar, gently, as if afraid of disturbing some sleeper.

It was Colonel Colquhoun's bedroom, large and luxurious, like the man himself. He was stretched upon the bed, in evening dress, his grey face upward. One glance at *that* sufficed. But almost before I had crossed the threshold I was conscious of an indescribable sense of relief. There were four persons in the room, that poor old "begad" major, who could not ride, and Captain Bartlet, both hastily summoned from the *dépôt* evidently, and still in mess dress; Dr. James in ordinary morning costume, with a covert coat on; and Evadne herself in a black evening dress, open at the throat. It was her attitude that relieved my mind the moment I saw her. She was seated beside the bed, crying heartily and healthily. The three gentlemen stood just behind her, gravely concerned; silent, sympathetic, helpless, waiting for me. No one spoke.

For the dead, reverence. I stood by the bed looking down on the splendid frame, prone now and inert, and again I thought of the last time I had seen him, a fine figure of a man, finely mounted, and exercising his authority arrogantly. I looked into the blank countenance. No other man on earth had ever called forth curses from my inmost soul such as I had uttered, to my shame, in one great burst of rage that had surprised me and shaken my fortitude the night

before as I journeyed back alone, without the slightest prospect, that I could see, of saving her. The blank face, decently composed. His right hand, palm upward, was stretched out toward me as if he were offering it to me; and thankful I was to feel that I could clasp it honestly. I had not a word or look on my conscience for which I deserved a reproach from the dead man lying there. I took his hand: a doctor doing a perfunctory duty? No, a last natural rite, an act of reconciliation. In that solemn moment, still holding his hand and gazing down into his face, I rejoiced to feel that the trouble had passed from my soul, that the rage and bitterness were no more, and that only the touching thought of his kindly hospitality and perfect confidence in my own integrity—a confidence impossible in a man who has not himself the saving grace of a better nature—would remain with me from that time forth for ever.

I laid my hand on Evadne's shoulder, and she looked up.

"Ah! have you come?" she cried, her voice broken with sobs that shook her. "Is it really true? Can nothing be done? Oh, poor, poor man! What a life! What a death! A miserable, miserable, misspent life, and such an end—in a moment—without a word of warning—and all these years when I have been beside him, silent and helpless. If only I could have done something to help him—said something. Surely, surely there was *something* I might have done?" She held her clasped hands out toward me, the familiar gesture, appealing to me to blame her.

"Thank Heaven!" I inwardly ejaculated. "This is as it should be."

In the presence of eternal death, her own transient sufferings were forgotten, and healthy human pity destroyed any sense of personal injury she might have cherished.

We four men stood awkwardly, patiently by for several minutes, listening to her innocent self-upbraidings, knowing her story, and touched beyond expression by the utter absence of all selfish sentiment in any word she said.

When she was quite exhausted, I drew her hand through my arm, and took her to her own room.

Cardiac syncope was the cause of death. Colonel Colquhoun had been out that evening, and had, through some mistake of the coachman's, missed his carriage, and walked home in a towering rage. The exertion and excitement, acting together on a heart already affected, had brought on the attack. He was storming violently in the hall, with his face flushed crimson—so the servants told us—when all at once he stopped, and called "Evadne!" twice, as if in alarm; and Mrs. Colquhoun ran down from the drawing-room; but before she could reach him he fell on the floor, and never spoke again.

CHAPTER XVII

MUCH of my time during the next few months was devoted to the consideration of Evadne's affairs. Her father made no sign, and she had no other relation in a position to come forward and share the responsibility; but, happily, she had very good friends. I had noticed that Diavolo was singularly agitated when he brought the terrible news that night to Fountain Towers, but thought little of it, as I knew the boy to be

emotional. The shock to his own feelings did not, however, prevent him thinking of others, and the next thing I heard of him was that he had been to Morningquest and waited till the telegraph office opened, in order to send the news to his own people, and beg them to return at once, if they could, on Evadne's account; and this they did, in the kindest manner, with as little delay as possible.

"I have only come to fetch Evadne," Lady Adeline said when she arrived. "I am going to take her away at once from this dreadful house and this dreary English winter to a land of sunshine and flowers and soft airs, and I hope to bring her back in the spring herself again—as *you* have never known her!"

Mr. Hamilton-Wells stayed behind, at considerable personal inconvenience, to consult with me about business. Colonel Colquhoun had died intestate and also in debt. What he had done with his money we could not make out, except that a large sum had been sunk in an annuity, which of course died with him. But one thing was quite evident, which was that Evadne would have little or nothing besides her pension from the service, and that would be the merest pittance for one always accustomed to the command of money as she had been. Mr. Hamilton-Wells wished to impose a handsome sum on her yearly by fraud and deceit, out of his own ample income.

"Really, ladies are so peculiar about money matters," he said. "I feel quite sure she would not accept sixpence from me if I were to offer it to her. But she need not know where the money comes from. It can be paid into her account at the bank, you see, regularly, and she will take it for granted that she is entitled to it."

"I am not so sure of that," I answered, with some heat; "but at anyrate the plan is not possible."

"Now, my dear Galbraith," Mr. Hamilton-Wells remonstrated, "do not put your foot down in that way. I am the older man, and I may also say, without offence, the older friend, and I am married; and Lady Adeline will strongly approve of what I propose."

"I do not doubt it," I maintained; "but it cannot be done."

"She is not the kind of person to marry for money," Mr. Hamilton-Wells observed, looking up at the ceiling.

"Who? Mrs. Colquhoun?" I asked. "I don't understand you."

"Oh," he answered, "it occurred to me that you might be thinking such a consideration would weigh with her in the choice of a second husband."

I stared at the man. He was sitting at a writing table in my library, with the papers we had been going through spread out before him, and I was standing opposite; and, as he spoke, he leant back in his chair, with his elbows on the arms of it, brought the tips of his long white fingers together, and smiled up at me, bland as a child, innocent of all offence. I am inclined to think he did secretly enjoy the effect of unexpected remarks without in the least appreciating the permanent impression he might be making. But I don't know. Some of these apparently hazardous observations of his were pregnant with reflection, and I believe, if his voice had been strong and determined instead of precise and insinuating; if he had brushed his hair up, instead of parting it in the middle and plastering it down smoothly on either side of his head; if his hands had been hardened by exposure and

use instead of whitened by excessive care; if he had worn tweed instead of velvet, Mr. Hamilton-Wells would have been called acute, and dreaded for his cynicism. But looking as he did, inoffensive as a lady's luggage, he was allowed to pass unsuspected; and if his mind were an infernal machine, concealed by a quilted cover, the world would have to have seen it to credit the fact.

I put my hands in my pockets after that last remark, and walked to the window glumly; but as I stood with my back to him, I could not help wondering if he was making faces at me, or up to any other undignified antics by way of relaxation. Did he ever wriggle with merriment when he was alone? I turned suddenly at the thought. He was calmly perusing a paper through his *pince-nez*, with an expression of countenance at once so benign, silly, and self-satisfied, that I felt I should like to have apologised for the suspicion.

"There is nothing for it, Galbraith," he said, "that I can see. She must either be poverty-stricken or have an income provided for her."

"She has enough to go on with for the present," I answered.

"You can provide the money yourself if you would rather," he suggested, in the tone of one who gives in good-naturedly to oblige you. "I don't care, you know, where the money comes from, so long as the source is disinterested and respectable."

I had returned to the table, but now again I walked to the window.

"But, I think," he continued, while I stood with my back to him, "as you say, for the present nothing need be done. Give her time for a rope—eh? What I do deprecate is leaving her to be driven by poverty to marry for money. My dear Galbraith," he broke off, protesting, "you have been on the prance for the last half-hour. For a medical man, you have less repose of manner than is essential, I should say. In fact, you quite give me the notion that you are impatient. But perhaps I am detaining you?"

"Oh, not at all," I assured him.

"Well, as I was saying," he pursued, "give her time to marry again. That would be the most satisfactory settlement of her difficulties. She is, I quite agree with you, a very attractive person. Now, there is the Duke of Panama already, Lady Adeline says—but she seems to have an objection to princes, especially if they are at all obese. I do not like obese people myself. Now, do *you* ever feel nervous on that score?"

"What score?"

"The score of obesity. You are just nicely proportioned at present for a man of your age and height. I, of course, am far too slender. But if you were to get any stouter by and by, it would be such a dreadful thing! I hope flesh is not in your family on both sides. On one I know it is. Now, my people are all slender. There is a great deal in that, I notice."

He was doing up the documents now with much neatness and dexterity.

"These had better go to my lawyer," he remarked.

"Why not to mine?" I suggested.

"Oh, allow me," he said, with great suavity—"as the older man. Of course, as a question of right, we neither of us have any claim to the privilege of being allowed to help this lady. Eventually, however, one of us may secure the right; but there is many a slip, you know, and perhaps

it would be less awkward afterward if a person whose disinterestedness is quite above suspicion had had the direction of affairs from the first."

There could be no doubt of what he meant by this time, and the argument was unanswerable.

"Do you feel inclined to return with me to Mentone?" he asked.

"I am afraid I cannot get away just now."

"Ah! I suppose it is too soon. Well, she is quite safe with us, and we will bring her back to Hamilton House in the spring." Mr. Hamilton-Wells smiled complacently as he took his seat in his carriage. I almost expected him to thank me for the sport I had been giving him, he looked so like a man who had been enjoying himself thoroughly. I thought about that last remark of his after he had gone, and pitied Lady Adeline. It must be trying to be liable at any moment to have words, which one deliberately chooses to hide one's thoughts, set aside as of no consequence, and the thoughts themselves answered naively. However, there was no real reason for hiding my thoughts any longer on that subject. I had done my best manfully, I hope, while the necessity lasted, to mask my feeling for her, even from myself; but there was now no further need for self-restraint. I might live for her and love her honestly and openly at last; and, accordingly, when Sir Shadwell Rock came to me for a few days at Christmas, I did not attempt to conceal my intention from him.

"It is a great risk," he said gravely, "a very great risk. Of course, now that the first cause of all the trouble is removed, the mental health may be thoroughly restored. So long as there is no organic brain lesion there is hope in all such cases. But I tell you frankly that the first call upon her physical strength may set up a recurrence of the moral malady, and you cannot foresee the consequences. However, you know as much about that as I do, and I can see it's no use warning you. You have made up your mind."

"Yes," I answered. "I shall be able to take good care of her if only I am fortunate enough to win her."

"Well, well, she seems to be a loyal little body," the old gentleman replied; "and I wish you success with all my heart. She will have much in her favour as your wife, and since you are determined to run the risk, let us hope for the best."

And that was just what I did while I waited for the spring, and to such good purpose that I became light-hearted as a schoolboy. I watched the birds building; I noticed the first faint green shadow on the hedges, and the yellowing of the gorse; I listened in the freshness of the dawn to the thrush that sang "Evadne." And when at last Mr. Hamilton-Wells walked in one day unexpectedly, and explained, somewhat superfluously, that he had come, I could have thrown up my hat and cheered!

"But without the ladies," he added.

"Have you left them behind you?" I demanded, trying not to look blank.

"Yes," he answered very slowly, then added, "At Hamilton House." I suppose nobody ever thought of kicking anything so "slender" as Mr. Hamilton-Wells, or associated such a vulgar idea as would have been involved in the suspicion of a deliberate intention to "sell" you with a person of such courteous and distinguished manners. But one did occasionally wonder what he was like at school, and if blessings and abuse were often showered on him then at one and the same time, as had come to be the case in later life.

He had come to ask me to dinner that evening, and when I arrived he was standing on the hearth-rug, gracefully, with a palm-leaf fan in his hand. Evadne greeted me quietly, Lady Adeline with affectionate cordiality, and Diavolo, who was the only other member of the party, with a grave yet bright demeanour which made him more like his Uncle Dawne in miniature than ever.

"In the spring," Mr. Hamilton-Wells observed precisely, waving his fan to emphasise each word, and addressing a remote angle of the cornice, "In the spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love."

Diavolo flushed crimson, Lady Adeline looked annoyed, but Evadne sat pale and still as if she had not heard.

I was right about her not being likely to leave her affairs in anybody's hands. Very soon after her arrival she insisted upon having an accurate statement of accounts, and begged me to go over to Hamilton House one morning to render it, as she found Mr. Hamilton-Wells quite unapproachable on the subject.

She received me in the morning-room alone, and began at once in the most business-like way. "Mr. Hamilton-Wells' reticence convinces me that I am a beggar," she said cheerfully. "Tell me the exact sum I have to depend upon."

I named it.

"Oh, then," she proceeded, "the question is, What shall I do? I cannot possibly live in the world, you know, on such a sum as that."

"What do you propose to do?" I asked, her tone having suggested some definite plan already formed.

"Go into a sisterhood, I think," she answered.

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed.

She raised her eyebrows.

"I beg your pardon," I said. "But you are not fit for such a life. Why, in a month you would be seeing visions and dreaming dreams."

"But I am afraid I shall do that now in any case, wherever I am," she sighed; and then she added, smiling at her own cynicism, "and I think I had better go where such things can be turned to good account. I have had no horrid thoughts, by the way, since I left As-You-Like-It, but of course I shall relapse."

"No, you will not," I blurted out, "if you marry happily."

Her face flushed all over at the word.

"Will you, Evadne," I proceeded—"or rather could you—be happy with me?" She rose, and made me a deep courtesy. "Thank you," she answered scornfully, "for your kind consideration, Sir George Galbraith! I always thought you the most disinterested person I ever knew, but I had no idea that even you could go so far as that!"

And then she left me alone with my consternation.

How in the name of all that is perplexing had I offended her?

Lady Adeline came in at that moment, and I put the question to her, telling her exactly what I had said. She burst out laughing.

"My dear George!" she exclaimed, "forgive me! I can't help it! But don't you think yourself you were a little bit abrupt? You do not seem to have mentioned the fact that you feel any special affection for Evadne. It did not occur to you to protest that you loved her, for instance?"

"No, it did not," I answered; "I should think that the fact is patent enough without protestations."

"She may have overlooked it, all the same," Lady Adeline suggested, still laughing at me. "I would advise you to find out the next time you have a chance."

"Where is she?" I demanded, going toward the door.

"Oh, you won't see her again to-day, you may be sure," she rejoined; "and it is just as well, you bear, if you mean to make love to her with that kind of countenance!"

But I would not be advised.

I strode straight up to her room, which I happened to know, and knocked at the door.

She answered "Come in!" evidently not expecting me, and when she saw who it was she was furious.

"I cannot understand what you mean by such conduct!" she exclaimed.

"Well, then, I'll make you understand!" I retorted.

Mr. Hamilton-Wells insinuated afterward that Evadne only accepted me to save her life. But I protested against the libel. I have never, to my certain knowledge, uttered a rough word either to or before my little lady in the whole course of our acquaintance. But why, when she loved me, she should have gone off in that ridiculous tantrum simply because I did not begin by expressing my love for her, I shall never be able to understand. She might have been sure that I should have enough to say on that subject as soon as I was accepted.

The day after the engagement was announced Diavolo called upon me. Needless to say he found me in the seventh heaven. I had been walking about the house, unable to settle to anything, and when I heard he had come, I thought it was to congratulate me, and I hurried down; but the first glimpse of his face caused my heart to contract ominously.

"Well, you have played me a nice trick," he said, with concentrated bitterness, "both of you. You knew what *my* intentions were, and you gave me no hint of your own. You preferred to steal a march on me. I could not have imagined such a thing possible from you. I should have supposed that you would have thought such underhand conduct low."

"Diavolo!" I gasped, "are you in earnest?"

"Am I in earnest!" he ejaculated. "Look at me! I suppose you think I am incapable of deep feeling."

"If only I had known!" I exclaimed. "Yet—how could I guess? The difference of age—and, Diavolo, my dear boy, believe me, I do sympathise with you most sincerely. This is a bitter drop in the cup for me. But—but—even if I had known—will it make it worse for you if I say it?—it is me she loves. She would not have accepted anyone but me. Even if I *had* withdrawn in your favour"—

He waved his hand to stop me. "Don't distress yourself," he said. "It is fate. We are to be punished with extinction as a family for the sins of our forefathers. My case will be the same as Uncle Dawne's—only," he added suddenly, and clenched his fists, "only, if you treat her badly, I'll blow your brains out."

"I hope you will," I answered.

He looked hard at me with a pained expression in his eyes. "Ah, I'm a fool," he said; "forgive me! I don't know what I'm saying. I'm mad with disappointment, and grief, and rage. Of course, if she loves you, I never had a chance. Yet the possibility of giving me one, had you known,

occurred to you. Well, I will show you that I can be as generous as you are." He held out his hand. "I—I congratulate you," he faltered. "Only, make her happy. But I know you will."

He felt about for his hat, and, having found it, walked with an uncertain step toward the door, blinded with tears.

I stood long as he had left me.

Ah, brother! have you not full oft
Found, even as the Roman did,
That in life's most delicious draught
Surgit amari aliquid?

Lady Adeline met me sadly the next time I went to Hamilton House.

"Do you blame me?" I faltered.

"No, oh no!" she generously responded.

"None of us—not one of us—not even Angelica, suspected for a moment that he was in earnest. It had been his wolf-cry, you know, all his life. Evadne herself has no inkling of the truth."

"I hope she never will," I said.

"If it rests with Diavolo, she will not," his mother answered, proud of him, and with good cause.

It is a salient feature of the Morningquest family history that not one of them ever had a great grief which they did not make in the long-run a source of joy to other people. Diavolo's first impulse was to go and see service abroad; but he soon abandoned that idea, although it would have afforded him the distraction he so sorely needed, and resigned his commission instead; and then took up his abode at Morne, in order to devote himself to his grandfather entirely, and it was in Diavolo's companionship that the latter found the one great pleasure and solace of his declining years. The old duke had been wont to say of Diavolo at his worst, "That lad is a gentleman at heart, and, mark my words, he will prove himself so yet!"

And so he has.

His was the first and loveliest present Evadne received. He did not come to her second wedding, but then, nobody else did except his father and mother, for it pleased us all to keep the ceremony as quiet and private as possible, so that his absence was not significant; and, afterward, he rather made a point, if anything, of not avoiding us in any way. In fact, the only change I noticed in him was that he never again made any of those laughing protestations of love and devotion to Evadne with which he used to amuse us all in the dark days of her captivity.

CHAPTER XVIII

WE were married in London, and when the final arrangements were being discussed, I asked her where she would like to go after the ceremony.

"Oh, let us go home, Don," she said—she insisted on calling me "Don." I told her the name conveyed no idea to me, but she answered that I was obtuse, and she was sure I should grow to love it in time, even if I did not understand it, if it were only because it was *fetish*, and nobody could use it but herself: to which extent, by the way, I was very soon able to endorse her opinion. "Don't let us go to nasty foreign hotels. I hate travelling, and I hate sight-seeing—the kind of sight-seeing one does for the sake of seeing. We will go home and be

happy. No place could be half so beautiful to me as yours is now."

That she should call it "home" at once, and long to be settled there, was a good omen, I thought. But she was happy, beyond all possibility of a doubt, in the anticipation of her life with me.

Soon after our return I took her into Morningquest, and left her to lunch with her aunt, Mrs. Orton Beg. I had business on the other side of the city which detained me for some hours, and when at last I could get away, I hurried back, being naturally impatient to rejoin her. Mrs. Orton Beg was alone in the drawing-room, and I suppose something in the expression of my face amused her, for she laughed, and answered a question I had not asked.

"Out there," she said, meaning in the garden.

I turned and looked through the open French window, and instantly that haunting ghost of an indefinite recollection was laid. Evadne was sleeping in a high-backed chair, with the creeper-curtained old brick wall for a background, and half her face concealed by a large summer hat which she held in her hand.

"I thought you would remember when you saw her so," said Mrs. Orton Beg. "It was just after that unhappy marriage fiasco. She had run away, and sought an asylum here, and when you were so struck by her appearance, I could not help thinking it was a thousand pities that you had not met before it was too late."

"And then you asked me to use the Scottish gift of second sight—I was thinking at the moment that she was the kind of girlie I should choose for a wife, and so I said she should marry a man called George"—

"Which made it doubly a Delphic oracle for vagueness to me," said Mrs. Orton Beg, "because Colonel Colquhoun's name was also George."

"Now, this is a singular coincidence!" I exclaimed.

"Ah!" she ejaculated. "But I do not talk of 'coincidences'—there is a special providence, you know."

"Which deserts Edith and protects Evadne?"

"You are incorrigible!"

"You are a demon worshipper! The Infinite Good gives us the knowledge and power if we will use it. Evadne was a Seventh Wave!"

"'The Seventh Waves of humanity must suffer,' you said." We looked at each other. "The oracle was ominous. But surely she has suffered enough? Heaven grant her happiness at last!"

"Amen," I answered fervently.

As soon as we were settled, I tried to order her life so as to take her mind completely out of the old groove. I kept her constantly out of doors, and never let her sit and sew alone, for one thing, or lounge in easy-chairs, or do anything else that is enervating.

I made her ride, too, and rise regularly in the morning; not too early, for that is as injurious in one way as too late is in another; the latter enervates, but the former exhausts. Regularity is the best discipline. I taught her also to shoot at a mark, and took her into the coverts in the autumn; but she could not bear the sight of suffering creatures, and unfortunately she wounded a bird the first time we were out, and I was never able to persuade her to shoot at another. However, there was active exercise enough for her without that, so long as she was able to take it, and when it became necessary to curtail the

amount, she drove both morning and afternoon, and took short walks and pottered about the grounds in between times.

I had bought As-You-Like-It while she was abroad with the Hamilton-Wellses, and had had the whole place pulled down, and the site converted into a plantation, so that no trace was left of that episode to vex her. In fact, I had done all that I could think of as likely in any way to help to re-establish her health, and certainly she was very happy. Everything I wished her to do seemed to be a pleasure to her; and mind and body grew rapidly so vigorous that I lost all fear for her. She said she was a new creature, and she looked it.

When we had been married about a year, Sir Shadwell Rock came to pay us a visit. Evadne was quite at her best then, and I introduced her to him triumphantly.

He asked about her progress with kindly interest when we were alone together, and declared heartily that she was certainly to all appearance thoroughly restored, that he was quite in love with her himself, and hoped to see her in the van of the new movement yet.

She took to the dear old man, and told him his great reputation did not frighten her one bit; and she would lean on his arm familiarly out in the grounds, pelt him with gorse blossom, fill his pockets with rose leaves surreptitiously, till they bulged out like bags behind, and keep him smiling perpetually at her pretty ways. He had been going abroad for a holiday, but we persuaded him to stay with us instead, and when we parted with him at last reluctantly, he declared that Evadne had made him young again, and the wrinkles were all smoothed out.

His last words to me were, "So far so good, Galbraith," and I knew he meant to warn as well as to congratulate. "Don't keep her in cotton wool too much. Make her face sickness and suffering while she is well herself. Take warning by the smallpox epidemic. She has no morbid horror of that subject, because she knows practically how much can be done for the sufferers. If she devote herself to good works, she will be sanguine because so much is being accomplished, instead of dwelling despondently on the hopeless amount there is still to do."

Soon after this, however, I began to hope that a new interest in life was coming to cure her of all morbid moods for ever. I was anxious at first, but she was so quietly happy in the prospect herself, and she continued so well in spite of the drain upon her strength, that I soon took heart again.

"You have got to be very young, Don, since I was so good as to marry you," she said to me one day.

She had come in with some flowers for me, and had caught me whistling instead of working.

Sir Shadwell had consented, in his usual kind and generous way, to share the responsibility of this time with me. He came down to us for an occasional "week-end," just to see how she progressed, and his observations, like my own, continued to be satisfactory. It was a crucial test, we knew. If we could carry her safely through this trying time, she would be able to take her proper place with the best of her sex in the battle of life, to fight with them and for them, which was what we both ardently desired to see her do.

There had been never a word of the mental malady since Colquhoun's death. I had judged

it well to let her forget she had ever suffered so if she could, and I had no reason to suspect that she ever thought of it. She had had hours, and even days, of depression since our marriage, but had always been able to account for them satisfactorily; and now, although of course she got down at times, she was less often so than is usually the case under the circumstances, and was always easily consoled.

She paid me a visit in my study one day. She had a habit of coming occasionally when I was at work, a habit that happily emphasised the difference between my solitary bachelor days and these. She was shy of her caresses as a rule, but would occasionally make my knee her seat, if it happened to suit her convenience, while she filled the flower-vases on my table; or she would stand behind me with her hands clasped round my neck, and lean her cheek against my hair. She did so now.

"You love your work, Don, don't you?" she said.

"Yes, sweetheart," I answered; "next to you, it is the great delight of my life."

"But, Don, you find it all-absorbing; don't you?"

"No, not *all*-absorbing, *now*."

"But sufficiently so to be a comfort to you if you ever had any great grief? After the first shock, you would return to your old pursuits, would you not? And, by and by, you would find solace in them?"

I unclasped her hands from my neck, and drew her round to me. There was a new note in her voice that sounded ominous.

"What is the trouble, little woman?" I whispered, when I had her safe in my arms.

"I don't think I could die and leave you, Don, if I thought you would be miserable."

"Well, then, don't allow yourself to entertain any doubt on the subject," I answered; "for I should be more than 'miserable.' I should never care for anything in the world again."

"But if I should have to die"—

"There is no need to distress either yourself or me by such an idle supposition, Evadne," I answered.

"There is not the slightest occasion for alarm."

"I am not *alarmed*," she said, and then she was silent.

A few days later, I found her sitting on the floor in the library, reading a book she had taken from one of the lower shelves. It was a book of Sir Shadwell Rock's on the heredity of vice. I took it from her gently, remarking as I did so, "I would rather you did not read these things just now, Evadne."

"I suppose you agree with Sir Shadwell Rock?" she said.

"Let me help you up," I answered.

"Do you?" she persisted.

"Of course. He is our chief authority," I answered. "But promise me, Evadne, not to look at any of those books again without consulting me. I shall be having you like the medical students who imagine they have symptoms of every disease they study."

"It would mark a strange change in my mind," she answered; "for I used to be able to study any subject of the kind without being affected in that way."

That her mind had changed, alas! or rather, that it had been injured by friction and pressure of the restrictions imposed upon it, was the suspicion which necessitated my present precaution, but I could not say so.

She held out her hands for me to help her to rise.

"Why are women kept in the dark about these things?" she said, pointing to the books on heredity. "Why are we never taught as you are? We are the people to be informed."

"You are quite right," I said. "It is criminal to withhold knowledge from any woman who has the capacity to acquire it. But there is a time for everything, you know, my sweetheart."

"Now, that poor Colonel Colquhoun," she went on, as if I had not spoken. "He for one should never have been born. With his ancestry, he must have come into the world foredoomed to a life of dissipation and disease. It is awful to think we may any of us become the parents of people who can't be moral without upsetting the whole natural order of the universe. Oh, Don! it is dreadful to know it, but it is sinful to be ignorant of the fact."

"But there is no fear for our children, Evadne," I said.

"Ah! that is what I want to know!" she exclaimed, clasping her hands round my arm.

"Come out into the grounds then, sweetheart," I answered, affecting a cheerfulness I was far from feeling, "and I will tell you the whole family history."

I had to go out that evening to see a serious case in consultation with a brother practitioner. I had ordered the dogcart for ten o'clock, and Evadne came out into the hall with me from the drawing-room, where I had been reading to her since dinner, when it was brought round.

"Must you go?" she said listlessly.

"I am afraid I must," I answered; "it is a matter of life and death. But why shouldn't you come too? It will be much better than staying here alone. I ought to have thought of it sooner. Do come! I will send the dogcart back, and have the brougham."

"It would delay you," she said, hesitating.

"Oh no! Two horses in the brougham will get over the ground faster than one in the dogcart. Come! Let me get you some wraps."

"But when we arrive, my presence will be an inconvenience," she objected.

"In no way," I answered. "It will not be a long business, and you can wait very well in the carriage with a book and a lamp."

She came out and looked at the night, still undecided. The weather was damp and uninviting.

"I don't think I'll go, Don," she said, shivering. "Good-bye, and safe home to you!"

As I drove along, I cast about in my own mind for a suitable companion for Evadne, someone who would vary the monotony for her when I had to be out. She had no lady-loves, as so many women have. Mrs. Orton Beg was at Fraylingay again, and Lady Adeline was the only other friend I knew of who would be congenial just then; but she had multifarious duties of her own to attend to, and it would not have been fair to ask her, especially as she was sure to come if she knew she was wanted, however great the inconvenience to herself. I knew nothing at that time of two other friends of Evadne's, Mrs. Sillenger and Mrs. Malcomson, to whom I afterward learnt that she was much attached. Owing, I think, to the unnatural habit of reticence which had been forced upon her, she had not mentioned them to me, although she continued to correspond with them. It took her some time to realise that every interest of hers was matter of moment to me. A certain Colonel and Mrs. Guthrie Brimston had recently settled in the neighbourhood, in order, as they gave out, to be near the Morningquest family, with whom they

claimed relationship, on the ground, I believe, that they also were Guthries. Colonel Guthrie Brimston led people to suppose that he had left the service entirely on the duke's account, his disinterested intention being to vary the monotony for the poor old gentleman during his declining years. They had claimed Evadne's acquaintance with effusion, but she had not responded very cordially.

"Let them have a carriage and horses whenever they like, Don," she said, "and give them plenty to eat; but don't otherwise encourage them to come here."

Recollecting which, I now inferred that Mrs. Guthrie Brimston would not answer my present purpose at all.

This was the first time Evadne had shown any objection to being left alone. She used to insist upon my going away sometimes, because, she said, I should be so very glad to come back to her! But she was never exacting in any way, and never out of temper. And she had such pretty ways as a wife! little endearing, womanly ways which one felt to be the spontaneous outcome of tenderness untold, and inexpressible. It was strange how her presence pervaded the house; strange to me that one little body could make such a difference.

Foolishly fond, if you like. But if every man could care as much for a woman, hallowed would be her name, and the strife-begetting uncertainties of heaven and hell would be allowed to lapse in order to make room for healthy human happiness. Our hearts have been starved upon fables long enough; we demand some certainty; and as knowledge increases, waging its inexorable war of extermination against evil, our beautiful old earth will be allowed to be lovable, and life a blessing, and death itself only a last sweet sleep, neither to be sought nor shunned—"The soothing sinking down on hard-earned holy rest," from which, if we arise again, it shall not be to suffer. No life could be fuller of promise than mine at this moment. Nothing was wanting but the patter of little feet about the house, and they were coming. Doubts and fears were latent for once. My hopes were limitless, my content was extreme.

"May you have quiet rest to-night, my darling; may your heart grow strong, and your faith in man revive at last."

About half-way to my destination, I met the gentleman who had asked me out in consultation, returning. He was on his way to my house to tell me that the patient was dead. My presence could therefore be of no avail, and I turned back also. I had not been absent more than an hour, but I found, on entering the house, that Evadne had already retired. It was a good sign, I thought, as she had been rather fidgety the whole day. I had some letters to write, and went at once to my study for the purpose, taking a candle with me from the hall. The servants, not expecting me back until late, had turned out most of the lights downstairs. The lamp in my study, however, was still burning. It stood on the writing table, and the first thing I saw, on entering the room, was a letter lying conspicuously on the blotting pad. It was from Evadne to me.

She had evidently intended me to get it in the morning, for a tray was always left for me in the dining-room in case I should be hungry when I came in late, and my chances were all against my going to the study again that night. I put my candle down, and tore the note open with trembling hands. The first few lines were enough. "I am haunted by a terrible fear," she wrote. "I

have tried again and again to tell you, but I never could. You would not see that it is prophetic, as I do—in case of our death—nothing to save my daughter from Edith's fate—better both die at once." So I gathered the contents. No time to read. I crumpled the note into my pocket. My labouring breath impeded my progress a moment, but, thank Heaven! I was not paralysed. Involuntarily I glanced at my laboratory. It was an inner room, kept locked as a rule, but the door was open now—as I knew I had expected it to be. I seized the candle and went to the shelf where I kept the bottles with the ominous red labels. One was missing.

"Evadne!" I shouted, running back through the study and library into the hall, and calling her again and again as I went. If it were not already too late, and she had heard my voice, I knew she would hesitate. I tore up the stairs, and I must have flown, although it seemed a century before I reached her room. I flung open the door.

She *had* heard me.

She was standing beside a dressing table in a listening attitude, with a glass half raised to her lips, and her eyes met mine as I entered.

My first cry of distress had reached her, and the shock of it had been sufficient. Had that note fallen into my hands but one moment later—but I cannot bear to think of it. Even at this distance of time the recollection utterly unmans me. The moment I saw her, however, I could command myself. I took the glass from her hand, and threw it into the fireplace with as little show of haste as possible.

"To bed now, my sweetheart," I said; "and no more nonsense of this kind, you know."

She looked at the fragments of the broken glass, and then at me, in a half-wondering, half-regretful, half-inquiring way that was pitiful to see. Shaken as I was, I could not bear it. While the danger lasted, it was no effort to be calm; but now I broke down, and, throwing myself into a chair, covered my face with my hands, thoroughly overcome.

In a moment she was kneeling beside me.

"Oh, Don!" she exclaimed, "what is it? Why are you so terribly upset?"

Poor little innocent sinner! The one idea had possessed her to the exclusion of every other consideration. I said nothing to her, of course, in the way of blame. It would have been useless. She was bitterly sorry to see me grieved; but her moral consciousness was suspended, and she felt no remorse whatever for her intention, except in so far as it had given me pain. The impulse had passed for the moment, however, and I was so sure of it that I did not even take the fatal phial away with me when I went to my dressing-room; but for forty-six days and nights I never left her an hour alone. The one great hope, however, that the cruel obliquity would be cured by the mother's love when it awoke amply sustained me.

She was well and cheerful for the rest of the time, greatly owing, I am sure, to the influence of Sir Shadwell Rock, who came at once, like the kind and generous friend he was, without waiting to be asked, when he heard what had happened; and announced himself prepared to stay until the danger was over. I heard Evadne laugh very soon after his arrival, and could see that "the worry in her head," as she described it, had gone again, and was forgotten. The impulse, which would have robbed me of all my happiness and hopes had she succeeded in carrying it out, never cost her a thought. The saving suffering of an agony

of remorse was what we should like to have seen, for in that there would have been good assurance of healthy moral consciousness restored.

It seemed to be only the power to endure mental misery which had been injured by those weary days of enforced seclusion and unnatural inactivity, for I never knew anyone braver about physical pain. It was the strength to contemplate the sufferings of others, which grows in action and is best developed by turning the knowledge to account for their benefit, that had been sapped by ineffectual brooding, until at last, before the moral shock of indignation which the view of preventable human evils gave her, her right mind simply went out, and a disordered faculty filled the void with projects which only a perverted imagination could contemplate as being of any avail.

Whatever doubts we may have had about her feeling for the child when it came were instantly set at rest. Nothing could have been healthier or more natural than her pride and delight in him. When she saw him for the first time, after he was dressed, I brought him to her myself with his little cheek against my face.

"Oh, Don!" she exclaimed, her eyes opening wide with joy. "I love to see you like that! But what is she like, Don? Give her to me!"

"She, indeed!" I answered. "Don't insult my son. He would reproach you himself, but he is speechless with indignation."

"Oh, Don, don't be ridiculous!" she cried, stretching up her arms for him. "Is it really a boy? Do give him to me! I want to see him so!" When I had put him in her arms, she gathered him up jealously, and covered him with kisses, then held him off a little way to look at him, and then kissed him again and again.

"Did you ever see a baby before?" I asked her.

"No, never! never!" she answered emphatically; "never such a darling as this, at all events! His little cheek is just like velvet; and see! he can curl up his hands! Isn't it wonderful, Don? He's like you, too. I'm sure he is. He's quite dark."

"He's just the colour of that last sunset you were raving about. I told you to be careful."

"Oh, Don, how can you!" she exclaimed. It was beautiful to see her raptures. She was like a child herself, so unaffectedly glad in her precious little treasure, and so surprised! The fact that he would move independently and have ideas of his own seemed never to have occurred to her.

So far so good, as Sir Shadwell said; and we soon had her about again; but the first time she sat up, after her cushions had been arranged for her, and her baby laid on her lap, when I stooped to give them both a kiss of hearty congratulation, she burst into tears.

"It is nothing, Don; don't be concerned," she said, trying bravely to smile again. "I was thinking of my mother. This would have been such a happy day for her."

This made me think of the breach with her father. I had forgotten that she had a father, but it occurred to me now that a reconciliation might add to her happiness, and I wrote to him accordingly to that effect, making the little grandson my excuse. Mr. Frayling replied that he had heard indirectly of his daughter's second marriage, but was not surprised to receive no communication from herself on the subject, because her whole conduct for many years past had really been most extraordinary. If, however, she

had become a dutiful wife at last, as I had intimated, he was willing to forgive her, and let bygones be bygones; whereupon I asked him to Fountain Towers, and he came.

He was extremely cordial. I had a long talk with him before he saw Evadne, during which I discovered from whence she took her trick of phrase-making. He expressed himself as satisfied with me and my position, my reputation and my place. He also shook his watch chain at my son, which denoted great approval, I inferred; and made many improving remarks, interspersed with much good advice on the subject of babies and the management of estates.

Evadne had been very nervous about meeting him again, but the baby broke the ice, and she was unfeignedly glad to make friends. Upon the whole, however, the reconciliation was not the success that I had anticipated. Father and daughter had lost touch, and, after the first few hours, there was neither pleasure nor pain in their intercourse; nothing, in fact, but politeness. The flow of affection had been too long interrupted. It was diverted to other channels now, and was too deeply imbedded in them to be coaxed back in the old direction. Love is a sacred stream which withdraws itself from the sacrilegious who have offered it outrage.

It was an unmitigated happiness, however, to Evadne to have her brothers and sisters with her again, and from that time forward we had generally some of them at Fountain Towers.

Mrs. Kilroy of Ilverthorpe, otherwise known to her friends as Angelica, was one of the first people privileged to see the baby.

"Oh, you queer little thing!" she exclaimed, pointing her finger at it by way of caress. "I've been thinking all this time that babies were always Speckled Toads. And you are all rosy and dimpled and plump, you pretty thing! I wish I had just a dozen like you!"

Poor erratic Angelica, with all her waywardness, "but yet a woman!" There was only the one man that I have ever known who could have developed the best that was in Angelica, and him she had just missed, as so often happens in this world of contraries. I am thinking of our poor Julian, known to her as the Tenor, whom she had met when it was too late, and in an evil hour for us and for herself apparently, the consequences having been his death and her own desolation. Yet I don't know. Those were the first consequences certainly, but others followed and are following. The memory of one good man is a light which sheds the brightest rays that fall on the lives of thousands—as Mr. Kilroy has reason to know; with whom, after the Tenor, Angelica is happier than she could have been with any other man. And then, again, she has Diavolo. The close friendship between them, which had been interrupted for some years, was renewed again in some inexplicable way by the effect of my marriage on Diavolo, and since then they have been as inseparable as their respective duties to husband and grandfather allow. And so the web of life is woven, the puzzling strands resolving themselves out of what has seemed to be a hopeless tangle into the most beautiful designs.

Some of Evadne's ideas of life were considerably enlarged in view of the boy's future.

"I am so glad you are a rich man," she said to me one day, "and have a title and all that. It doesn't matter for you, you know, Don, because you *are* you. But it will give the baby such a start in life."

She summoned me at a very early period of his existence to choose a name for him, and having decided upon George Shadwell Beton, she had him christened with all orthodox ceremony by the Bishop of Morningquest as soon as possible. That duty once accomplished must have relieved her mind satisfactorily with regard to a *Christian* name for him, for she has insisted on calling him by the heathen appellation of Donino ever since, for the flattering reason that his temper when thwarted is exactly like mine.

"I am sure when you were his age you used to kick and scream just as he does when his wishes are not carried out on the instant," she said. "You don't kick and scream now when you are vexed; you look like thunder, and walk out of the room."

"Baby seems to afford you infinite satisfaction when he kicks and screams. You laugh and hug him more, if anything, in his tantrums than when he is good," I remarked.

"I take his tantrums for a sign of strength," she answered. "He is merely standing on his dignity, and demanding his rights as a rule. It was the same thing with his father when he frowned and walked out of the room. He wouldn't be sat upon either, and I used to see in that a sign of self-respect also. It is a long time now since I saw you frown and walk out of the room, Don."

"It is a long time since you attempted to sit upon me," I said.

"I am afraid I neglect you," she answered apologetically; "you see Donino requires so much of my time."

She continued to be cheerful for months after the birth of the boy, and we waited patiently for some sign which should be an assurance of her complete restoration to mental health; or, so far as I was concerned, for an opportunity of testing her present feeling about the subject that distressed her. I had given up expecting a miraculous cure in a moment, and now only hoped for a gradual change for the better.

The opportunity I was waiting for came one winter's afternoon when she was playing with the baby. It was a moment of leisure with me, the afternoon tea-time, which I always arranged to spend with her if possible, and especially if she would otherwise have been alone, as was the case on this occasion.

I had been responding for half an hour, as well as I could, to incessant appeals for sympathy and admiration—not that I found it difficult to admire the boy, who was certainly a splendid specimen of the human race, although perhaps I ought not to say so; but my command of language never answered his mother's expectations, somehow, when it came to expressing my feelings.

"Do you think you care as much for him as I do, Don?" she burst out at last.

"More," I answered seriously.

"Why? How?" she demanded, surprised by my tone.

"Because I never could have hurt him."

"Hurt him!" she exclaimed, gathering him up in her arms. "Do you mean that I could hurt him! hurt my baby! Oh!" She got up and stood looking at me indignantly for a few seconds with the child's face hidden against her neck; and then she rang the bell sharply, and sent him away.

"What do you mean, Don?" she said, when we were alone together again. "Tell me. You would not say a cruel thing like that for nothing."

"I am referring to that night before he was born," I said, taking the little bottle from my pocket. This seems to me to have been the cruellest operation that I have ever had to perform.

"Oh, Don!" she cried, greatly distressed. "I understand. I should have killed him. But why, why do you remind me of that now?"

"I want to be quite sure that you have learnt what a mistaken notion that was, and that you regret the impulse."

She sat down on a low chair before the fire, with her elbows on her knees and her face buried in her hands, and remained so for some time. She wanted to think it out, and tell me exactly.

"I do not feel any regret," she said at last. "I would not do the same thing now, but it is only because I am not now occupied with the same thoughts. They have fallen into the background of my consciousness, and I no longer perceive the utility of self-sacrifice."

"But do you not perceive the sin of suicide?"

"Not of that kind of suicide," she answered. "You see, we have the divine example. Christ committed suicide to all intents and purposes by deliberately putting Himself into the hands of His executioners; but His motive makes *them* responsible for the crime; and my motive would place society in a similar position."

"Your view of the great sacrifice would startle theologians, I imagine," was my answer. "But, even allowing that Christ was morally responsible for His own death, and thereby set the example you would have followed to save others from suffering; tell me, do you really see any comparison between an act which had the redemption of the world for its object, and the only result that could follow from the sacrifice of one little mother and child?"

"What result, Don?"

"Breaking your husband's heart, spoiling his life, and leaving him lonely for ever."

She started up and threw herself on her knees beside me, clasping her hands about my neck.

"Oh, Don, don't say that again!" she cried. "Don't say anything like that again—ever—will you?"

"You know I should never think of it again if I could be sure"—

She hid her head upon my shoulder, but did not answer immediately.

"I am seeking for some assurance in myself to give you," she said at last; "but I feel none. The same train of thought would provoke me again—no, not to the same act, but to something desperate; I can't tell what. But I suffer so, Don, when such thoughts come, from grief, and rage, and horror, I would do almost anything for relief."

"But just think"—I began.

"No, don't ask me to think!" she interrupted. "All my endeavour is not to think. Let me live on the surface of life, as most women do. I will do nothing but attend to my household duties and the social duties of my position. I will read nothing that is not first weeded by you of every painful thought that might remind me. I will play with my baby by day, and curl up comfortably beside you at night, infinitely grateful and content to be so happily circumstanced myself—Don, help me to that kind of life, will you? And burn the books. Let me deserve my name and be 'Well-pleasing-one' to you first of all the world, and then to any with whom I may come

in contact. Let me live while you live, and die when you die. But do not ask me to think. I can be the most docile, the most obedient, the most loving of women as long as I forget my knowledge of life; but the moment I remember I become a raging fury; I have no patience with slow processes; 'Revolution' would be my cry, and I could preside with an awful joy at the execution of those who are making the misery now for succeeding generations."

"But, my dear child, it would surely be happier for you to try to alleviate"—

"No, no," she again interrupted. "I know all you can say on that score; but I cannot bear to be brought into contact with certain forms of suffering. I cannot bear the contradictions of life; they make me rage."

"What I want to say is, that you should act, and not think," I ventured.

"How can I act without thinking?" she asked.

"You see, if you don't act you must think," I pursued; "and if you do think without acting, you become morbid. The conditions of an educated woman's life now force her to know the world. She is too intelligent not to reason about what she knows. She sees what is wrong; and if she is high-minded, she feels forced to use her influence to combat it. If she resists the impulse her conscience cannot acquit her, and she suffers herself for her cowardice."

"I know," she answered. "But don't let us discuss the subject any more."

We were silent for some time after that, and then I made a move as if to speak, but checked myself.

"What is it?" she asked.

"I was going to ask you to do something to oblige me; but now I do not like to."

"Oh!" she exclaimed, much hurt; "do you really think there is anything I would not do for you, if I could?"

"Well, this is a mere trifle," I answered. "I want you to take that sturdy, much be-ribboned darling of yours to see my poor sick souls in the hospital. A sight of his small face would cheer them. Will you?"

"Why, surely," she said. "How could you doubt it? I shall be delighted."

"And there was another thing"—

"Oh, don't hesitate like that," she exclaimed.

"You can't think how you hurt me."

"I very much wish you would take charge of the flowers in the hospital for me, that was what I was going to say. I should be so pleased if you should make them your special care. If you would cut them yourself, and take them and arrange them whenever fresh ones are wanted, you would be giving me as much pleasure as the patients. And you might say something kind to them as you pass through the wards. Even a word makes all the difference in their day."

"Why didn't you ask me to do this before?" she said reproachfully.

"I was a little afraid of asking you now," I answered.

"I shall begin to-morrow," she said. "Tell me the best time for me to go."

There is a great deal in the way a thing is put, was my trite reflection afterward. If I had given Evadne my reason for particularly wishing her to visit the hospital, she would have turned it inside out to show me that it was lined with objections; but now, because I had asked her to oblige me simply, she was ready to go; and would have gone if it had cost her half her comfort

in life. This was a great step in advance. As in the smallpox epidemic, so now at the hospital, she had no horror of anything she saw. It was always what she imagined that made her morbid.

CHAPTER XIX

FOLLOWING these days there came a time of perfect peace for both of us. Evadne's health was satisfactory; she led the life she had planned for herself; and so long as she shut out all thought of the wicked world and nothing occurred to remind her of the "awful, needless suffering" with which she had become acquainted in the past, she was tranquilly happy.

Donino rapidly grew out of arms. He was an independent young rascal from the first, and would never be carried if he could walk, or driven from the moment he could sit a pony—grip is the word, I know, but his legs were not long enough to grip when he began, and his rides were therefore conducted all over the pony's back at first. His object was to keep on, and in order to do so without the assistance he scorned, he rode like a monkey.

Evadne was proud of the boy, but she missed the baby, and complained that her arms were empty. It was not long, however, happily—and *à propos* of the number of my responsibilities, I was taken to task severely one day, and discovered that I had in my son a staunch supporter and a counsellor whose astuteness was not to be despised.

I was finishing my letters one afternoon in the library when Evadne came in with her daughter in her arms, and Donino clinging to her skirt. I expected the usual "Don, I am sure you have done enough. Come and have some tea," and turned to meet it with the accustomed protest, "Just five minutes more, my sweetheart." But Evadne began in quite another tone.

"I have just heard such a disgraceful thing about you," she said.

"A disgraceful thing about me!" I exclaimed.

"Yes. I hear you were asked the other day how many children you had, and you answered 'Two or three!' Now, will you kindly count your children, and when you are quite sure you know the number off by heart, repeat it aloud to me, so that I may have some hope that you will not commit yourself in that way again."

"Oh," I answered, "I know how many babies there are; my difficulty is about you. I am never quite sure whether to count you as a child or not."

"Now, I call that a mean little score," she said, carrying her baby off with an affectation of indignation which deceived Donino.

He had been standing with his back to the writing table and his feet firmly planted before him, gravely watching us, and now when his mother left the room he came to my knee and looked up at me confidentially.

"Ou bin naughty, dad?" he asked.

"It looks like it," I answered.

"Ou say ou sorry," he advised.

"What will happen then?" I wanted to know.

"Den de missus 'ill kiss ou," he explained.

"Den dat all right."

"Truly 'a wise son maketh a glad father,'" I observed.

Donino knitted his brows, and grumbled a puzzled but polite assent. I saw signs of reflection afterward, however, which warned me not to

be too sure that I knew exactly where the limits of the little understanding were. But one thing was evident. The boy was being educated on the principle of repent and have done with it. Old accounts are not cast up in this establishment.

Donino watched me putting my writing things away; he was waiting to see me through my trouble. When I was ready, he took as much of my hand as he could hold in his, protectingly, and led me to the drawing-room with a dignified air of importance. Sir Shadwell Rock was staying with us at the time, and my daughter was creeping from her mother to him as we entered the room, and receiving a large share of his attention. Donino glanced at him, fearing, perhaps, that his presence as audience would make matters more unpleasant for me.

"Mumme," he said, "dad's tum."

Evadne looked up inquiringly.

"I've come to say I am sorry," I exclaimed.

"Oh," said Evadne, a little puzzled, "that's right."

Donino looked from one to the other expectantly; but as his mother made no move, he edged up to her side, and repeated with emphasis, "Dad's sorry."

"That's right," his mother answered, putting her arm round him, and caressing him fondly.

He drew away from her dissatisfied, and walked to the window, where he stood, with his thumbs in his belt, and his chin on his chest.

"Oh, Don," Evadne whispered, "do look at yourself in miniature! But what is the matter? What have I done to disturb him? or left undone?"

"I said I was sorry, and you haven't kissed me," I replied.

Evadne grasped the situation at last, and got up.

"I suppose I must kiss you," she said. "I hope you won't be naughty again."

The boy made no sign at the moment, but presently he sauntered back to the tea-table as if he were satisfied.

When the children were gone Sir Shadwell asked for an explanation.

"It is beautiful to watch the mind of a young child unfold," he observed; "to notice its wonderful grasp, on the one hand, of ideas one would have thought quite beyond its comprehension, and, on the other, its curious limitations. Now, that boy of yours reasons already from what he observes."

"Clearly," I answered. "He observes that my position in this house is quite secondary, and therefore, although he sees his mother 'naughty' every day, he never thinks for a moment of suggesting that she should 'own up' to me."

"Don, you are horrid!" Evadne exclaimed.

The next day she went out early in the afternoon to pay calls.

Sir Shadwell and I accompanied her to the door to see her into her carriage, and she drove off smiling, and kissing her hand to us.

"Now," I said, as we lingered on the doorstep, watching the carriage glint between the trees, "what do you think about the wisdom of my marriage?"

"Oh," he answered, his eyes twinkling, "you didn't explain, you know, so I naturally concluded that you were merely marrying for your own gratification, in which case you would have been disappointed when you found what I foresaw, that, under the circumstances, the pleasure would

not be unmixed. You should have explained that your sole purpose was to make a very charming young lady healthy-minded again and happy, if you wanted to know what I thought of your chances of success."

"You're a confounded old cynic," I said, turning into the house.

Sir Shadwell went out into the grounds, and there I found him later, patiently instructing Donino in the difficult art of stringing a bow, his white head bowed beside the boy's dark one, and his benign face wrought into wrinkles of intentness.

I was busy during the afternoon, but I fancied I heard the carriage return. Evadne did not come to report herself to me, however, as was her wont after an expedition, and I therefore thought that I must have been mistaken, and more especially so when she did not appear at tea-time. After tea, Sir Shadwell settled himself with a book, and I left him. In the hall I met the footman who had gone out with Evadne.

"When did you return?" I asked.

"I can't say rightly, Sir George," the man replied. "We only paid one call this afternoon, and then came straight back. Her ladyship seemed to be poorly."

I ran upstairs to my wife's sitting-room. She was lying on a couch asleep, her face grey, her eyelids swollen and purple with weeping, her hair disordered. As I stood looking down at her, she opened her eyes and held up her arms to me. She looked ten years older, a mere wreck of the healthy, happy, smiling woman who had driven off kissing her hand to us only a few hours before.

"Tell me the trouble, my sweetheart," I said, kneeling down beside her. "Where did you go to-day?"

"Only to Mrs. Guthrie Brimston," she answered. "But Mrs. Beale was there with Edith's boy, and we talked—Oh, Don!" she broke off. "I wish my children had never been born! The suffering! the awful, needless suffering! How do I know that they will escape?"

Alas! alas! that terrible cry again, and just after we had allowed ourselves to be sure that it had been silenced at last for ever.

I did not reason with her this time. I could only pet her, and talk for the purpose of distracting her attention, as one does with a child. So far, I had never for a moment lost heart and hope. I could not believe that the balance of her fine intelligence had been too rudely shaken ever to be perfectly restored; but now at last it seemed as if her confidence in her fellow-creatures, the source of all mental health, had been destroyed for ever, and with that confidence her sense of the value of life and of her own obligations had been also injured or distorted to a degree which could not fail to be dangerous on occasion. There are injuries which set up carcinoma of the mind, we know, cancer spots confined to a small area at first, but gradually extending with infinite pain until all the surrounding healthy tissue is more or less involved, and the whole beautiful fabric is absorbed in the morbid growth, for which there is no certain palliative in time, and no possible prospect of cure except in eternity. Was this to be Evadne's case? Alas! alas! But still, doctors sometimes mistake the symptoms, and find, happily, that they have erred when they arrived at an unfavourable diagnosis. So I said to myself, but the assurance in no way affected the despair which had settled upon my heart, and was crushing it.

Late that night I was sitting alone in my study. I had been reading Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple, and the book still lay open before me. It was a habit of mine to read the Bible when I was much perturbed. The solemn majestic march of the measured words seldom failed to restore my tranquillity in a wonderful way, and it had done so now. I felt resigned. "Hearken therefore unto the supplication of Thy servant"—I was repeating to myself, in fragments, as the lines occurred to me—"that Thine eyes may be upon this house day and night. . . . hear Thou from Thy dwelling-place, even from heaven; and when Thou hearest forgive."

I must have dozed a moment, I think, when I had pronounced the words, for I had heard no rustle of trailing garments in the library beyond, yet the next thing I was conscious of was Evadne kneeling beside me. She put her arms round my neck, and drew my face down to her.

"Don," she said, with a great dry sob, "I am sorry. I have annoyed you somehow"—

"Not annoyed me, my wife."

"Hurt you, then, which is worse. I have taken all the heart out of you—somehow—I can see that. But I cannot—cannot tell what it is I have done." She looked into my face piteously, and then hid her own on my shoulder, and burst into a paroxysm of sobs and tears,

If only I could have made her comprehend what the trouble was! But there! I had tried, and I had failed.

One little white foot peeped out from beneath her dressing-gown, the pink sole showing. She had got out of bed and slipped on her *pantoufles* only, and the night was cold. I might have thought that she would lie awake fretting if she were left alone on a night when her mind was so disturbed, and here had I been seeking solace myself and forgetting that great as my own trouble was hers must surpass it even as the infinite does the finite.

But that error I could repair, I hoped, and it should never be repeated.

"Come, my sweetheart," I said, gathering her up close in my arms. "So long as you will let me be a comfort to you, you will not be able to hurt me again; but if at any time you will not listen to my words, if nothing I can do or say strengthens or helps you, if I cannot keep you from the evil that it may not grieve you, then I shall know that I have lost all that makes life worth having, and I shall not care how soon this lamp of mine goes out."

She looked up at me in a strange startled way, and then she clung closer; and I thought she meant that, if she could help it, I should not lose the little all I ask for now—the power to make her life endurable.

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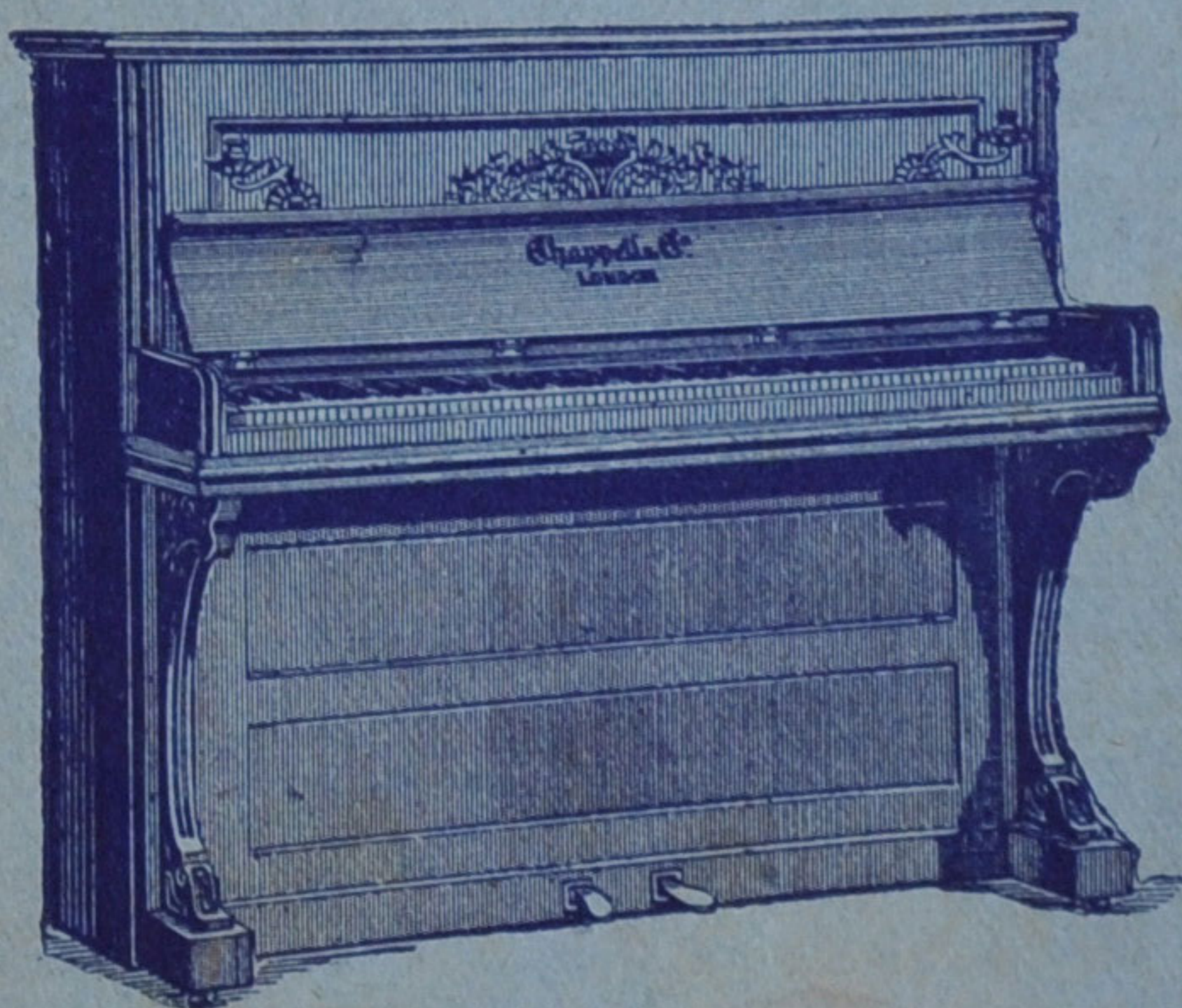
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