DUCHESS

FAITH AND UNFAITH: A NOVEL

Duchess
Faith and Unfaith: A Novel

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=24619781
Faith and Unfaith: A Novel:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	4
CHAPTER II	22
CHAPTER III	27
CHAPTER IV	33
CHAPTER V	44
CHAPTER VI	59
CHAPTER VII	67
CHAPTER VIII	76
CHAPTER IX	87
CHAPTER X	102
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	114

Duchess
Faith and Unfaith: A Novel

CHAPTER I

"A heap of dust alone remains of thee:
'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be!" – Pope.

In an upper chamber, through the closed blinds of which the sun is vainly striving to enter, Reginald Branscombe, fifth Earl of Sartoris, lies dead. The sheet is reverently drawn across the motionless limbs; the once restless, now quiet, face is hidden; all around is wrapt in solemn unutterable silence, – the silence that belongs to death alone!

A sense of oppressive calm is upon everything, – a feeling of loneliness, vague and shadowy. The clock has ticked its last an hour ago, and now stands useless in its place. The world without moves on unheeding; the world within knows time no more! Death reigns triumphant! Life sinks into insignificance!

Once, a little flickering golden ray, born of the hot sun outside, flashes in through some unknown chink, and casts itself gleefully upon the fair white linen of the bed. It trembles vivaciously now here, now there, in uncontrollable joyousness, as though seeking in its gayety to mock the grandeur of the King of Terrors! At

least so it seems to the sole watcher in the lonely chamber, as with an impatient sigh he raises his head, and, going over to the window, draws the curtains still closer to shut out the obnoxious light; after which he comes back to where he has been standing, gazing down upon, and thinking of, the dead.

He is an old man, tall and gaunt, with kind but passionate eyes, and a mouth expressive of impatience. His hands – withered but still sinewy – are clasped behind his back; every feature in his face is full of sad and anxious thought.

What changes the passing of a few short hours have wrought – so he muses. Yesterday the man now chilled and silent for evermore was as full of animation as he – his brother – who today stands so sorrowfully beside his corpse. His blood had run as freely in his veins, his pulses throbbed as evenly, his very voice had been sounding strong and clear and hearty, when Death, remorseless, claimed him for his own.

Poor Reginald! Had he known of the fell disease that had nestled so long within his heart? – or had no symptoms ever shown themselves to give him kindly warning? Certainly no hint of it had ever passed his lips, even to those most near and dear to him. He had lived apparently free from care or painful forebodings of any kind, – a good and useful life too, leaving nothing for those behind (who loved him) to regret. Indeed, of late he had appeared even gayer, happier, than before; and now —

It seems such a little time ago since they both were lads

together. A tiny space taken from the great eternity, when all is told. How well the living man remembers at this moment many a boyish freak and light-hearted jest, many a kindness shown and gift bestowed by the dead, that until now had wellnigh been forgotten!

He thinks of the good old college days, when they worked little, and fought hard, and trained their fresh young limbs to mighty deeds, and walked, and rode, and held their own with the best, and showed open defiance of dons and deans and proctors; he lingers, too, on the day still farther on, when Reginald, having attained to his kingdom, lavished with no meagre hand upon his more extravagant brother the money so sorely needed.

Now Reginald is gone, and he, Arthur, reigns in his stead, and – Alas! alas! poor Reggy! – Poor, dear old fellow!

He rouses himself with an effort, and, going very softly to a small door that opens from the apartment, beckons gently to somebody beyond.

An old woman, dressed in deepest mourning, and of the housekeeper type, answers his summons, her eyes red with excessive weeping.

"I am going now," Lord Sartoris whispers to her in a low tone. "I have finished everything. You will remain here until my return."

"Yes, Mr. Arthur, – yes, my Lord," she answers, nervously; and then, as she gives the old title for the first time to the man before her, she bursts out crying afresh, yet silently, in a subdued

fashion, as though ashamed of her emotion.

Sartoris pats her shoulder kindly, and then with a sigh turns away, and passes from the room with bent head and hands still clasped behind him, as has become a habit with him of late years.

Down the stairs and along the hall he goes, until, reaching a door at the lower end, he pauses before it, and, opening it, enters a room, half library, half boudoir, furnished in a somewhat rococo style.

It is a room curiously built, being a complete oval, with two French windows opening to the ground, and a glass door between them – partly stained – that leads to the parterre outside. It is filled with mediæval furniture, uncompromising and as strictly uncomfortable as should be, and has its walls (above the wooden dado) covered with a high-art paper, on which impossible storks, and unearthly birds of all descriptions, are depicted as rising out of blue-green rushes.

This room is known as "my lady's chamber," – having ever been the exclusive property of the mistress of the house, until Mrs. Dorian Branscombe, in default of any other mistress, had made her own of it during her frequent visits to Hythe, and had refurnished it to suit her own tastes, which were slightly Æsthetic.

Now, she too is dead and gone, and the room, though never entirely closed or suffered to sink into disrepair, is seldom used by any of the household.

As Lord Sartoris goes in, a young man, who has been standing at one of the windows, turns and comes quickly to meet him.

He is of good height, and is finely formed, with brown hair cut closely to his head, a brown moustache, and deep-blue eyes. His whole appearance is perhaps more pleasing and aristocratic than strictly handsome, his mouth being too large and his nose too pronounced for any particular style of beauty.

Yet it is his eyes – perfect as they are in shape and color – that betray the chief faults of his disposition. He is too easy-going, too thoughtless of consequences, too much given to letting things go, – without consideration or fear of what the end may bring; too full of life and spirits to-day, to dream of a sadder morrow; – so happy in the present that the future troubles him not at all.

"How ill you look!" he says, anxiously, addressing his uncle. "My dear Arthur, you have been overdoing it. You should not have remained so long in that room alone."

"Well, it is all over now," Sartoris says, wearily, sinking into a chair near him. "I was glad to finish it once for all. Those private papers he kept in his own room should be examined sooner or later; and now my task is at an end I feel more contented."

"Was there anything beyond? – "

"Very little. Just one letter sealed and directed to me. It contained a desire that poor Maud's letters should be buried with him. I found them in a drawer by themselves neatly tied with pale-blue ribbon, – her favorite color, – and with them an old likeness of her, faded almost white."

"For how long he remembered her!" says the young man, in a tone of slow astonishment.

"Too long for our present day," returns his uncle, absently. Then there is silence for a moment or two, broken only by the chatter of the birds in the sunlit garden outside. Presently Sartoris speaks again. "Where is Horace?" he asks, indifferently.

"He was here, half an hour ago, with Clarissa. She came over when she heard of – our sad news. They went out together, – to the stables, I think. Shall I find him for you?"

"No, I do not want him," says Sartoris, a little impatiently. "How strange no one told me of Clarissa's coming! And why did you not go with her to the stables, Dorian? Surely you know more about horses than he does."

About twenty years before my story opens, Dorian, fourth Lord Sartoris, died, leaving behind him three sons, – Reginald (who now, too, has passed into the land of shadows), Arthur, the present earl, and Dorian, the younger.

This Dorian alone, of all the brothers, had married. But his wife (who was notable for nothing beyond her deceitful temper and beautiful face, being as false as she was fair) having died too, in giving birth to her second child Horace, and her husband having followed her to the grave about three years later, the care of the children developed upon their uncle Reginald, who had been appointed guardian.

But Reginald – being a somewhat careless man in many respects, and little given to children – took small heed of them, and, beyond providing masters for them at first, and later on sending them to school and college, and giving them choice of

professions, had left them very much to their own devices.

True, when college debts accumulated, and pressing bills from long-suffering tradespeople came pouring in, he would rouse himself sufficiently to remonstrate with them in a feeble fashion, and, having received promises of amendment from both boys, he would pay their bills, make each a handsome present (as atonement for the mild scolding), and, having thus dropped a sop to Cerberus, – or conscience, – would dismiss money matters, nephews, and all from his thoughts.

So the children grew, from youth to boyhood, from boyhood to early manhood, with no one to whom to appeal for sympathy, with no woman's voice to teach them right from wrong, – with few hardships, fewer troubles, and no affections.

Arthur Branscombe, indeed, who had come back from India six months after his father's death, and had stayed at Hythe for two interminable years (as they seemed to him), had during that time so worked himself into the heart of the eldest boy Dorian, and had so far taken him into his own in return, that long years had failed to efface the fondness of either. Indeed, now that he has returned from abroad (only, as fate has willed it, to take his brother's place), he finds the love he had grafted in the child still warm in the heart of the man.

Horace, the younger, had chosen his profession, and gone in heavily for law. But Dorian, who inherited two thousand a year from his father, and a charming residence, – situated about three miles from Hythe, and two from the pretty village of

Pullingham, – had elected to try his hand at farming, and was at first honestly believed in by confiding tenants, who discussed him as a being up to his eyes in agricultural lore and literally steeped in new and improved projects for the cultivation of land.

But time undeceived these good souls. And now, though they love him better, they believe in him not at all. To adore one's horses, and to be a perfect slave to one's dogs, is one thing; to find a tender interest in the price of guano, and a growing admiration for prize pigs, is quite another. When Dorian had tried it for six months, he acknowledged, reluctantly, that to him mangels were an abomination, and over-fed cattle a wearying of the flesh!

Every now and then, indeed, he tells himself that he must "look about him," as he calls it, and, smothering a sigh, starts for a quick walk across his land, and looks at a field or two, or into the nearest paddock, and asks his steward how things are going on, and if all is as satisfactory now as in the old days when his father held the reins of government, and, having listened absently to comfortable answers and cheerful predictions for the future, strolls away again, thoroughly content, not caring to investigate matters further.

He is fond of London life, and spends a good deal of his time there; is courted and petted and made much of by enterprising dowagers with marriageable daughters, as a young man charming, well bred, altogether *chic*, and undoubted heir to an earldom; for of Arthur Sartoris's ever marrying, now he has so long passed the prime of life, no one ever dreams.

He knows all the best people in town, and puts in a good time when there; is a fair hand at whist, and can beat most men at billiards; will now and then put money on a favorite for the Oaks or the Grand National, but cannot be said to regard gambling as an amusement. He is extravagant in many ways, but thoroughly unselfish and kind-hearted, and generous to a fault. He is much affected by women, and adored by children, who instinctively accept him as a true friend.

Horace, both in face and in figure, is strangely like his brother, – in character very different. He is tall and well built, with eyes large, dark, and liquid, but rather too closely set to be pleasing. His mouth is firm and somewhat hard, his smile soft, but uncertain. He is always charming to women, being outwardly blind to their caprices and an admirer of their follies, and is therefore an immense favorite with a certain class of them, whose minds are subservient to their bodies. Yet to every rule there is an exception. And by women good and true, and loyal, Horace has been, and is, well beloved.

As Lord Sartoris and Dorian cross the hall, they meet Horace, and a pretty girl – tall, slender, and graceful – coming towards them. She appears sad, and slightly distressed, but scarcely unnerved: there is a suspicion of tears about her large gray eyes. Her gown, of violet velvet (for, though they are in the merry month of May, the days are still cold and fretful), sits closely to her perfect figure; a Langtry bonnet, to match her dress, covers her head and suits admirably her oval face and Grecian nose and

soft peach-like complexion.

Going up, with impulsive grace, to Lord Sartoris, she lays both her ungloved hands upon his shoulders, and presses her lips with tender sympathy to his cheek.

"How sad it all is!" she says, with a little break in her voice. "How can I tell you all I feel for you? If you had only had the faintest warning! But it was all so sudden, so dreadful."

"What a kind child you are, Cissy!" says Sartoris, gently; "and to come to us *so soon*, that was so good of you."

"Was it?" says Clarissa, quickly. "That is what has been troubling me. We only heard the terrible news this morning, and papa said it would be intrusive to call so early; but I – I could not keep away."

"Your presence in this gloomy house is an undeniable comfort," says Sartoris, sadly. "I am glad you understood us well enough to know that. It is my greatest wish that you should regard us all with affection."

He glances from her to Dorian, as he speaks, with anxious meaning. But Dorian's gaze is fixed thoughtfully upon the stained-glass window that is flinging its crimson and purple rays upon the opposite wall, and has obviously been deaf to all that has been passing. As for Clarissa, she has turned, and is looking into Horace's dark eyes.

Sartoris, catching the glance, drops Miss Peyton's hand with a sigh. She notices the half-petulant action, and compresses her lips slightly.

"Now I have seen you, I shall feel better," she says, sweetly. "And – I think I must be going."

"Will you desert us so soon?" says Sartoris, reproachfully. "At least stay to luncheon – ." He pauses, and sighs profoundly. Just now the idea that the routine of daily life must be carried on whether our beloved lie dead upon their couches or stand living in our path, is hateful to him.

"I hardly like," says Clarissa, nervously; "I fear – "

Dorian, rousing himself from his thoughts, comes back to the present moment.

"Oh, stay, Clarissa," he says, hurriedly. "You really must, you know. You cannot imagine what a relief you are to us: you help us to bear our gloomy memories. Besides, Arthur has tasted nothing for hours, and your being here may tempt him, perhaps, to eat."

"If I can be of any use – ," says Clarissa, kindly. Whereupon Sartoris gives her his arm, and they all adjourn to the dining-room.

It is a large, old-fashioned, stately apartment, oak-panelled, with large mullioned windows, and a massive marble chimney-piece that reaches high as a man's head. A pleasant, sociable room at ordinary times, but now impregnated with the vague gloom that hangs over all the house and seeks even here to check the gaudy brightness of the sun that, rushing in, tries to illuminate it.

At the sideboard stands Simon Gale, the butler and oldest domestic of Hythe, who has lived with the dead lord as man and

boy, and now regrets him with a grief more strongly resembling the sorrowing of one for a friend than for a master.

With downcast eyes and bowed head he stands, thinking sadly how much too old he is for new cares and fresh faces. Reginald had been all the world to him: the new man is as nothing. Counting friendships as of little worth unless years have gone to prove their depth and sincerity, he feels no leaning towards the present possessor, – knows him too short a time to like or dislike, to praise or blame.

Now, as his eyes wander down the long table, to where he can see the empty chair of him who rests with such unearthly tranquillity in the silent chamber above, the thought of how soon a comparative stranger will fill it causes him a bitter pang. And, as he so muses, the door opens, and they all come in, – Sartoris first, with Clarissa, pale, and quiet; the brothers – so like, yet so unlike – following.

Old Simon, rousing himself, watches with jealous eyes to see the place so long occupied by Reginald usurped by another. But he watches in vain. Sartoris, without so much as a glance in its direction, takes the chair at the lower end of the table; and the others, following his lead, seat themselves at the sides without comment of any kind; whereupon Gale draws a long breath, and vows fidelity to his new lord upon the spot.

It is a dismal meal, dull, and dispiriting. The ghastly Egyptian mummy seems present in full force, if not in the letter at least in the spirit. Sartoris, having taken a glass of sherry, trifles with the

meat upon his plate, but literally eats nothing. No one appears possessed with a desire to speak, and indeed there is little to be said. When luncheon is nearly over, a small dark object, hitherto unseen, creeps out from some forgotten corner, and stretches itself forlornly; it is poor Reginald's favorite dog, that ever since his death has lain crouching out of sight, but now, driven by the pain of hunger, comes creeping forward, whining piteously.

He goes up to the accustomed chair, but, finding it for the first time empty and deaf to his complainings, turns disconsolately away, and passes from seat to seat, without accepting food at any of their hands, until he comes to Clarissa. She, stooping, raises him to her knee (her lashes wet with tears), and feeds him tenderly with the dainty scraps upon her plate.

The whole scene, though simple, is suggestive of loss and loneliness. Sartoris, leaving the table with some haste, goes to the window to hide his emotion. Dorian follows him. Whereupon Horace, rising too, crosses to where Clarissa sits, and, bending over her, says something in a low tone.

The moments fly. A clock upon the mantel-piece chimes half-past four. Some bird, in the exuberance of its mad joy, scurries wildly past the windows. Sartoris, with a sigh, turns from the light, and, seeing Miss Peyton and Horace still deep in conversation, frowns slightly.

"Horace, will you tell Durkin I want to see him at once, in the library," he says, very quietly, yet with some latent irritability.

"In one moment," replies Horace, unmoved, going back to the

low-toned dialogue he has been carrying on with Clarissa.

"I am afraid I must lay myself open to the charge of rudeness," says Sartoris, still very quietly, but with a peculiar smile. "But it is important, and I must see Durkin at once. My dear Horace, oblige me in this matter."

"Shall I not see Clarissa to her carriage first?" says Horace, raising his dark eyes for one moment to his uncle's face.

"Dorian will see to that," says the old man, slowly, but so decisively that Horace, bidding the girl a silent but warm farewell, with a bad grace departs.

"How late it grows," says Miss Peyton, glancing at the clock; and, drawing from a side-pocket her own watch, she examines it attentively, as though to assure herself the huge timepiece on the mantel-shelf has not told a deliberate lie. "I must go home! Papa will wonder where I have been all this long time. Good-by, Mr. Branscombe" (she is still, naturally, forgetful of the new title). "I hope," very sweetly, "you will come to see us as soon as ever you can."

"Thank you, yes, I shall come very soon," says Sartoris; and then she bids him good-by, and Dorian follows her from the room into the great dark hall outside.

"How changed he is!" she says, turning suddenly to him, and indicating, by a little backward motion of her head towards the room she had just left, the person of whom she speaks. "How altered! – Arthur, I mean. Not now, not by this grief; it isn't that: his manner, to me especially, has been altogether different

for a fortnight past. Ever since that last picnic at Anadale – you remember it – he has not been quite the same to me."

"Let me see; that, I think, was the evening you and Horace drove home alone together, with that rather uncertain brown mare, was it not?" says Dorian, with no apparent meaning in his tone. "My dear child, I dare say you are mistaken about Arthur. Your imagination is leading you astray."

"No, it is not. I am the least imaginative person alive," says Miss Peyton, with an emphatic shake of her pretty head. "I can't bear that sort of people myself; they are always seeing something that isn't there, and are generally very tiresome all around. I'm rather vexed about Arthur, do you know?"

"Don't mind him," says Branscombe, easily. "He'll come all right in time. He is a peculiar fellow in many ways, and when he sets his heart on any hobby, rides it to the death."

"Has he a hobby now?"

"Yes. He has just formed, and is now trying to work out, a gigantic scheme, and cuts up a little rough every now and then because all the world won't see it in the light that he does."

"Poor man!" says Clarissa, sympathetically, "No wonder he seems strange at times: it is so depressing to be baffled. Why don't you help him, Dorian?"

"It would take two to help him," says Mr. Branscombe, looking faintly amused.

"Could I be of any use?" – eagerly. "I would do anything I could for him."

"No, would you?" says Branscombe, his amusement growing more perceptible. "I'm sure that's very good of you. I dare say, if Arthur could hear you say that, he would go wild with joy. 'Anything' is such a comprehensive word. You're sure you won't go back of it?"

"Quite sure," – with some surprise.

"My dear Clarissa, is it possible you have not yet seen through Arthur's latest and greatest design?"

"If you intend to tell me anything, do so: beating about the bush always fatigues me to death," says Miss Peyton, in a tone of dignified rebuke. "What does Arthur want?"

"A little thing, – a mere trifle. He simply wants you to marry me."

"Really, Dorian," says Clarissa, coloring slowly, but warmly, "I think you might find some other subject to jest on."

"I never made a joke in my life; I hope I never shall," returns Branscombe, reproachfully. "What have I done, that you should accuse me of such a crime? I have only spoken the plain, unvarnished truth. To see you my wife is the dream of Arthur's life, his sole ambition. And just now, you know, you said you were quite prepared to do anything for him. You can't, with any sense of honor, back out of your given word."

"I never heard anything so absurd, so foolish, so nonsensical!" says Miss Peyton, resentfully.

"Nonsensical! My dear Clarissa! pray consider my – "

"It is more! it is right down stupid of him," says Clarissa, who

plainly declines to consider any one's feelings.

"You needn't pile up my agony any higher," interposes Branscombe, meekly. "To my everlasting regret I acknowledge myself utterly unworthy of you. But why tell me so in such round terms? I assure you I feel excessively hurt and offended. Am I to understand, then, that you have refused me?"

"You shall understand something worse, if you say another word," says Clarissa, holding, up before him a little clinched hand in a would-be threatening manner. And then they both laugh in a subdued fashion; and she moves on towards the open hall-door, he following.

"Well, I forgive you," he says, as she steps into her low phaeton, and he arranges the rug carefully around her. "Though you don't deserve it. (What ridiculous little hands to guide such refractory ponies!) Sure you are quite comfortable? Well, good-by; and look here," – teasingly, – "I should think it over if I were you. You may not get so excellent a chance again; and Arthur will never forgive you."

"Your uncle, though charming, and a very dear, is also a goose," says Miss Peyton, somewhat irreverently. "Marry you, indeed! Why, I should quite as soon dream of marrying my brother!"

"Well, as I can't be your husband, it would be rather nice to be your brother," says Mr. Branscombe, cheerfully. "Your words give me hope that you regard me in that light. I shall always think of you for the future as my sister, and so I am sure" – with an

eloquent and rather mischievous pause – "will Horace!"

Miss Peyton blushes again, – much more vividly this time, – and, gathering up the reins hastily, says "good-by" for the second time, without turning her flushed face to his, and drives rapidly up the avenue.

Branscombe stands on the steps watching her until she is quite lost to sight behind the rhododendrons, and then strokes his moustache thoughtfully.

"That has quite arranged itself, I should fancy," he says, slowly. "Well, I hope he will be very good to her, dear little thing!"

CHAPTER II

"Her form was fresher than the morning rose
When the dew wets its leaves." – Thomson.

Pullingham-on-the-Moors is a small, untidy, picturesque little village, situated on the side of a hill. It boasts a railway-station, a police-barrack, a solitary hotel, and two or three well-sized shops. It is old-fashioned, stationary, and, as a rule, hopelessly harmless, though now and then, dissensions, based principally on religious grounds, will arise.

These can scarcely be avoided, as one-half of the parish trips lightly after Mr. Redmond, the vicar (who has a subdued passion for wax candles, and a craving for floral decorations), and looks with scorn upon the other half, as, with solemn step and slow, it descends the high hill that leads, each Sabbath, to the "Methody" Chapel beneath.

It never grows older, this village, and never younger; is seldom cast down or elated, surprised or demonstrative, about anything. In a quaint, sleepy fashion, it has its dissipations, and acknowledges its festive seasons, – such as Christmas-tide when all the shops burst into a general bloom of colored cards, and February, when valentines adorn every pane. It has also its fair days, when fat cattle and lean sugar-sticks seem to be everywhere.

A marriage is reckoned an event, and causes some gossip: a birth does not, – possibly because of the fact that it is a weekly occurrence. Indeed, the babies in Pullingham are a "joy forever." They have their season all the year round, and never by any chance "go out;" though I have heard people very foolishly liken them to flowers. They grow, and thrive, and blossom all over the place, which no doubt is greatly to the credit of the inhabitants. Occasionally, too, some one is good enough to cause a little pleasurable excitement by dying, but very seldom, as the place is fatally healthy, and people live here until they become a social nuisance, and almost wish themselves dead. There is, I believe, some legend belonging to the country, about an old woman who had to be shot, so aggressively old did she become; but this is obscure.

About two miles from the town, one comes to Sartoris, the residence of Dorian Branscombe, which runs in a line with the lands of Scrope Royal, the property of Sir James Scrope.

Sir James is a tall, rather old-young man of thirty-two with a calm, expressive face, kindly eyes, and a somewhat lanky figure. He has a heart of gold, a fine estate, and – a step-sister.

Miss Jemima Scrope is not as nice as she might be. She has a face as hard as her manners, and, though considerably over forty, is neither fat nor fair. She has a perfect talent for making herself obnoxious to all unhappy enough to come within her reach, a temper like "Kate the Curst," and a nose like the Duke of Wellington.

Somewhere to the left, on a hill as high and pompous as itself, stands the castle, where three months out of the twelve the Duke and Duchess of Spendleton, and some of their family, put in a dreary time. They give two balls, one fancy bazaar, a private concert, and three garden-parties – neither more nor less – every year. Nobody likes them very much, because nobody knows them. Nobody dislikes them very much, for just the same reason.

The castle is beautifully situated, and is correct in every detail. There are Queen Anne rooms, and Gothic apartments, and Elizabethan anterooms, and staircases of the most vague. There are secret passages, and panels, and sliding doors, and trap-doors, and, in fact, every sort of door you could mention, and all other abominations. Artists revel in it, and grow frenzied with joy over its impossibilities, and almost every year some room is painted from it and sent to the Academy, But outside lies its chief beauty, for there are the swelling woods, and the glimpse of the far-off ocean as it gleams, now green, now steel-blue, beneath the rays of the setting sun. And beyond it is Gowran, where Clarissa lives with her father, George Peyton.

Clarissa is all that is charming. She is tall, slight, *svelte*: indeed, earth has not anything to show more fair. She is tender, too, and true, and very earnest, – perhaps a degree too earnest, too intense, for every-day life. Her eyes, "twin stars of beauty," are deep and gray; her hair is dark; her mouth, though somewhat large, is perfect; and her smile is indescribable, so sweet it is, so

soft and lingering.

Her mother died when she was nine years old, and from that time until she was twelve she spent most of her life with the Branscombe boys, – riding, fishing, sometimes even shooting, with them. The effect of such training began to make itself felt. She was fast degenerating into a tomboy of the first water (indeed, one of the purest gems of its kind), when James Scrope, who even then was a serious young man, came to the rescue, and induced her father to send her from Gowran to a school at Brussels.

"Virtue is its own reward," they tell us: let us hope Scrope felt rewarded! Whether he did or not, I know he was considerably frightened when Clarissa (having discovered who had been the instigator of this "plot" to drive her from her beloved Gowran) came down to Scrope Hall, and, dashing into his presence like a small whirlwind, abused him for his well-meant interference in good round terms, and, having refused even to say good-by to him, had slammed the door in his face, and, starting from home next morning, had seen no more of him for six long years.

At seventeen, her aunt, the Hon. Mrs. Greville, had brought her back from Brussels to her own house in town, where she kept her for twelve months, and where she once more renewed acquaintance with her old friends, Dorian and Horace Branscombe. Mrs. Greville took her to all the most desirable balls of her season, to concerts and "small and earlies," to high-art entertainments of the most "too, too," and, having given her

free scope to break the hearts of half the men in town, had sent her at last to her father, hopelessly in love with a detrimental.

The detrimental was Horace Branscombe. Mrs. Greville was intensely annoyed and disgusted. After all her care, all her trouble, to have this happen! She had married her own girls with the greatest *éclat*, had not made one false move with regard to any of them, and now to see Clarissa (who, with her beauty and fortune, might have married any one) throw herself away upon a penniless barrister seemed to her to savor of positive crime.

Horace, certainly, so far, had not proposed in form, but Mrs. Greville was not to be hoodwinked. He meant it. He was not always at her niece's side for nothing; and, sooner or later, Clarissa, with all her money, would go over to him. When she thought of this shocking waste of money, she groaned aloud; and then she washed her hands of the whole affair, and sent Clarissa back to Gowran, where her father received her with open arms, and made much of her.

CHAPTER III

"O Helen, fair beyond compare!
I'll make a garland of thy hair,
Shall bind my heart for evermair,
Until the day I die!"

Across the lawn the shadows move slowly, and with a vague grace that adds to their charm. The birds are drowsy from the heat, and, sitting half hidden in the green branches, chant their songs in somewhat lazy fashion. All nature has succumbed to the fierce power of Phœbus Apollo.

"The morn is merry June, I trow:
The rose is budding fain."

Each flower in the sunlit garden is holding up its head, and breathing fragrant sighs as the hours slip by, unheeded, yet full of a vague delight.

Miss Peyton, in her white gown, and with some soft rich roses lying on her lap, is leaning back in a low chair in the deep embrasure of the window, making a poor attempt at working.

Her father, with a pencil in his hand, and some huge volumes spread out before him, is making a few desultory notes. Into the library – the coseyest, if not the handsomest, room at Gowran – the hot sun is rushing, dancing lightly over statuettes and pictures,

and lingering with pardonable delay upon Clarissa's bowed head.

"Who is this coming up the avenue?" she says, presently, in slow, sleepy tones, that suit the day. "It is – no, it isn't – and yet it is – it must be James Scrope!"

"I dare say. He was to have returned yesterday. He would come here as soon as possible, of course." Rising, he joins her at the window, and watches the coming visitor as he walks his horse leisurely down the drive.

"What a dear little modest speech!" says Miss Peyton, maliciously. "Now, if I had been the author of it, I know some one who would have called me vain! But I will generously let that pass. How brown Jim has grown! Has he not?"

"Has he? I can scarcely see so far. What clear eyes you must have, child, and what a faithful memory to recollect him without hesitation, after all these years!"

"I never forget," says Clarissa, simply, which is quite the truth. "And he has altered hardly anything. He was always so old, you know, he really couldn't grow much older. What is his age now, papa? Ninety?"

"Something over thirty, I fancy," says papa, uncertainly.

"Oh, nonsense!" says Miss Peyton. "Surely you romance, or else you are an invaluable friend. When I grow brown and withered, I hope you will prove equally good to me. I shall expect you to say all sorts of impossible things, and not to blush when saying them. Ah! – here is Sir James" as the door opens, and Scrope – healthy and bronzed from foreign travel – enters quietly,

staid and calm as ever.

When he has shaken hands with, and been warmly welcomed by, Mr. Peyton, he turns with some diffidence towards the girl in the clinging white gown, who is smiling at him from the window, with warm red lips, half parted and some faint amusement in her friendly eyes.

"Why, you have forgotten me," she says, presently, in a low tone of would-be reproach. "While I – I knew you at once."

"I have not forgotten," says Scrope, taking her hand and holding it, as though unconsciously. "I was only surprised, puzzled. You are so changed. All seems so different. A little child when last I saw you, and now a lady grown."

"Oh, yes, I am quite grown up," says Miss Peyton, demurely. "I can't do any more of that sort of thing, to oblige anybody, – even though papa – who adores a Juno, and thinks all women should be divinely tall – has often asked me to try. But," maliciously, "are you not going to ask me how I have progressed (isn't that the right word?) with my studies? You ought, you know, as it was you who sent me to school."

"I?" says Sir James, rather taken aback at this unexpected onslaught.

"Yes, you," repeats she, with a little nod. "Papa would never have had the cruelty even to think of such a thing. I am glad you have still sufficient grace left to blush for your evil conduct. Do you remember," with a gay laugh, "what a terrible scolding I gave you before leaving home?"

"I shall remember it to my dying day," says Sir James. "I was never so thoroughly frightened before, or since. Then and there, I registered a vow never again to interfere with any one's daughter."

"I hope you will keep that vow," says Miss Peyton, with innocent malice, and a smile only half suppressed, that torments him in memory for many a day. And then George Peyton asks some question, and presently Sir James is telling him certain facts about the Holy Land, and Asia generally, that rather upset his preconceived ideas.

"Yet I still believe it must be the most interesting spot on earth," he says, still clinging to old thoughts and settled convictions.

"Well, it's novel, you know, and the fashion, and that," says Sir James, rather vaguely. "In fact, you are nowhere nowadays if you haven't done the East; but it's fatiguing, there isn't a doubt. The people aren't as nice as they might be, and honesty is not considered the best policy out there, and dirt is the prevailing color, and there's a horrid lot of sand."

"What a dismal ending!" says Clarissa, in a tone suggestive of disappointment. "But how lovely it looks in pictures! – I don't mean the sand, exactly, but the East."

"Most things do. There is an old grandaunt of mine hung in the gallery at Scrope – "

"How shocking!" interrupted Miss Peyton, with an affected start. "And in the house, too! So unpleasant! Did she do it herself,

or who hanged her?"

"Her picture, you know," says Scrope, with a laugh. "To hear that she had made away with herself would be too good to be true. She looks absolutely lovely in this picture I speak of, almost too fine for this work-a-day world; yet my father always told me she was ugly as a nightmare. Never believe in paint."

"Talking of Scrope," says Clarissa, "do you know, though I have been home now for some months, I have never been through it since I was a child? I have rather a passion for revisiting old haunts, and I want to see it again. That round room in the tower used to be my special joy. Will you show it to me? – some day? – any day?"

"What day will you come?" asks Scrope, thinking it unnecessary to express the gladness it will be to him to point put the beauties of his home to this new-old friend, – this friend so full of fresh and perfect beauty, yet so replete with all the old graces and witcheries of the child he once so fondly loved.

"I am just the least little bit in the world afraid of Miss Scrope," says Clarissa, with an irrepressible smile. "So I shall prefer to come some time when you are in. On Thursday, if that will suit you. Or Friday; or, if not then, why, Saturday."

"Make it Thursday. That day comes first," said Scrope.

"Now, that is a very pretty speech," declares Miss Peyton, vast encouragement in her tone. "Eastern air, in spite of its drawbacks, has developed your intellect, Jim. Hasn't it?"

The old familiar appellation, and the saucy smile that has

always in it something of tenderness, smites some half-forgotten chord in Scrope's heart. He makes no reply, but gazes with an earnestness that almost amounts to scrutiny at Clarissa, as she stands in the open window leaning against a background of ivy, through which pale rose-buds are struggling into view. Within her slender fingers the knitting-needles move slowly, glinting and glistening in the sun's hot rays, until they seem to emit tiny flashes as they cross and recross each other. Her eyes are downcast, the smile still lingers on her lips, her whole attitude, and her pretty graceful figure, clad in its white gown, is

"Like a picture rich and rare."

"On Thursday, then, I shall see you," he says, not because he has tired of looking at her, but because she has raised her eyes and is evidently wondering at his silence. "Good-by."

"Good-by," says Clarissa, genially. Then she lays down the neglected knitting (that, indeed, is more a pretence than a reality), and comes out into the middle of the room. "For the sake of old days I shall see you to the hall door," she says, brightly. "No, papa, do not ring: I myself shall do the honors to Jim."

CHAPTER IV

"All thoughts, all passions, all delights,
Whatever stirs this mortal frame,
All are but ministers of Love,
And feed his sacred flame." – Coleridge.

All round the drawing-room windows at Scrope a wide balcony has been built up, over which the creepers climb and trail. Stone steps leads to it from the scented garden beneath, and up these runs Clarissa, gayly, when Thursday morning had dawned, and deepened, and given place to noon.

Within the drawing-room, before a low table, sits Miss Scrope, tatting industriously. Tatting is Miss Scrope's forte. She never does anything else. Multitudinous antimacassars, of all shapes, patterns, and dimensions, grow beneath her untiring touch with the most alarming rapidity. When finished, nobody knows what becomes of them, as they instantly disappear from view and are never heard of afterwards. They are as good as a ghost in Pullingham, and obstinately refuse to be laid. It was charitably, if weakly, suggested at one time, by a member of the stronger sex, that probably she sent them out in bales as coverings for the benighted heathen; but when it was explained to this misguided being that tatted antimacassars, as a rule, run to holes,

and can be seen through, even he desisted from further attempts to solve the mystery.

Miss Peyton, throwing up one of the window-sashes, steps boldly into the drawing-room and confronts this eminent tatter.

"Good-morning," she says, sweetly, advancing with smiling lips.

Miss Scrope, who has not heard her enter, turns slowly round: to say she started would be a gross calumny. Miss Scrope never starts. She merely raises her head with a sudden accession of dignity. Her dignity, as a rule, is not fascinating, and might go by another name.

"Good-afternoon, Clarissa," she says, austerely. "I am sorry you should have been forced to make an entrance like a burglar. Has the hall door been removed? It used to stand in the front of the house."

"I think it is there still," Miss Peyton ventures, meekly. "But" – prettily – "coming in through the window enabled me to see you at least one moment sooner. Shall I close it again?"

"I beg you will not distress yourself about it," says Miss Scrope, rising to ring the bell. "When Collins comes in he will see to it."

It is a wild day, though warm and sweet, and the wind outside is tearing madly over lawn and shrubberies into the wood beyond.

"But in the mean time you will perhaps catch cold, of rheumatism, or something," says Clarissa, hesitating.

"Rheumatism! pugh! nonsense!" says Miss Scrope,

disdainfully. "I simply don't believe in rheumatism. It is nothing but nerves. I don't have those ridiculous pains and aches people hug nowadays, and I don't believe they have either; it employs their idle time trying to invent them."

"Is Jim in?" asks Clarissa, presently, having seated herself in a horribly comfortless but probably artistic chair.

"*James is* in," says Miss Scrope, severely. "Do you mean my brother? It is really almost impossible to understand young people of the present age."

"Don't you like the name Jim?" asks Clarissa, innocently, leaning slightly forward, and taking up the edge of Miss Scrope's last antimacassar to examine it with tender interest. "I think it such a dear little name, and so happily wanting in formality. I have never called him anything else since I can remember, so it comes most naturally to me."

"I think it a most unmaidenly way of addressing any gentleman whose priest christened him James," says Miss Scrope, unflinchingly. "What would you think of him werehe to call you by some hideous pet name, or, more properly speaking, nickname?"

"I shouldn't mind it in the least; indeed, I think I should rather like it," returns Clarissa, mildly.

"I believe that to be highly probable," retorts Miss Jemima, with considerable scorn.

Clarissa laughs, – not an irritating laugh, by any means, but a little soft, low, girlish laugh, very good to hear.

"If you scold me any more I shall cry," she says, lightly. "I always give way to tears when driven into a corner. It saves time and trouble. Besides," returning with some slight perversity to the charge, "shall I tell you a secret? Your brother likes that little name. He does, indeed. He has told me so a thousand times in the days gone by. Very frivolous of him, isn't it? But – ah! here he is," as the door opens, and Sir James comes in. "You are a little late, are you not?" leaning back in her chair with a certain amount of languid, but pleasing, grace, and holding out to him a slender ungloved hand, on which some rings sparkle brilliantly.

"Have I kept you waiting?" asks he, eagerly, foolishly, glad because of her last words, that seem to imply so much and really mean so little. Has she been anxious for his coming? Have the minutes appeared tedious because of his absence? "I hurried all I knew," he says; "but stewards will be stewards."

"I have been quite happy with Miss Scrope; you need not look so penitent," says Clarissa. "And who am I, that I should compete with a steward? We have been having quite a good time, and an excellent argument. Come here, and tell your sister that you think Jim the prettiest name in the world."

"Did any one throw a doubt on the subject? Lives there a soul so dead to euphony as not to recognize the music in those three letters? – Jim! Why, it is poetry itself," says Sir James, who is not so absent that he cannot scent battle on the breeze. As he speaks, he smiles: and when James Scrope smiles he is almost handsome.

"Some day you will regret encouraging that child in her folly,"

remarks Miss Scrope, severely. At which the child makes a saucy little grimace unseen, and rises to her feet.

"What a solemn warning!" says Scrope, with a shrug. "I hope," turning to Clarissa, "you have taken it to heart, and that it will keep you out of imaginary mischief. It ought, you know. It would be a shabby thing to bring down public censure on the head of one who has so nobly espoused your cause."

"My conduct from this day forth shall be above suspicion," says Clarissa. "Good-by, Miss Scrope," stooping to press her fresh warm lips to the withered cross old cheek beneath her: "I am going to tread old ground with – James."

She follows him across hall and corridor, through two modern rooms, and past a *portière*, into another and larger hall beyond. Here, standing before a heavy oaken doer, he turns the handle of it, and, as it swings back slowly and sleepily, they pass into another room, so unexpectedly and so strangely different from any they have yet entered, as almost to make one start.

It is a huge old-fashioned apartment, stone-floored and oak panelled, that once, in olden days, must have been a refectory. Chairs carved in oak, and built like bishops' thrones, line the walls, looking as though no man for many a hundred years has drawn them from their present position. Massive cabinets and cupboards, cunningly devised by crafty hands in by-gone days, look out from dusky corners, the hideous faces carved upon them wreathed in their eternal ghastly smiles. From narrow, painted windows great gleams of sunset from the gay world without pour

in, only to look sadly out of place in the solemn gloomy room. But one small door divides it from the halls outside; yet centuries seem to roll between it and them.

In one corner a door lies half open, and behind it a narrow flight of stairs runs upward to a turret chamber above, – a tiny stairway, heavily balustraded and uncarpeted, that creates in one a mad desire to ascend and learn the secrets that may lie at its top.

Miss Peyton, scarce noticing the monkish refectory, runs to the stairs and mounts them eagerly, Sir James following her in a more leisurely fashion.

"Now for my own room," she says, with some degree of quickness in her tone. She reaches the turret chamber as she speaks, and looks around her. It is quite a circle, and apparently of the same date as the one they have just quitted. Even the furniture, though of lighter make and size, is of a similar age and pattern. Ugly little chairs and unpleasantly solid tables are dotted here and there, a perfect wealth of Old-World work cut into them. Everything is carved, and to an unsympathetic observer it might occur that the carver must have been a person subject to fiendish visions and unholy nightmares. But no doubt the beauty of his designs lies in their ugliness, and his heads are a marvel of art, and his winged creatures priceless!

The high chimney-piece is *en rapport* with all the rest, and scowls unceasingly; and the very windows – long and deep – have little faces carved on either side of them, of the most diabolical.

Miss Peyton is plainly entranced with the whole scene, and

for a full minute says nothing.

"I feel as though I were a child again," she says, presently, as though half regretful. "Everything comes back to me with such a strange yet tender vividness. This, I remember, was my favorite table, this my favorite chair. And that little winged monster over there, he used to whisper in my ears more thrilling tales than either Grimm or Andersen. Have you never moved anything in all these years?"

"Never. It is your own room by adoption, and no one shall meddle with it. When I went abroad I locked it, and carried the key of it with me wherever I went; I hardly know why myself." He glances at her curiously, but her face is averted, and she is plainly thinking less of him than of the many odd trifles scattered around. "When I returned, dust reigned, and spiders; but it has been made spick and span to day for its mistress. Does it still please you? or will you care to alter anything?"

"No, nothing. I shall pay a compliment to my childish taste by letting everything stay just as it is. I must have been rather a nice child, Jim, don't you think? if one passes over the torn frocks and the shrewish tongue."

"I don't think I ever saw a tear in your frocks," says Sir James, simply, "and if your tongue was shrewish I never found it out."

Miss Peyton gives way to mirth. She sits down on a wretchedly uncomfortable, if delightfully mediæval, chair and laughs a good deal.

"Oh, wad some power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

she quotes, gayly. "Those lines, meant by poor Burns as a censure on frail humanity, rather fall short at this moment. Were I to see myself as you see me, Jim, I should be a dreadfully conceited person, and utterly unbearable What a good friend you make!"

"A bad one, you mean. A real friend, according to my lights, is a fellow who says unpleasant things all round and expects you to respect his candor. By and by, when I tell you a few home truths, perhaps you will not like me as you do now."

"Yes, I shall always like you," says Clarissa. "Long ago, when you used to scold me, I never bore malice. I suppose you are one of those rare people who can say the ungracious thing in such a manner that it doesn't grate. But then you are old, you know, Jim, very old, – though, in appearance, wonderfully young for your years. I do hope papa, at your age, will look as fresh."

She has risen, and has slipped her hand through his arm, and is smiling up at him gayly and with a sweetness irresistible. Sir James looks as pleased as though he had received a florid compliment.

"What a baby you are!" he says, after a pause, looking down at her admiringly. Judging by his tone, babies, in his eyes, must possess very superior attractions. "There are a good many babies in the world, don't you think?" he goes on, presently. "You are

one, and Geoffrey Branscombe is another. I don't suppose he will ever quite grow up."

"And Horace," says Clarissa, idly, "is he another?"

But Sir James, though unconsciously, resents the question.

"Oh, no!" he says, hastily. "He does not come within the category at all. Why," with a faint smile, "he is even older than I am! There is no tender baby-nonsense about him."

"No, he is so clever, – so far above us all, where intellect is concerned," she says, absently. A slight smile plays about her lips, and a light, that was not there a moment since, comes to life within her eyes. With an effort, she arouses herself from what were plainly happy daydreams, and comes back to the present, which, just now, is happy too.

"I think nature meant me to be a nun," she says, smiling. "This place subdues and touches me so. The sombre lights and shadows are so impressive! If it were indeed mine (in reality), I should live a great part of my time in it. Here, I should write my pleasantest letters, and read my choicest books, take my afternoon tea, and make welcome my dearest friends, – you among them. In fact, if it were practicable," nodding her pretty head emphatically, "I should steal this room. There is hardly anything I would not do to make it my own."

Scrope regards her earnestly, with a certain amount of calm inquiry. Is she a coquette, or merely unthinking? If, indeed, the face be the index of the mind, one must account her free of all unworthy thought or frivolous design. Here is

"A countenance in which do meet
Sweet records, promises as sweet."

Her eyes are still smiling up at him; her whole expression is full of a gentle friendliness; and in his heart, at this moment, arises a sensation that is not hope, or gladness, or despair, but yet is a faint wild mingling of all three.

As for Clarissa, she stands a little apart, unconscious of all that is passing in his heart, and gazes lovingly upon the objects that surround her, as one will gaze now and then on things that have been fondly remembered through the haze of many years. She is happy, wrapped in memories of a past all sunshine and no shade, and is ignorant of the meaning he would gladly attach to her last words.

"While I stay here I sin, – that is, I covet," she says, at length, surprised by his silence, "and it grows late. Come, walk with me a little way through the park: I have not yet seen the old path we used to call the 'short cut' to Gowran, long ago."

So, down the dark stairs he follows her, across the stone flooring, and into the hall outside, that seems so brilliant by contrast, and so like another world, all is so changed, so different. Behind, lie silence, unbroken, perfect, a sad and dreamy light, Old-World grandeur; here, all is restless life, full of uncertain sounds, and distant footsteps, and voices faint but positive.

"Is it not like a dream?" says Clarissa, stopping to point

backwards to the turret they have just quitted.

"The past is always full of dreams," replies he, thoughtfully.

CHAPTER V

"A violet by a mossy stone
Half hidden from the eye!
Fair as a star, when only one
Is shining in the sky." – Wordsworth.

The baby morn has flung aside its robes, and grown to perfect strength. The day is well advanced. Already it is making rapid strides towards rest and evening; yet still no cooling breeze has come to refresh the heart of man.

Below, in the quiet fields, the cattle are standing, knee-deep in water, beneath the spreading branches of the kindly alder. They have no energy to eat, but munch, sleepily, the all-satisfying cud, and, with gentle if expressionless eyes, look out afar for evening and the milkmaid.

"'Tis raging noon; and, vertical, the sun
Darts on the head direct his forceful rays.
O'er heaven and earth, far as the ranging eye
Can sweep, a dazzling deluge reigns; and all,
From pole to pole, is undistinguished blaze.
Distressful Nature pants!
The very streams look languid from afar,
Or, through th' unsheltered glade, impatient, seem

To hurl into the covert of the grove."

A tender stillness reigns over everything. The very birds are mute. Even the busy mill-wheel has ceased to move.

Bright flashes of light, that come and go ere one can catch them, dart across the gray walls of the old mill, – that holds its gaunt and stately head erect, as though defying age, – and, slanting to the right, fall on the cottage, quaint and ivy-clad, that seems to nestle at its feet. The roses that climb its walls are drooping; the casements all stand wide. No faintest breath of air comes to flutter Ruth's white gown, as she leans against the rustic gate.

All millers' daughters should be pretty. It is a duty imposed upon them by tradition. Romance, of the most floral description, at once attaches itself to a miller's daughter. I am not at all sure it does not even cast a halo round the miller himself. Ruth Annersley at least acknowledges this fact, and does her duty nobly; she gives the lie to no old legends or treasured nursery superstitions; she is as pretty as heart can desire, —

"Fresh as the month, and as the morning fair."

She is small, piquant, timid, with large almond-shaped eyes and light-brown hair, a rounded supple figure, and hands delicately white. Perhaps there is a lack of force in her face, an indefinable want, that hardly detracts from her beauty, yet sets one wondering, vaguely, where it lies, and what it can be. The mouth, mobile and slightly parted, betrays it most.

Her lashes, covering her brown eyes, are very long, and lie a good deal on her cheeks. Her manner, without a suspicion of *gaucherie*, is nervous, almost appealing; and her smile, because so rare, is very charming, and apt to linger in the memory.

She is an only child, and all through her young life has been petted and caressed rather more than is good for any one. Her father had married, somewhat late in life, a woman in every way his superior, and, she dying two years after her marriage, he had fallen back for consolation upon the little one left to his sole care. To him, she was a pride, a delight, a creature precious beyond words, on whom the sun must shine gently and the rain fall not at all.

A shy child from the first, Ruth had declined acquaintance with the villagers, who would, one and all, have been glad to succor the motherless girl. Perhaps the little drop of gentle blood inherited from her mother had thriven in her veins, and thus rendered her distant and somewhat repellent in her manners to those in her own rank of life.

She had been sent early to a private school, had been carefully educated far above her position, and had come home again to her father, with all the pretty airs and unconscious softness of manner that, as a rule, belong to good birth.

She is warm-hearted, passionate, impulsive, and singularly reserved, – so much so that few guess at the terrible power to love, or hate, or suffer, in silence, that lies within her. She is a special favorite with Miss Peyton and the vicarage people

(Mr. and Mrs Redmond and their five children), with those at Hythe, and indeed with most of the country people, Miss Scrope excepted, who gives it freely as her opinion that she will come to no good "with her books and her high society and general fiddle-faddling." Nobody knows what this last means, and every one is afraid to ask.

Just now, with her pretty head bare, and her hand shading her eyes, she is gazing down the dusty road. Her whole attitude denotes expectancy. Every feature (she is off her guard) expresses intense and hopeful longing, —

> "Fiery Titan, who
> – with his peccant heat
> Has dried up the lusty liquor new
> Upon the herbis in the greene mead,"

has plainly fallen in love with her to-day, as he has clothed her in all his glory, and seems reluctant to pass her by on his homeward journey.

The heat has made her pale and languid; but just at this moment a faint delicate color springs into her face; and as the figure of a young man, tall and broad-shouldered, turns the corner of the road, she raises her hand to her cheek with a swift involuntary gesture. A moment later, as the figure comes closer, so near that the face is discernible, she pales again, and grows white as an early snow drop.

"Good-morning, Ruth," says Dorian Branscombe, with a

smile, apparently oblivious of the fact that morning has given place to noon many hours agone.

Ruth returns his salutation gently, and lets her hand lie for an instant in his.

"This is a summer's day, with a vengeance," says Dorian, genially, proceeding to make himself comfortable on the top of the low wall near which she is standing. He is plainly making up his mind to a long and exhaustive conversation. "Talk of India!" he says disparagingly; "this beats it to fits!"

Ruth acquiesces amiably.

"It is warm, – very," she says, calmly, but indifferently.

"'Ot I call it, – werry 'ot," returns he, making his quotation as genially as though she understands it, and, plucking a little rose-bud from a tree near him, proceeds to adorn his coat with it.

"It seems a long time since I have seen you," he goes on, presently; and, as he speaks, his eyes again seek hers. Something in her face touches some chord in his careless kindly nature.

"How pale you are!" he says, abruptly.

"Am I? The heat, no doubt," – with a faint smile.

"But thin, too, are you not? And – and – " he pauses. "Anything wrong with you, Ruth?"

"Wrong? No! How should there be?" retorts she, in a curious tone, in which fear and annoyance fight for mastery. Then the storm dies away, and the startled look fades from her pretty face.

"Why should you think me unhappy because I am a little pale?" she asks, sullenly.

Branscombe looks surprised.

"You altogether mistake me," he says, gently. "I never associated you in my mind with unhappiness. I merely meant, had you a headache, or any other of those small ills that female flesh is heir to? I beg your pardon, I'm sure, if I have offended you."

He has jumped off the wall, and is now standing before her, with only the little gate between them. Her face is still colorless, and she is gazing up at him with parted lips, as though she would fain say something difficult to form into satisfactory speech. At this moment, Lord Sartoris, coming suddenly round the angle of the road, sees them.

Ruth lowers her eyes, and some slight transient color creeps into her cheeks. Sartoris, coming quickly up to them, makes some conventional speech to her, and then turns to his nephew.

"Where are you going?" he asks, coldly.

"I was going to Hythe," returned the young man, easily. "Just as well I didn't, eh? Should have found you out."

"Found me out, – yes," repeats his uncle, looking at him strangely. How long – how long it takes to find out some people, on whom our very hearts are set. "I am going to the village."

"Then so am I," says Branscombe. "Though I should think it would run the original 'deserted' one close on such a day as this. Good-by, Ruth."

He holds out his hand; and the girl, silently returning his warm pressure, makes a faint courtesy to Lord Sartoris. There is no

servility, but some nervousness, in the slight salutation.

"How is your father, Ruth?" asks he, detaining her by a quick movement of the hand.

"Quite well, thank you, my lord." Some timidity is discernible in her tone, caused by the unmistakable reproof and sternness in his.

"I am glad to hear it. There is no worthier man in all the parish than John Annersley. I hope nothing will ever occur to grieve or sadden that good old man."

"I hope not, my lord," returns she, steadily, although his voice has meaning in it. In another moment she is gone.

"How does your farming go on, Dorian?" asks Lord Sartoris, presently, rousing himself from a puzzling revery.

"Quite in the model line," says Dorian, cheerful. "That Sawyer is an invaluable fellow. Does all the work, you know, – which is most satisfactory. Looks after the men, pays their wages, and takes all trouble off my shoulders. Never could understand what a perfect treasure is till I got him. Every one says I am most fortunate in my choice of a steward."

"I dare say. It is amazing the amount of information people possess about other people's servants. But you look after things yourself, of course? However faithful and trustworthy one's hirelings may be, one's own eyes should also be in the matter."

"Oh, of course," acquiesces Dorian, still cheerfully. "Nothing like personal supervision, and so on. Every now and then, you know, I do look over the accounts, and ask a few questions, and

show myself very learned in drainages, and so forth. But I don't see that I gain much by it. Horrid stupid work, too," – with a yawn. "Luckily, Sawyer is one of the most knowing fellows in the world, or I suppose I should go to smash. He is up to everything, and talks like a book. Quite a pleasure, I give you my word, – almost a privilege, – to hear him converse on short-horns and some eccentric root they call mangels."

"It is possible to be too knowing," says his uncle, depreciatingly.

"Eh? oh, no; Sawyer is not that sort of person. He is quite straight all through. And he never worries me more than he can help. He looks after everything, and whatever he touches (metaphorically speaking) turns to gold. I'm sure anything like those pheasants – "

"Yes, yes, I dare say. But pheasants are not everything."

"Well, no; there are a few other things," says Dorian, amicably, – "notably, grouse. Why this undying hatred to Sawyer, my dear Arthur? In what has he been found wanting?"

"I think him a low, under-hand, sneaking sort of fellow," says Sartoris, unhesitatingly. "I should not keep him in my employ half an hour. However," relentingly, and somewhat sadly, "one cannot always judge by appearances."

They have reached the village by this time, and are walking leisurely through it. Almost as they reach the hotel that adorns the centre of the main street, they meet Mr. Redmond, the rector, looking as hearty and kindly as usual. Lord Sartoris, who has

come down on purpose to meet him, having asked his question and received his answer, turns again and walks slowly homeward, Dorian still beside him.

As they again catch sight of the old mill, Sartoris says, quietly, with a laudable attempt at unconcern that would not have deceived the veriest infant, but is quite successful with Dorian, whose thoughts are far away, —

"What a nice girl that little Ruth has grown!"

"Awfully pretty girl," returns Dorian, carelessly.

"Yes," – gravely, – "very pretty; and I think – I hope – upright, as she is beautiful. Poor child, hers seems to me a very desolate lot. Far too well educated to associate with those of her own class, she is still cut off by the laws of caste from mixing with those above her. She has no friends, no mother, no sister, to love and sympathize with her."

"My dear Arthur, how you do agonize yourself!" says Dorian. "She has her father, and about as comfortable a time altogether as I know of."

"She reminds me of some lowly wayside flower," goes on the old man, musingly, heedless of the brilliant interlude, "raising its little head sadly among gay garden-plants that care not for her, whilst beyond the hedge that bounds her garden she can watch her own species grow and flourish in wild luxuriance. Her life can scarcely be called happy. There must always be a want, a craving for what can never be obtained. Surely the one that could bring sorrow to that pure heart, or tears to those gentle eyes, should

be – "

"Asphyxiated," puts in Dorian, idly. He yawns languidly and pulls the head off a tall dandelion, that adorns the wayside, in a somewhat desultory fashion. The color in the older man's cheeks grows a shade deeper, and a gesture, as full of impatience as of displeasure, escapes him.

"There are some subjects," he says, with calm severity, "that it would be well to place beyond the reach of ridicule."

"Am I one of them?" says Dorian, lightly. Then, glancing at his uncle's face, he checks himself, and goes on quickly. "I beg your pardon, I'm sure. I have been saying something unlucky, as usual. Of course I agree with you on all points, Arthur, and think the man who could wilfully bring a blush to Ruth Annersley's cheek neither more nor less than a blackguard *pur et simple*. By the by, that last little homely phrase comes in badly there, doesn't it? Rather out of keeping with the vituperative noun, eh!"

"Rather," returns Sartoris, shortly. He drops his nephew's arm, and walks on in silence. As a rule, Dorian's careless humor suits him; it amuses and adds a piquancy to a life that without it (now that Dorian's society has become indispensable to him) would prove "flat, stale, and unprofitable." But to-day, he hardly knows why, – or, perhaps, hardly dares to know why, – his nephew's easy light-heartedness jars upon him, vexing him sorely.

As they turn the corner of the road and go down the hill, they meet Horace, coming towards them at a rapid pace. As he sees them, he slackens his speed and approaches more slowly.

"Just as well I met you," he says, with an airy laugh, "as my thoughts were running away with me, and Phœbus Apollo is in the ascendant: veritably he 'rules the roast.' This uphill work is trying on the lungs."

"Where have you been?" asks Dorian, just because he has nothing else to say, and it is such a bore to think.

"At Gowran."

"Ah! I'm going there now. You saw Clarissa, then?" says Sartoris, quickly. "When do you return to town, Horace?"

"To-morrow, I think, – I hope," says Horace; and, with a little nod on both sides, they part. But when the bend in the road again hides him from view, it would occur to a casual on-looker that Horace Branscombe's thoughts must once more have taken his physical powers into captivity, as his pace quickens, until it grows even swifter than it was before.

Sartoris goes leisurely down the hill, with Dorian beside him, whistling "Nancy Lee," in a manner highly satisfactory to himself, no doubt, but slightly out of tune. When Sartoris can bear this musical treat no longer, he breaks hurriedly into speech of a description that requires an answer.

"What a pretty girl Clarissa Peyton is! don't you think so?"

When Dorian has brought Miss Lee to a triumphant finish, with a flourish that would have raised murderous longings in the breast of Stephen Adams, he says, without undue enthusiasm, —

"Yes, she is about the best-looking woman I know."

"And as unaffected as she is beautiful. That is her principal

charm. So thoroughly bred, too, in every thought and action. I never met so lovable a creature!"

"What a pity she can't hear you!" says Branscombe. "Though perhaps it is as well she can't. Adulation has a bad effect on some people."

"She is too earnest, too thorough, to be upset by flattery. I sometimes wonder if there are any like her in the world."

"Very few, I think," says Dorian, genially.

Another pause, somewhat longer than the last, and then Sartoris says, with some hesitation, "Do you never think of marrying, Dorian?"

"Often," says Branscombe, with an amused smile.

"Yet how seldom you touch on the matter! Why, when I was your age, I had seen at least twenty women I should have married, had they shown an answering regard for me."

"What a blessing they didn't!" says Branscombe. "Fancy, twenty of them! You'd have found it awkward in the long run, wouldn't you? And I don't think they'd have liked it, you know, in this illiberal country. So glad you thought better of it."

"I wish I could once see you as honestly" – with a slight, almost unconscious, stress on the word – "in love as I have been scores of times."

"What a melancholy time you must have put in! When a fellow is in love he goes to skin and bone, doesn't he? slights his dinner, and refuses to find solace in the best cigar. It must be trying, – very; especially to one's friends. I doubt you were a susceptible

youth, Arthur. I'm not."

"Then you ought to be," says Sartoris, with some anger. "All young men should feel their hearts beat, and their pulses quicken, at the sight of a pretty woman."

"My dear fellow," says Branscombe, severely, removing his glass from his right to his left eye, as though to scan more carefully his uncle's countenance, "there is something the matter with you this morning, isn't there? You're not well, you know. You have taken something very badly, and it has gone to your morals; they are all wrong, – very unsound indeed. Have you carefully considered the nature of the advice you are giving me? Why, if I were to let my heart beat every time I meet all the pretty women I know, I should be in a lunatic asylum in a month."

"Seriously, though, I wish you would give the matter some thought," says Lord Sartoris, earnestly: "you are twenty-eight, – old enough to make a sensible choice."

Branscombe sighs.

"And I see nothing to prevent your doing so. You want a wife to look after you, – a woman you could respect as well as love, – a thoughtful beautiful woman, to make your home dearer to you than all the amusements town life can afford. She would make you happy, and induce you to look more carefully to your own interests, and – and – "

"You mean you would like me to marry Clarissa Peyton," says Dorian, good-humoredly. "Well, it is a charming scheme, you know; but I don't think it will come off. In the first place, Clarissa

would not have me, and in the next, I don't want to marry at all. A wife would bore me to death; couldn't fancy a greater nuisance. I like women very much, in fact, I may say, I am decidedly fond of a good many of them, but to have one always looking after me (as you style it) and showing up my pet delinquencies would drive me out of my mind. Don't look so disgusted! I feel I'm a miserable sinner; but I really can't help it. I expect there is something radically wrong with me."

"Do you mean to tell me" – with some natural indignation – "that up to this you have never, during all your wanderings, both at home and abroad, seen any woman you could sincerely admire?"

"Numbers, my dear Arthur, – any amount, – but not one I should care to marry. You see, that makes such a difference. I remember once before – last season – you spoke to me in this strain, and, simply to oblige you, I thought I would make up my mind to try matrimony. So I went in heavily, heart and soul, for Lady Fanny Hazlett. You have seen Lady Fanny?"

"Yes, a good deal of her."

"Then you know how really pretty she is. Well, I spent three weeks at it; regular hard work the entire time, you know, no breathing-space allowed, as she never refuses an invitation, thinks nothing of three balls in one night, and insisted on my dancing attendance on her everywhere. I never suffered so much in my life; and when at last I gave in from sheer exhaustion, I found my clothes no longer fitted me. I was worn to a skeleton

from loss of sleep, the heavy strain on my mental powers, and the meek endurance of her ladyship's ill tempers."

"Lady Fanny is one woman, Clarissa Peyton is quite another. How could you fail to be happy with Clarissa? Her sweetness, her grace of mind and body, her beauty, would keep you captive even against your will."

Dorian pauses for a moment or two, and then says, very gently, as though sorry to spoil the old man's cherished plan, —

"It is altogether impossible. Clarissa has no heart to give me."

Sartoris is silent. A vague suspicion of what now appears a certainty has for some time oppressed and haunted him. At this moment he is sadly realizing the emptiness of all his dreaming. Presently he says, slowly, —

"Are you quite sure of this?"

"As certain as I can be without exactly hearing it from her own lips."

"Is it Horace?"

"Yes; it is Horace," says Branscombe, quietly.

CHAPTER VI

"Tread softly; bow the head, —
In reverent silence bow,
No passing bell doth toll,
Yet an immortal soul
Is passing now." – Caroline Southey.

A little room, scantily but neatly furnished. A low bed. A dying man. A kneeling girl, – half child, half woman, – with a lovely, miserable face, and pretty yellow hair.

It was almost dusk, and the sound of the moaning sea without, rising higher and hoarser as the tide rushes in, comes like a wail of passionate agony into the silent room.

The rain patters dismally against the window-panes. The wind – that all day long has been sullen and subdued – is breaking forth into a fury long suppressed, and, dashing through the little town, on its way to the angry sea, makes the casements rattle noisily and the tall trees sway and bend beneath its touch. Above, in the darkening heavens, gray clouds are scurrying madly to and fro.

"Georgie," whispers a faint voice from out the gathering gloom, "are you still there?"

"Yes, dear, I am here, quite near to you. What is it?"

"Sit where I can see you, child, – where I can watch your face.

I have something to say to you. I cannot die with this weight upon my heart."

"What weight, papa?"

"The uncertainty about your future," says the dying man, with some excitement. "How can I leave you, my little one, to fight this cruel world alone?"

"Do not think of me," says the girl, in a voice so unnaturally calm as to betray the fact that she is making a supreme effort to steel herself against the betrayal of emotion of any kind. By and by, will there not be long years in which to make her moan, and weep, and lament, and give herself wholly up to that grim giant, Despair? "Put me out of your thoughts altogether. I shall do very, very well. I shall manage to live as others have lived before me."

"Your Aunt Elizabeth will take you in for a little while, and then – then – "

"I shall go out as a governess. I shall get into some kind, pleasant family, and every one will be very good to me," says the girl, still in a resolutely cheerful tone. "It will just suit me. I shall like it. Do you understand me, papa? I shall like it better than anything, because children are always fond of me."

The father's face grows sadder, even grayer, as she speaks. He sighs in a troubled fashion, and strokes feebly the little fragile hand that clings so desperately to his, while the damps of death lie thick upon his brow.

"A governess," he murmurs, with some difficulty. "While you are only a child yourself? What a hard, hard fate! Is there no

friend to help and comfort you?"

"I have a friend," replies she, steadily. "You have often heard me mention her. You remember the name, now, – Clarissa Peyton? She was my best friend at school, and I know she will do what she can for me. She will be able to find me some nice children, and – "

"Friendship," – interrupts he, bitterly, – "it is a breath, – a name. It will fail you when you most need it."

"Clarissa will not fail me," replies she, slowly, though with a feeling of deadly sickness at her heart. "And, besides, you must not think of me as a governess always, papa. I shall, perhaps, marry somebody, some day."

The dying man's eyes grow a shade brighter; it is a mere flicker, but it lasts for a moment, long enough to convince her she has indeed given some poor hope to cheer his last hours.

"Yes; to marry somebody," he repeats, wistfully, "that will be best, – to get some good man, some kindly, loving heart to protect you and make a safe shelter for you. There is comfort in the thought. But I hope it will be soon, my darling, before your spirit is broken and your youth dulled."

"I shall marry as soon as ever I can," says Georgie, making a last terrible effort to appear hopeful and resigned. "I shall meet some one very soon, no doubt, – very soon: so do not fret about me any more. Why should I not, indeed? I am very pretty, am I not, papa?" In spite of the lightness of her words, a heavy choking sob escapes her as she finishes her little set speech. She buries

her face in the bed-clothes, to stifle her rising grief, but her father is almost too far gone to notice it.

"Yes, – so like your mother," he mutters, somewhat thickly, clutching aimlessly at the quilt. "Poor Alice! – poor girl! It was that day on the beach, when the waves were dancing, and the sun – or was it? – Did the old man ever forgive – ?"

He is wandering, dreaming his death-dream of happier days, going back, even as he sinks into everlasting sleep, to the gilded hours of youth.

The girl presses his hand to rouse him.

"Think of *me* now," she entreats, despairingly; "it will only be for a little while, – such a little while, – and then you will be with *her* forever. Oh, papa! my dear, my dear; smile at me once again. Think of me happily; let me feel when you are gone that your last hours with me were peaceful."

His eyes meet hers, and he smiles tenderly. Gently she slips her arms round him, and, laying her golden head upon the pillow, close to him, presses her lips to his, – the soft warm lips, that contrast so painfully with those pale cold other ones they touch. So she remains for a long time, kissing him softly every now and again, and thinking hopelessly of the end.

She neither sighs, nor weeps, nor makes any outward sign of anguish. Unlike most people, she has realized to its fullest the awfulness of this thing that is about to befall her. And the knowledge has paralyzed her senses, rendering her dull with misery, and tearless.

Presently the white lids, weary with nights of watching, droop. Her breath comes more evenly. Her head sinks more heavily against the pillow, and, like a child worn out with grief and pain, she sleeps.

When next she wakes, gray dawn is everywhere. The wind still moans unceasingly. Still the rain-drops patter against the panes. She raises her head affrightedly, and, springing to his feet, bends with bated breath above the quiet form lying on the bed.

Alas! alas! what change is here? He has not moved; no faintest alteration can be traced in the calm pose of the figure that lies just as she last saw it, when sleep o'er came her. The eyes are closed; the tender smile – the last fond smile – still lingers on his lips; yet, he is dead!

The poor child stands gazing down upon him with parted lips and clasped hands, and a face almost as ashen as that marble one to which her eyes grow with a horror unspeakable. He looks so peaceful – so much as though he merely sleeps – that for one mad moment she tries not to believe the truth. Yet she knows it is death, unmistakable and relentless, upon which for the first time she looks.

He is gone, forever! without another kiss, or smile, or farewell word beyond those last uttered. He had set out upon his journey alone, had passed into the other happier land, in the cold silence of the night, even while she slept, – had been torn from her, whilst yet her fond arms encircled him.

Impelled by some indefinable desire, she lays her fingers

softly on the hand that lies outside the coverlet. The awful chill that meets her touch seems to reach even to her heart. Throwing her arms above her head, with a wild passionate cry, she falls forward, and lies senseless across the lifeless body.

Misery hurts, but it rarely kills; and broken hearts are out of fashion. All this unhappiness came to Georgie Broughton about a year ago, and though brain-fever followed upon it, attacking her with vicious force, and almost handing her over as a victim to the greedy grave, yet she had survived, and overcome death, and returned from the land of shadows, weakened, indeed, but with life before her.

Months passed before she could summon up sufficient energy to plan or think about a possible future. All this time her aunt Elizabeth had clothed and fed and sheltered her, but unwillingly. Indeed, so grudgingly had she dealt out her measure of "brotherly love" that the girl writhed beneath it, and pined, with a passionate longing, for the day that should see her freed from a dependence that had become unspeakably bitter to her.

To-day, sitting in her little room, – an apartment high up in Aunt Elizabeth's house, – she tells herself she will hesitate no longer, that she is strong now, quite strong, and able to face the world. She holds up her delicate little hand between her eyes and the window, as a test of her returning strength, only to find she can almost see the light through it, – so thin, so fragile, has it grown. But she will not be disheartened; and, drawing pen and paper towards her, she tries to write.

But it is a difficult task, and her head is strangely heavy, and her words will not come to her. A vague feeling, too, that her letter will be unsuccessful, that her friend will fail her, distresses and damps her power to explain her position clearly.

Who can say if Clarissa Peyton will be the same at heart as when last they parted, with many words of good will and affection, and eyes dark with tears?

Grief and misery, and too much of Aunt Elizabeth, have already embittered and generated distrust in her young bosom. She is tired, too. All day she has toiled, has worked religiously, and gone through wearying household labor, trying to repay in some faint wise the reluctant hospitality extended to her. At this moment a sense of utter desolation overpowers her, and with a brain on fire, and a heart half broken, she pushes from her the partly-written letter, and, burying her face in her arms, breaks into low but heavy weeping.

"Papa! papa!" she sobs, miserably. It is the common refrain of all her sorrowful dirges, – the sadder that no response ever comes to the lonely cry. Of our dead, if we would believe them happy we must also believe that they have forgotten us; else how (when we think on our bleeding hearts) could they keep their bliss so perfect?

Mournfully as Mariana in her moated grange, the poor child laments, while sobs shake her slender frame. And the day dies, and the sun goes down, and happily some noise in the house – a step, a voice – arouses her, and, starting as though from some

ugly dream, she takes up her pen again, and writes eagerly, and without premeditation, to the one friend in whom she still puts faith.

CHAPTER VII

"Life has rising ills." – Dyer.

"Papa, papa," says Miss Peyton, impatiently, without eliciting any response.

It is half-past ten, and breakfast is on the table! So are two little white pigeons, who have flown in through the open window, and are sitting, one on Clarissa's shoulder, the other on the edge of the table, picking crumbs out of her plate. The sun is streaming hotly in, the breath of flowers floating faintly in his train. A bowl of roses, half opened and filled with the dew of early morning, lies near Clarissa's plate. Upon the window-sill, outside, another little pigeon, brown-tinged and timid, stands peeping shyly in, envying his bolder brothers, and longing for the pretty coaxing voice of his mistress that shall make him brave to enter.

But to-day the welcome summons does not come. Miss Peyton has an open letter in her hand, the contents of which have plainly disturbed and interested her to an unusual degree; so that the little bird, whose pretty brown plumage is being transformed by the sun into richest bronze, grows each moment more dejected. Not for him the crumbs and the "flesh pots of Egypt."

"One – two – If you don't answer me before I say three, papa, I shall do something desperate," she says, again, raising her voice a little.

But still papa takes no heed. At this moment, poor man, he is deep in Mr. Forster's Irish Distress Bill, and is deaf to all surroundings.

Clarissa loses patience. Taking up a teaspoon, she makes a sharp "assault and battery" upon an unoffending teacup, thereby creating a din compared to which the noise of tomtoms would be sweetest music.

George Peyton is not proof against this tattoo. He looks up irritably, and for a moment withdraws his mind from Mr. Forster's Bill.

"My dear Clarissa," he says, very justly incensed, "what is it? What on earth is the matter with you? My dear, whatever it is, do stop that unpleasant noise: it plays the very mischief with one's nerves."

"It is only a teaspoon," begins Miss Peyton, delighted with her success.

"And a cup, I think," says Mr. Peyton. "Separately they are unoffending, together they can annoy. If you will put that spoon out of your hand, my dear, you will make me much happier."

"It was only when I was actually hoarse, from trying to attract your attention, that I resorted to violent measures," says Clarissa, severely.

"I beg your pardon," returns he, submissively.

"Now listen to my letter," says Clarissa. "I want your advice. It is such a dear letter, and such a sad one; and – and something must be done at once."

"I quite agree with you," murmurs her father, dreamily. Once again his mind is losing itself in the folds of the fragrant "Times."

"Mannerton, Tuesday, September 24.

"My dear Clarissa, —

"So long a time has elapsed since last I saw or heard of you that I half fear, as you read this, it will puzzle you to remember the writer. Am I quite forgotten? I hope not; as I want you to do me a great service. This reason for wishing myself still in your memory sounds selfish, – almost rude; but what can I do? Must I not speak the truth? And indeed I am in sore trouble. I am friendless, all but homeless, and utterly alone in the world. But, as I am quite determined to fight my own way, I have decided on going out as a governess, and I want you, dear, dear Cissy, to get somebody to try me, – somebody who would not be too hard upon me, just at first, until I had accustomed myself to the life and to the children's ways. You may say I can paint very well, and, though not a brilliant pianist, I have a good voice. (Do you recollect how, at school, you used to say you liked to hear me sing when the day was dying?) I can speak French and German, but I know nothing of Italian or Latin, and I was never very much at arithmetic, or that. I think I could get on, after a little training; and at all events I know I must try, as life here is not endurable.

"Oh, Cissy, if time has changed you, if you have grown cold and careless, as all the rest of this cruel world, what shall I do? But I will not believe that even a hundred years could make you unkind or unfeeling. Do you think you

will be very long in answering this? Every hour I shall be listening for the post: write to me, then, as soon as you can. I am very unhappy here with Aunt Elizabeth, who does not care for me.

"I am, dear Clarissa,

"Your affectionate friend,
"Georgie Broughton.

"P.S. – If you could get me pretty children, I should be so glad; but of course it must not make any difference, and I dare say ugly ones are just as nice, when one gets used to them. I am dreadfully afraid of boys; but perhaps there may be a few found somewhere amenable to reason, and at least one or two who do not object to knees in their knickerbockers. Do you remember the gardener's babies at Brussels, and how fond they were of me? Dear Cissy, write soon."

This is the letter, with all its pathetic little confidences, its "do you remembers?" and "have you forgottens?" and its tone, – half proud and half beseeching, – that has touched Miss Peyton so deeply.

Her mouth trembles, there are tears in her voice and eyes, as she finishes the last word and turns her face to her father. Something she sees in that vague but kindly man checks her enthusiasm for the moment; a thought but half defined, a suspicion, disgraceful if true, crosses her brain and fills her with indignation.

"Papa! Have you been listening?" she asks, in her sternest tones.

"Listening, my dear? Of course I have. Yes, certainly, with all my might," returns he, with unusual and therefore doubtful alacrity. As a matter of fact, I don't think much would be said about his "distinguished answering" were he to be examined in the letter just read; but all the more for this reason does he assume an air of surprise at Clarissa's question, and covers himself with an expression of injured innocence. Unfortunately for him, however, Miss Peyton is a person not to be done.

"No, you have not," she says, severe but calm. "You have not heard a single syllable. Your mind was full of that miserable paper all the time, and I am positive you were putting together some silly speech that you imagine would electrify those absurd men in the House of Commons."

"I don't think it was a very silly speech, my dear Clarissa," remonstrates Mr. Peyton, feebly.

"Oh, then you do acknowledge you were miles away in thought," says Clarissa, triumphant, if disgusted.

"My dear girl, how you do misjudge me!" protests poor Mr. Peyton, at his wits' end. "I assure you, I was all attention to that very excellent letter from beginning to end."

"Were you?" returns she, sweetly. "Then, of course, you can tell me what was the last word."

She has placed her elbows on the table, and has let her pretty face sink into the palms of her hands, and is now regarding her

father with a smile, half mocking, half malicious.

"The last word! Oh, nonsense, my dear Cis! who ever remembered the last word of anything, unless it happened to be 'The Burial of Sir John Moore,' or 'Beautiful Star,' or something that way? But I know your letter was all about a young woman who has got herself into a mess and wants to come to you now as maid or laundress. But there is always danger in that sort of thing, you know, and you mightn't like it afterwards: and – "

"Oh, what an engrossing speech that imaginary one of yours must have been!" says Clarissa, with a little distracted shake of her head. "I knew you were in the room, didn't I? No, no, no, you are altogether wrong: this is no letter from maid or laundress, but from Georgie Broughton. (You must remember her name, I have so often mentioned it to you.) She is the dearest little thing in the world, – quite that, and more. And she writes, to tell me she is miserably poor, and wants to go out as a governess."

"Poor girl! Of all unhappy resources, the last."

"Yes; isn't it wretched? But, you see, she is bound to do something, and wearing out one's heart in a dingy school-room seems to be the only course left open to a pretty girl like Georgie."

"Try Mrs. Redmond, then. She is looking out for a governess for the children; and your friend might drop in there without further trouble."

"Oh, papa, but all those children! and Mrs. Redmond herself, too, so fretful and so irritable, – so utterly impossible in every

way. Her very 'How d'ye do?' would frighten Georgie to death."

"People don't die of chills of that description; and your poor little friend can scarcely expect to find everything *couleur de rose*. Besides, 'all those children' you speak of just resolve themselves into two, as the boys are at school, and Cissy calls herself grown up. I should think Cissy would be, in fact, a great comfort to her, and would be amenable to her, and gentle – and that."

At this, Miss Peyton laughs a little, and bites her lip.

"Amenable," she says, slowly. "Do you know, I am afraid my Georgie is even younger than Cissy?"

"Younger!"

"Well, she will certainly look younger; she has such a little, fresh, babyish rose-bud of a face. Do you think" – anxiously – "that would matter much?"

"It doesn't sound promising; but, if she is a good girl, one might forgive the great crime of being fresh and young. Dear me, it is very awkward. If she had been a nice, sensible, ugly, middle-aged person, now, all would have gone well; but, after all, poor child, of course she can't help her appearance."

"No, she certainly cannot," says Clarissa, with a sigh, heart-felt pity in her tone. "And her eyes are the very color of forget-me-nots, – quite the prettiest I ever saw. It is really too bad."

"Redmond, himself, would make no difficulty about it. He prefers to have young people about him, and was always, you know, rather – rather melancholy when in Miss Prood's society, who was really a most estimable woman, and one whose moral

character one could not fail to admire, when one forgot her nose, and her – "

"Temper?"

"Well, yes, she was rather excitable. But, as I was saying, Redmond and your friend would probably pull very well; and then there's the curate. Why," – brilliantly, – "she might marry the curate!"

"Mr. Hastings?" says Clarissa, with animation, brightening visibly. "Why, really, so she might. Such a good-looking man, too, and clever. It is only a day or two ago since somebody said to me, 'He has the very sort of face they make bishops of nowadays.'"

"What a very disinterested girl you are!" says her father, with a smile, faint but amused: "without a moment's hesitation you surrender every hope of making this embryo bishop your own. Can devotion farther go? Well, take my advice; and, as your heart is set upon this thing, go down to the vicarage to-day; tell Mrs. Redmond you have secured a governess for her; do not discuss the subject, – simply state the fact; and I think you will find her deeply grateful, in that you have put an end to her difficulties, without compelling her brain to bear upon the matter."

"Machiavelli was a poor creature, when compared with you," says Miss Peyton, saucily. "What plots and plans swell out your busy brain! I shall go to the vicarage to-day, as you advise, and be as sweet as honey to Mrs. Redmond, and win my cause against all obstacles. But first" – turning with a soft movement to caress the

snowy pigeon that rests upon her shoulder – "little home friends must be fed."

The bird, as though comprehending her words, flies through the open window to the balcony outside, to nestle among its more timid companions; whilst Clarissa, a creature scarcely less fair than they, follows him, to fling breadcrumbs for their morning meal.

A little later, having dressed herself, she starts upon her errand, ready to take the vicarage by storm.

CHAPTER VIII

"'Tis love, love, love, that makes the world go round."

The hot September sun beats fiercely on her as she walks along; the day is full of languor and sweet peace. The summer is almost done, and is dying, rich in beauty, and warm with the ripeness of strength perfected. From out the thickets, little birds, that three months agone scarce knew the power of breath, now warble soft melodies, that thrill the air with joy. Clarissa, glad, and full of purpose, feels her heart at one with these tiny, heaven-taught musicians, as she follows the path beneath the leafy trees that leads to the vicarage.

As she deserts the tinted wood, and gains the road that runs by the old mill, she finds herself face to face with Horace Branscombe, coming towards her in a somewhat laggard fashion. His brow is darkened by a frown: his whole expression is moody and oppressed with discontent.

As he sees Clarissa, his features – as though compelled by a powerful will – undergo a complete change, and he smiles, and comes forward with outstretched hand to greet her.

"Horace! you here again, and so soon?" she says, quickly. Surprise lends haste to her tongue. She has believed him in London; and now to see him thus unexpectedly, and without the usual friendly warning conveyed by letter, causes her not only

pleasure, but a vague uneasiness.

"Does it seem 'so soon' to you?" replies he, in a carefully inspired tone. "To me the last two months have appeared almost a year, so heavily have dragged the days spent away from Pullingham."

It is a very stereotyped little sentence, old and world-worn, and smacking faintly of insincerity; but when a woman loves a man she rarely measures his words.

"I seem rude," says Clarissa, with a soft smile. "But you will understand me. And you know you told me you did not intend to return before Christmas."

"Yes, I know." He is silent for a little while, and then, rousing himself, as though by an effort, says, slowly, —

"Did you miss me?"

"I always miss you," returns she, simply: "you know that." She flushes warmly, and lets her long lashes fall leisurely, until at length they hide from view the sweet confession of her eyes. There is a pause that embraces a full minute, and then she speaks again. "You have not yet told me the reason of your return," she says, gently.

"I wearied of town," replies he. "A strange acknowledgment for one like me, but true. For once, I honestly pined for the country – insipid as I have always deemed it – and craved unceasingly for something fresh, new, innocent, something unused to gas, and the glare and unholy glitter of a city."

He speaks bitterly – almost passionately – and as though for

the moment he has altogether forgotten the existence of his companion. An instant later, however, he recovers himself.

"I felt I should be happier, more fitted to cope with my work, if I could get even one glimpse of you!"

"Are you not happy, then?" asks she, gently, her heart beating fast, her color growing and lessening rapidly.

"Happy? no. Can a man be happy while a perpetual doubt distracts him? Can he know even the meaning of the word Peace, whilst devoured with a fear that he shall never possess the one great good he desires?"

Again, his thoughts appear to wander; and some passion, not born of the present moment, but borrowed from some other hour, fills his tone.

"Yes," says Clarissa, nervously, questioningly, feeling poor in words, now that the great crisis of her life has come.

"So I am here," he goes on, softly, "to solve my doubt, to gain at least a rest from the gnawing suspense that for so long I have endured. Need I tell you that I love you? – that" (he pauses, and a faint contraction of the features, that dies almost as it is born, disfigures his face for a second) – "that you are the one woman in all the world upon whom I have set my heart?"

There is silence. For Clarissa, an intense joy holds her mute; the very intensity of her happiness checks the flow of speech. He, too, seems lost in thought. Presently, however, he breaks the silence, and this time a faint anxiety may be discernible in his voice, though his face is calm and composed, as usual.

"You do not speak, Clarissa. I have told you of my love, and you are silent. I now ask if you can love me? At least, give me an answer. Dearest," – glancing at her averted face, and seeing the shy blush that adds another charm to its beauty, – "tell me the truth."

"I can; I do love you!" says Clarissa, sweetly, and with perfect trust. She slips her hand into his. Raising his hat, he lifts the slender fingers to his lips, and kisses them; and, then, together – still hand in hand – they walk along, speechless, yet seemingly content.

The road is dusty; and a few drops of rain fall, like mild blessings, into its parched furrows. The roadside flowers, drooping and languid, fling their rich perfume, with lavish generosity, upon the motionless air. Some sheep, in a far-off meadow, bleat mournfully, and answer back the echo that mocks their lament.

"You have made me happier than I ever hoped to be; but you have not yet said you will marry me." The words come from Horace, but sound curiously far away, the very stillness and sadness of the evening rendering them more distant. Clarissa, glancing at him, can see he is white as Death.

"How pale he is!" she thinks, and then makes herself happy in the belief that he is terribly in earnest about this matter, and that his love for her is infinite.

"Yes, I shall marry you," she says, with tender seriousness. To her, this promise is a solemn bond, that nothing but death or

falsehood can cancel.

"When?"

"Oh, Horace, I cannot answer that question so readily. There are so many things. Papa must be told; and James Scrope; and you must tell Dorian and your uncle."

"All that would hardly take half an hour."

"Perhaps; but there are other reasons for delay, more than I can tell you just now. And, besides, it is all so new, so strange." She smiles, as though she would willingly have added the words, "so sweet;" and a little happy far-away look creeps into and illumines her eyes. "Why are you so impatient?"

"Impatient!" returns he, a touch of vehemence in his tone. "Of course I am impatient. The sooner it is all got over the better." He checks himself, draws his breath somewhat quickly, and goes on in a calmer fashion: "What sort of a lover should I be, if I showed no anxiety to claim you as soon as possible? *You* should be the last to blame me for undue haste in this matter. When shall it be, then? – In one month? two? three?" He speaks again, almost excitedly.

"Oh, no, no," gently, but shrinking from him a little. "That would be impossible. Why, think! – it is only this moment you have told me you love me, and now you would have me name our wedding-day!"

"Not exactly that. But tell me some definite time, near at hand, to which I can be looking forward. Everything rests with you now, remember that." His last words convey an unconscious

warning, but Clarissa neither heeds or understands it.

"Papa will miss me so terribly," she says, dreamily; "it seems selfish, almost as though I were wilfully deserting him. I should, at least, like another Christmas at home with him. And see," – turning to him, with gentle earnestness, – "are we not quite happy as we now are, loving and trusting in each other? Why, then, should we not continue this present happiness for another year? You are silent, Horace! You do not answer! Are you angry with me?" She lays her hand lightly on his arm.

"No; not angry." His eyes are on the ground; and he takes no notice of the tender pressure on his arm. "But a year is a long time to wait! So many things may happen in twelve months; and deeds once done, forever leave their mark."

"Do not speak like that, it is as though you would foretell evil," says Clarissa, a faint feeling of superstitious horror making her nervous.

Branscombe, raising his head, regards her curiously.

"Why should there be evil to foretell?" he says, slowly. "And yet, Clarissa, I would ask you always to remember this hour, and the fact that it was you, not I, who wished the postponement of our marriage. If it must be as you say, it will be better to keep our engagement as quiet as possible; perfectly secret will indeed be best."

"Yes; if you wish it. That will please me, too. Only papa need know of it, and – James Scrope."

"And why Sir James?" with a scrutinizing gaze.

"Why?" – with some surprise. "Well, I suppose because papa and I never do anything important without telling him of it. He is quite our oldest friend. We should hardly get on now without Jim."

"Not so old, either. I hope, by and by, you will be able to manage without Sir James as a father-confessor."

"By and by I shall have you," says Clarissa, sweetly, with a smile and a soft blush.

"True! I wonder if you will find that sufficient? I doubt I'm half such a good fellow, Clarissa, as you believe me."

In which he comes nearer the truth than he ever came before.

"You are good enough for me," says Clarissa, with fond conviction. "Will you come with me as far as the vicarage? I must go there to-day, and the walk is such a pretty one, and," – with a little happy laugh, – "now you are quite my own property, I think I should like to make use of you. Look! there is Ruth Annersley standing at her gate. Good-morning, Ruth! What a charming day, is it not? after all yesterday's rain!"

Ruth – who, the moment before, had made a faint movement as though she would willingly have stepped behind the huge rose-bush nearest to her and so have escaped observation – comes slowly forward. She is pale; but the intense heat of the day makes itself felt by all, and has deprived even Miss Peyton's cheeks of some of their usual warmth. She accepts Clarissa's proffered hand, and smiles a faint welcome. But when Horace would, too, have shaken hands with her, she declines to see his meaning, and,

bowing slightly, turns aside to listen to his companion's words.

"Were you raking your walks?" asks Clarissa, idly, leaning on the gate, and gazing down the trim-gravelled path that leads to the ivy-clad cottage beyond. "Nobody's walks are ever as clean as yours, I think. And your roses are something too delicious, far better than our out-door flowers at Gowran. And so late in the season, too!"

"May I give you one?" says Ruth, dimpling prettily at her praise.

"Thank you. How sweet they are! No, no, Horace, that is altogether too large for your coat. Ruth, will you give Mr. Branscombe a tiny bud? That one over there, for instance."

"I don't think I see it," says Ruth, quietly. She has grown pale again, and her lips have lost a little of the childish petulant pout that characterizes them.

"Just over there. Don't you see? Why, you are almost looking at it, you stupid child."

"I am stupid, I am afraid," – with a faint smile. "Come in, Miss Peyton, and gather it yourself." She opens the gate, with a sort of determination in her manner, and Clarissa, going up to the rose-tree, plucks the delicate blossom in dispute. Horace has followed her inside the gate, but, turning rather to the left, falls apparently in love with an artless white rose-bud that waves gently to and fro upon its stem, as though eager to attract and rivet admiration.

"I think I prefer this flower, after all," he says, lightly. "May I ask you to give it to me, Ruth?" His manner is quite easy, very

nearly indifferent, and his back is turned to Clarissa. But his eyes are on Ruth; and the girl, though with open reluctance and ill-repressed defiance, is compelled to pick the white rose and give it to him.

"Well, I really don't think you have shown very good taste," says Clarissa, examining the two flowers. "Mine is the most perfect. Nevertheless, I suppose wilful man must have his way. Let me settle it in your coat for you."

Almost as she speaks, the flower drops accidentally from her fingers; and, both she and Horace making a step forward to recover it, by some awkward chance they tread on it, and crush the poor, frail little thing out of all shape. It lies upon the gravel, broken and disfigured, yet very sweet in death.

"You trod on it," says Horace, rather quickly, to Clarissa.

"No, dear; I really think – indeed I am sure – it was you," returns she, calmly, but with conviction.

"It doesn't matter: it was hardly worth a discussion," says Ruth, with an odd laugh. "See how poor a thing it looks now; and, yet, a moment since it was happy on its tree."

"Never mind, Horace: this is really a charming little bud," says Clarissa, gayly, holding out the rose of her own choosing: "at least you must try to be content with it. Good-by, Ruth; come up to Gowran some day soon, and take those books you asked for the other day."

"Thank you, Miss Peyton. I shall come soon."

"Good-by," says Horace.

"Good-by," returns she. But it is to Clarissa, not to him, she addresses the word of farewell.

When the mill has been left some distance behind them, and Ruth's slight figure, clad in its white gown, has ceased to be a fleck of coloring in the landscape, Clarissa says, thoughtfully, —

"What a pretty girl that is, and how refined! Quite a little lady in manner; so calm, and so collected, – cold, almost. I know many girls, irreproachably born, not to be compared with her, in my opinion. You agree with me?"

"Birth is not always to be depended upon nowadays."

"She is so quiet, too, and so retiring. She would not even shake hands with you, when we met her, though you wanted her to. Did you remark that?"

"Sometimes I am dull about trifles, such as that."

"Yes. By the by, she did not seem surprised at seeing you here to-day, although she thought you safe in town, as we all did, – you deceitful boy."

"Did she not?"

"No. But then, of course, it was a matter of indifference to her."

"Of course."

They have reached the entrance to the vicarage by this time, and are pausing to say farewell for a few hours.

"I shall come up to Gowran to-morrow morning first thing, and speak to your father: is that what you will wish me to do?" asks Horace, her hand in his.

"Yes. But, Horace," looking at him earnestly, "I think I should like to tell it all to papa myself first, this evening."

"Very well, dearest. Do whatever makes you happiest," returns he, secretly pleased that the ice will be broken for him before his prepares for his *mauvais quart-d'heure* in the library. "And if he should refuse his consent, Clarissa, what then? You know you might make so much a better marriage."

"Might I?" – tenderly. "I don't think so; and papa would not make me unhappy."

CHAPTER IX

"A generous friendship no cold medium knows." – Pope.

Mrs. Redmond is sitting on a centre ottoman, darning stockings. This is her favorite pastime, and never fails her. When she isn't darning stockings, she is always scolding the cook, and as her voice, when raised, is not mellifluous, her family, in a body, regard the work-basket with reverential affection, and present it to her notice when there comes the crash of broken china from the lower regions, or when the cold meat has been unfairly dealt with.

She is of the lean cadaverous order of womankind, and is bony to the last degree. Her nose is aquiline, and, as a rule, pale blue. As this last color might also describe her eyes, there is a depressing want of contrast about her face. Her lips are thin and querulous, and her hair – well, she hasn't any hair, but her wig is flaxen.

As Clarissa enters, she hastily draws the stocking from her hand, and rises to greet her. A faint blush mantles in her cheek, making one at once understand that in by-gone days she had probably been considered pretty.

"So unexpected, my dear Clarissa," she says, with as pleased a smile as the poor thing ever conjures up, and a little weakness at the knees, meant for a courtesy. "So very glad to see you," –

as, indeed, she is.

In her earlier days she had been called a belle, – by her own people, – and had been expected, accordingly, to draw a prize in the marriage-market. But Penelope Proude had failed them, and, by so doing, had brought down eternal condemnation on her head. In her second season she had fallen foolishly but honestly in love with a well-born but impecunious curate, and had married him in spite of threats and withering sneers. With one consent her family cast her off and consigned her to her fate, declaring themselves incapable of dealing with a woman who could wilfully marry a man possessed of nothing. They always put a capital N to this word, and perhaps they were right, as at that time all Charlie Redmond could call his own was seven younger brothers and a tenor voice of the very purest.

As years rolled on, though Mrs. Redmond never, perhaps, regretted her marriage, she nevertheless secretly acknowledged to herself a hankering after the old life, a longing for the grandeur and riches that accrued to it (the Proudes for generations had been born and bred and had thriven in the soft goods line), and hugged the demoralizing thought to her bosom that a little more trade and a little less blue blood would have made her husband a degree more perfect.

It pleased her when the county families invited the youthful Cissy to their balls; and it warmed her heart and caused her to forget the daily shifts and worries of life when the duchess sent her fruit and game, accompanied by kind little notes. It above

all things reconciled her to her lot, when the heiress of Gowran Grange pulled up her pretty ponies at her door, and running in, made much of her and her children, and listened attentively to her grievances, as only a sympathetic nature can.

To-day, Clarissa's visit, being early, and therefore unconventional, and for that reason the more friendly, sweetens all her surroundings. Miss Peyton might have put in an appearance thrice in the day later on, yet her visits would not have been viewed with such favor as is this matutinal call.

"Cissy is out: she has gone to the village," says Mrs. Redmond, scarcely thinking Clarissa has come all the way from Gowran to spend an hour alone with her.

"I am sorry: but it is you I most particularly wanted to see. What a delicious day it is! I walked all the way from Gowran, and the sun was rather too much for me; but how cool it always is here! This room never seems stuffy or over-heated, as other rooms do."

"It is a wretched place, quite wretched," says Mrs. Redmond, with a depreciating glance directed at a distant sofa that might indeed be termed patriarchal.

"What are you doing?" asks Clarissa, promptly, feeling she cannot with any dignity defend the sofa. "Darning? Why can't I help you? – I am sure I could darn. Oh, what a quantity of socks! Are they all broken?" looking with awe upon the overflowing basket that lies close to Mrs. Redmond's feet.

"Every one of them," replies that matron, with unction. "I can't

think how they do it, but I assure you they never come out of the wash without innumerable tears." Whether she is alluding, in her graceful fashion, to her children or their socks, seems at present doubtful. "I sometimes fancy they must take their boots off and dance on the sharp pebbles to bring them to such a pass; but they say they don't. Yet how to account for this?" She holds up one bony hand, decorated with a faded sock, in a somewhat triumphant fashion, and lets three emaciated fingers start to life through the toe of it.

"Do let me help you," says Clarissa, with entreaty, and, stooping to the basket, she rummages there until she produces a needle, a thimble, and some thread. "I dare say I shall get on splendidly, if you will just give me a hint now and then and tell me when I am stitching them up too tightly."

This hardly sounds promising, but Mrs. Redmond heeds her not.

"My dear, pray do not trouble yourself with such uninteresting work," she says, hastily. "It really makes me unhappy to see you so employed; and that sock of all others, – it is Bobby's, and I'm sure there must be something wrong with his heels. If you insist on helping me, do try another."

"No, I shall stitch up Bobby, or die in the attempt," says Miss Peyton, valiantly. "It is quite nice work, I should think, and so easy. I dare say after a time I should love it."

"Should you?" says Mrs. Redmond. "Well, perhaps; but for myself, I assure you, though no one will believe it, I abhor the

occupation. There are moments when it almost overcomes me, – the perpetual in and out of the needle, you will understand, – it seems so endless. Dear, dear, there was a time when I was never obliged to do such menial services, when I had numerous dependants to wait on me to do my bidding But then" – with a deep sigh, that sounds like a blast from Boreas – "I married the vicar."

"And quite right, too," says Clarissa, with a cheerful little nod, seeing Mrs. Redmond has mounted her high horse and intends riding him to the death. "I myself shouldn't hesitate about it, if I only got the chance. And indeed where could any one get a more charming husband than the dear vicar."

"Well, well, it was a foolish match notwithstanding," says Mrs. Redmond, with a smile and a wan sort of blush; "though certainly at that time I don't deny he was very fascinating. Such a voice, my dear! and then his eyes were remarkably fine."

"'Were' —*are*, you mean," says the crafty Clarissa, knowing that praise of her husband is sweet to the soul of the faded Penelope, and that the surest means of reducing her to a pliant mood is to permit her to maunder on uninterruptedly about past glories, and dead hours rendered bright by age. To have her in her kindest humor, before mentioning the real object of her visit, must be managed, at all risks. "Yours was a love-match, wasn't it?" she says, coaxingly. "Do tell me all about it." (She has listened patiently to every word of it about a hundred times before.) "I do so like a real love-affair."

"There isn't much to tell," says Mrs. Redmond, who is quite delighted, and actually foregoes the charm of darning, that she may the more correctly remember each interesting detail in her own "old story;" "but it was all very sudden, – very; like a tornado, or a whirlwind, or those things in the desert that cover one up in a moment. First we met at two croquet-parties, – yes, two, – and then at a dinner at the Ramseys, and it was at the dinner at the Ramseys' that he first pressed my hand. I thought, my dear, I should have dropped, it was such a downright, not-to-be-got-over sort of squeeze. Dear me, I can almost feel it now," says Mrs. Redmond, who is blushing like a girl.

"Yes. Do go on," says Clarissa, who, in reality, is enjoying herself, intensely.

"Well, then, two days afterwards, to my surprise, he called with some tickets for a concert, to which my mamma, who suspected nothing, took me. There we met again, and it was there, right, as one might say, under mamma's nose, he proposed to me. He was very eloquent, though he was obliged to speak rather disconnectedly, owing to the music stopping now and then and my mamma being of a suspicious turn: but he was young in those days, my dear, and well favored, no doubt. So we got married."

"That is the proper ending to all pretty stories. But is it true," says Clarissa, with a wiliness really horrible in one so young, "that just at that time you refused a splendid offer, all for the vicar's sake?"

"Splendid is a long word," says Mrs. Redmond, trying to speak carelessly, but unmistakably elated, "yet I must confess there is some truth in the report to which you allude. Sir Hubert Fitz-Hubert was a baronet of very ancient lineage, came over with the Conqueror, or King Alfred, I quite forget which, but it was whichever was the oldest: that I know. He was, in fact, a trifle old for me, perhaps, and not so rich as others I have known, but still a baronet. He proposed to me, but I rejected him upon the spot with scorn, though he went on his knees to me, and swore in an anguished frenzy, that he would cut his throat with his razor if I refused to listen to his suit! I did refuse, but I heard nothing more about the razor. I am willing to believe he put some restraint upon his maddened feelings, and refrained from inflicting any injury upon himself."

"Poor fellow!" says Clarissa, in a suspiciously choky tone.

"Then I espoused the vicar," says Mrs. Redmond, with a sentimental sigh. "One does foolish things sometimes."

"That, now, was a wise one. I would not marry a king if I loved a beggar. Altogether, you behaved beautifully, and just like a novel."

Feeling that the moment for action has arrived, as Mrs. Redmond is now in a glow of pride and vanity well mixed, Clarissa goes on sweetly:

"I have some news for you."

"For me?"

"Yes, for you. I know how delicate you are, and how unable

to manage those two strong children you have at home. And I know, too, you have been looking out for a suitable governess for some time, but you have found a difficulty in choosing one, have you not?"

"Indeed I have."

"Well, I think I know some who will just suit you. She was at school with me, and, though poor now, having lost both father and mother, is of very good family, and well connected."

"But the salary?" says Mrs. Redmond, with some hesitation. "The salary is the thing. I hear of no one now who will come for less than sixty or seventy pounds a year at the lowest; and with Henry at school, and Rupert's college expenses, forty pounds is as much as we can afford to give."

"Miss Broughton will, I think, be quite content with that: she only wants to be happy, and at rest, and she will be all that with you and Cissy and Mr. Redmond. She is young, and it is her first trial, but she is very clever: she has a really lovely voice, and paints excessively well. Ethel has rather a taste for painting, has she not?"

"A decided talent for it. All my family were remarkable for their artistic tendencies, so she, doubtless, inherits it; and – yes, of course, it would be a great thing for her to have some one on the spot to develop this talent, and train it. Your friend, you say, is well connected?"

"Very highly connected, on her mother's side. Her father was a lieutenant in the navy, and very respectable too, I believe; though

I know nothing of him."

"That she should be a lady is, of course, indispensable," says Mrs. Redmond, with all the pride that ought to belong to softgoods people. "I need hardly say *that*, I think. But why does she not appeal for help to her mother's relations?"

"Because she prefers honest work to begging from those who up to this have taken no notice of her."

"I admire her," says Mrs. Redmond, warmly. "If you think she will be satisfied with forty pounds, I should like to try what she could do with the children."

"I am very glad you have so decided. I know no place in which I would rather see a friend of mine than here."

"Thank you, my dear. Then will you write to her, or shall I?"

"Let me write to her first, if you don't mind: I think I can settle everything."

"Mind? – no, indeed: it is only too good of you to take so much trouble about me."

To which Clarissa says, prettily, —

"Do not put it in that light: there is no pleasure so keen as that of being able to help one's friends."

Then she rises, and, having left behind her three socks that no earthly power can ever again draw upon a child's foot, so hopelessly has she brought heel and sole together, she says good-by to Mrs. Redmond, and leaves the room.

Outside on the avenue she encounters the vicar, hurrying home.

"Turn with me," she says, putting her hand through his arm. "I have something to say to you."

"Going to be married?" asks he, gayly.

"Nonsense!" – blushing, in that he has so closely hit the mark. "It is not of anything so paltry I would unburden my mind."

"Then you have nothing of importance to tell me," says the vicar; "and I must go. Your story will keep: my work will not. I am in a great hurry: old Betty Martin – "

"Must wait. I insist on it. Dying! nonsense! she has been dying every week for three years, and you believe her every time. Come as far as the gate with me."

"You command, I obey," says the vicar, with a sigh of resignation, walking on beside his pet parishioner. "But if you could only understand the trouble I am in with those Batesons you would know some pity for me."

"What! again?" says Clarissa, showing, and feeling, deep compassion.

"Even so. This time about the bread. You know what unpleasant bread they bake, and how Mrs. Redmond objects to it; and really it *is* bad for the children."

"It is poison," says Clarissa, who never does anything by halves, and who is nothing if not sympathetic.

"Well so I said; and when I had expostulated with them, mildly but firmly, and suggested that better flour might make better dough, and they had declined to take any notice of my protest, – why, I just ordered my bread from the Burtons opposite, and – "

The vicar pauses.

"And you have been happy ever since?"

"Well, yes, my dear. I suppose in a way I have; that is, I have ceased to miss the inevitable breakfast-lecture on the darkness and coarseness of the bread; but I have hardly gained on other points, and the Batesons are a perpetual scourge. They have decided on never again 'darkening the church door' (their own words, my dear Clarissa), because I have taken the vicarage custom from them. They prefer imperilling their souls to giving up the chance of punishing me. And now the question is, whether I should not consent to the slow poisoning of my children, rather than drive my parishioners into the arms of the Methodists, who keep open house for all comers below the hill."

"I don't think I should poison the children," says Clarissa.

"But what is to become of my choir? Charlotte Bateson has the sweetest voice in it, and now she will not come to church. I am at my wits' end when I think of it all."

"I am going to supply Charlotte's place for you," says Clarissa, slyly.

"Thank you, my dear. But, you see, you would never be in time. And, unfortunately, the services must begin always at a regular hour. Punctuality was the one thing I never could teach you, – that, and the Catechism."

"What a libel!" says Clarissa. "I shouldn't malign my own teaching if I were you. I am perfectly certain I could say it all now, this very moment, from start to finish, questions and all,

without a mistake. Shall I?"

"No, no. I'll take your word for it," says the vicar, hastily. "The fact is, I have just been listening to it at the morning school in the village, and when one has heard a thing repeated fourteen times with variations, one naturally is not ambitious of hearing it again, no matter how profitable it may be."

"When I spoke of filling Charlotte's place," says Clarissa, "I did not allude in any way to myself, but to – And now I am coming to my news."

"So glad!" says the vicar; "I may overtake old Betty yet."

"I have secured a governess for Mrs. Redmond. Such a dear little governess! And I want you to promise me to be more than usually kind to her, because she is young and friendless and it is her first effort at teaching."

"So that question is settled at last," says the vicar, with a deep – if carefully suppressed – sigh of relief. "I am rejoiced, if only for my wife's sake, who has been worrying herself for weeks past, trying to replace the inestimable – if somewhat depressing – Miss Prood."

"Has she?" says Clarissa, kindly. "Worry is a bad thing. But to-day Mrs. Redmond seems much better than she has been for a long time. Indeed, she said so."

"Did she?" says the vicar, with a comical, transient smile, Mrs. Redmond's maladies being of the purely imaginary order.

"What are you laughing at now?" asks Clarissa, who has marked this passing gleam of amusement.

"At you, my dear, you are so quaintly humorous," replies he. "But go on: tell me of this new acquisition to our household. Is she a friend of yours?"

"Yes, a great friend."

"Then of course we shall like her."

"Thank you," says Clarissa. "She is very pretty, and very charming. Perhaps, after all, I am doing a foolish thing for myself. How shall I feel when she has cut me out at the vicarage?"

"Not much fear of that, were she Aphrodite herself. You are much too good a child to be liked lightly or by halves. Well, good-by: you won't forget about the flannel for the Batley twins?"

"I have it ready, – at least, half of it. How could I tell she was going to have twins," says Clarissa, apologetically.

"It certainly was very inconsiderate of her," says the vicar, with a sigh, as he thinks of the poverty that clings to the Batley *ménage* from year's end to year's end.

"Well, never mind; she shall have it all next week," promises Clarissa, soothingly, marking his regretful tone; and then she bids him farewell, and goes up the road again in the direction of her home.

She is glad to be alone at last. Her mission successfully accomplished, she has now time to let her heart rest contentedly upon her own happiness. All the events of the morning – the smallest word, the lightest intonation, the most passing smile, that claimed Horace as their father – are remembered by her. She dwells fondly on each separate remembrance, and repeats to

herself how he looked and spoke at such-and-such moments.

She is happy, quite happy. A sort of wonder, too, mixes with her delight. Only a few short hours ago she had left her home, free, unbetrothed, with only hope to sustain her, and now she is returning to it with her hope a certainty, – bound, heart and soul, to the dearest, truest man on earth, as she believes.

How well he loves her! She had noticed his sudden paling when she had begged for some delay before actually naming her "brydale day." She had hardly believed his love for her was so strong, so earnest: even she (how *could* she? with tender self-reproach) had misjudged him, had deemed him somewhat cold, indifferent; unknowing of the deep stratum of feeling that lay beneath the outward calm of his demeanor.

Dear, dearest Horace! She will never disbelieve in him again; he is her own now, her very own, and she loves him with all her heart, and he loves just the same, and – Oh, if every woman in the world could only be as happy as she is to-day, what a glorious place it would be!

Not that it is such a bad place, by any means, as some people would lead one to imagine. Surely these are disagreeable people, misanthropists, misogamists, and such like heretics; or else, poor souls! they are in a bad strait, without present hope and without any one to love them! This last seems, indeed, a misfortune.

Yet why abuse a lovely world? How bright the day is, how sweet and fresh the air, though evening is nigh at hand! She hardly ever remembers a September so fine, So free from damp; the

very birds —

Had he thought her unloving or capricious when she pleaded for a longer engagement? (Here the tears rise unbidden in her eyes.) Oh, surely not; he understood her thoroughly; for had he not smiled upon her afterwards?

So he will always smile. There shall never be any cross words or angry frowns to chill their perfect love! Their lives will be a summer dream, a golden legend, a pure, fond idyl.

Thus beguiling time with beliefs too sweet for earthly power to grant, she hastens home, with each step building up another story in her airy house, until at length she carries a castle, tall and stately, into her father's house.

CHAPTER X

"I have no other but a woman's reason:
I think him so, because I think him so." – Shakespeare.

"Where is papa?" she asks, meeting one of the servants in the hall. Hearing he is out, and will not be back for some time, she, too, turns again to the open door, and, as though the house is too small to contain all the thoughts that throng her breast, she walks out into the air again, and passes into the garden, where autumn, though kindly and slow in its advances, is touching everything with the hand of death.

"Heavily hangs the broad sunflower
Over its grave i' the earth so chilly;
Heavily hangs the hollyhock,
Heavily hangs the tiger lily."

With a sigh she quits her beloved garden, and wanders still! farther abroad into the deep woods that "have put their glory on," and are dressed in tender russets, and sad greens, and fading tints, that meet and melt into each other.

The dry leaves are falling, and lie crackling under foot. The daylight is fading, softly, imperceptibly, but surely. There is yet a glow from the departing sunlight, that, sinking lazily beyond the distant hills, tinges with gold the browning earth that in her

shroud of leaves is lying.

But death, or pain, or sorrow, has no part with Clarissa to-day. She is quite happy, – utterly content. She marks not the dying of the year, but rather the beauty of the sunset. She heeds not the sullen roar of the ever-increasing streamlets, that winter will swell into small but angry rivers; hearing only the songs of the sleepy birds as they croon their night-songs in the boughs above her.

When an hour has passed, and twilight has come up and darkened all the land, she goes back again to her home, and, reaching the library, looks in, to find her father sitting there, engrossed as usual with some book, which he is carefully annotating as he reads.

"Are you very busy?" asks she, coming slowly up to him. "I want to be with you for a little while."

"That is right. I am never too busy to talk to you. Why, it is quite an age since last I saw you! – not since breakfast; where have you been all day?"

"You are a pet," says Miss Peyton, in a loving whisper, rubbing her cheek tenderly against his, as a reward for his pretty speech. "I have been at the vicarage, and have pleaded Georgie's cause so successfully that I have won it; and have made them half in love with her already."

"A special pleader indeed. Diplomacy is your forte: you should keep to it."

"I mean to. I shouldn't plead in vain with you, should I?" She

has grown somewhat earnest.

"Oh! with me!" says her father, with much self-contempt; "I have given up all that sort of thing, long ago. I know how much too much you are for me, and I am too wise to swim against the tide. Only I would entreat you to be merciful as you are strong."

"What a lot of nonsense you do talk, you silly boy!" says Clarissa, who is still leaning over his chair in such a position that he cannot see her face. Perhaps, could he have seen it, he might have noticed how pale it is beyond its wont. "Well, the Redmonds seemed quite pleased, and I shall write to Georgie to-morrow. It will be nice for her to be here, near me. It may keep her from being lonely and unhappy."

"Well, it ought," says George Peyton. "What did the vicar say?"

"The vicar always says just what I say," replies she, a trifle saucily, and with a quick smile.

"Poor man! his is the common lot," says her father; and then, believing she has said all she wants to say, and being filled with a desire to return to his book and his notes, he goes on: "So that was the weighty matter you wanted to discuss, eh? Is that all your news?"

"Not quite," returns she, in a low tone.

"No? You are rich in conversation this evening. Who is it we are now to criticise?"

"The person you love best, – I hope."

"Why, that will be you," says George Peyton.

"You are sure?" says Clarissa, a little tremulously; and then her father turns in his chair and tries to read her face.

"No; stay just as you are; I can tell you better if you do not look at me," she whispers, entreatingly, moving him with her hands back to his former position.

"What is it, Clarissa?" he asks, hastily, though he is far from suspecting the truth. Some faint thought of James Scrope (why he knows not) comes to him at this moment, and not unpleasingly. "Tell me, darling. Anything that concerns you must, of necessity, concern me also."

"Yes, I am glad I know that," she says, speaking with some difficulty, but very earnestly. "To-day I met Horace Branscombe."

"Yes?" His face changes a little, from vague expectancy to distinct disappointment; but then she cannot see his face.

"And he asked me to be his wife – and – I said, Yes – if – if it pleases you, papa."

It is over. The dreaded announcement is made. The words that have cost her so much to utter have gone out into the air; and yet there is no answer!

For a full minute silence reigns, and then Clarissa lays her hand imploringly upon her father's shoulder. He is looking straight before him, his expression troubled and grave, his mouth compressed.

"Speak to me," says Clarissa, entreatingly.

After this he does speak.

"I wish it had been Dorian," he says, impulsively.

Then she takes her hand from his shoulder, as though it can no longer rest there in comfort, and her eyes fill with disappointed tears.

"Why do you say that?" she asks, with some vehemence. "It sounds as if – as if you undervalued Horace! Yet what reason have you for doing so? What do you know against him?"

"Nothing, literally nothing," answers Mr. Peyton, soothingly, yet with a plaintive ring in his voice that might suggest the idea of his being sorry that such answer must be made. "I am sure Horace is very much to be liked."

"How you say that!" – reproachfully. "It sounds untrue! Yet it can't be. What could any one say against Horace?"

"My dear, I said nothing."

"No, but you insinuated it. You said Dorian was his superior."

"Well, I think he is the better man of the two," said Mr. Peyton, desperately, hardly knowing what to say, and feeling sorely aggrieved in that he is compelled to say what must hurt her.

"I cannot understand you; you said you know nothing prejudicial to Horace (it is impossible you should), and yet you think Dorian the better man. If he has done no wrong, why should any one be a better man? Why draw the comparison at all? For the first time in all your life, you are unjust."

"No, Clarissa, I am not. At least, I think not. Injustice is a vile thing. But, somehow, Sartoris and I had both made up our minds that you would marry Dorian, and – "

He pauses.

"Then your only objection to poor Horace is that he is not Dorian?" asks she, anxiously, letting her hand once more rest upon his shoulder.

"Well, no doubt there is a great deal in that," returns he, evasively, hard put to it to answer his inquisitor with discretion.

"And if Dorian had never been, Horace would be the one person in all the world you would desire for me?" pursues she, earnestly.

George Peyton makes no reply to this, – perhaps because he has not one ready. Clarissa, stepping back, draws her breath a little quickly, and a dark fire kindles in her eyes. In her eyes, too, large tears rise and shine.

"It is because he is poor," she says, in a low tone, that has some contempt in it, and some passionate disappointment.

"Do not mistake me," says her father, speaking hastily, but with dignity. Rising, he pushes back his chair, and turning, faces her in the gathering twilight. "Were he the poorest man alive, and you loved him, and he was worthy of you, I would give you to him without a murmur. Not that" – hurriedly – "I consider Horace unworthy of you, but the idea is new, strange, and – the other day, Clarissa, you were a child."

"I am your child still, – always." She is sitting on his knee now, with her arms round his neck, and her cheek against his; and he is holding her *svelte* lissome figure very closely to him. She is the one thing he has to love on earth; and just now she seems

unspeakably – almost painfully – dear to him.

"Always, my dear," he reiterates, somewhat unsteadily.

"You have seen so little of Horace lately," she goes on, presently, trying to find some comfortable reason for what seems to her her father's extraordinary blindness to her lover's virtues. "When you see a great deal of him, you will love him! As it is, darling, do —*do* say you like him very much, or you will break my heart!"

"I like him very much," replies he, obediently, repeating his lesson methodically, while feeling all the time that he is being compelled to say something against his will, without exactly knowing why he should feel so.

"And you are quite pleased that I am going to marry him?" reading his face with her clear eyes; she is very pale, and strangely nervous.

"My darling, my one thought is for your happiness." There is evasion mixed with the affection in this speech; and Clarissa notices it.

"No: say you are glad I am going to marry him," she says, remorselessly.

"How can you expect me to say that," exclaims he, mournfully, "when you know your wedding-day must part us?"

"Indeed it never shall!" cries she, vehemently; and then, overcome by the emotion of the past hour, and indeed of the whole day, she gives way and bursts into tears. "Papa, how can you say that? To be parted from you! We must be the same to

each other always: my wedding-day would be a miserable one indeed if it separated me from you."

Then he comforts her, fondly caressing the pretty brown head that lies upon his heart, as it had lain in past years, when the slender girl of to-day was a little lisping motherless child. He calls her by all the endearing names he had used to her then, until her sobs cease, and only a sigh, now and again, tells of the storm just past.

"When is it to be?" he asks her, after a little while. "Not too soon, my pet, I hope?"

"Not for a whole year. He said something about November, but I could not leave you in such a hurry. We must have one more Christmas all to ourselves."

"You thought of that," he says, tenderly. "Oh, Clarissa, I hope this thing is for your good. Think of it seriously, earnestly, while you have time. Do not rush blindly into a compact that must be binding on you all your life."

"I hope it *will be* for all my life," returns she, gravely. "To be parted from Horace would be the worst thing that could befall me. Always remember that, papa. I am bound to him with all my heart and soul."

"So be it!" says George Peyton, solemnly. A sigh escapes him.

For some time neither speaks. The twilight is giving place to deeper gloom, the night is fast approaching, yet they do not stir. What the girl's thoughts may be at this moment, who can say? As for her father, he is motionless, except that his lips move, though

no sound comes from them. He is secretly praying, perhaps, for the welfare of his only child, to her mother in heaven, who at this time must surely be looking down upon her with tenderest solicitude. Clarissa puts her lips softly to his cheek.

"Our engagement will be such a long one, that we think – "

"Yes?"

"We should like it keep it secret. You will say nothing about it to any one?"

"Not until you give me leave. You have acted wisely, I think, in putting off your marriage for a while." Almost unconsciously he is telling himself how time changes all things, and how many plans and affections can be altered in twelve months.

"But surely you will tell James Scrope," he goes on, after a while: "that will not be making it public. He has known you and been fond of you ever since you were a baby; and it seems uncivil and unfriendly to keep him in the dark."

"Then tell him; but no one else now, papa. I quite arranged for James, he is such an old friend, and so nice in every way."

Here she smiles involuntarily, and, after a little bit, laughs outright, in spite of herself, as though at some ridiculous recollection.

"Do you know," she says, "when I told Horace I thought I should like Sir James to know of our engagement, I really think he felt a little jealous! At least, he didn't half like it. How absurd! – wasn't it? Fancy being jealous of dear old Jim?"

"Old! – old! He is a long way off that. Why, all you silly little

girls think a man past twenty-nine to be hovering on the brink of the grave. He can not be more than thirty-three, or so."

"He is very dreadfully old, for all that," says Miss Peyton, wilfully. "He is positively ancient; I never knew any one so old. He is so profound, and earnest, and serious, and – "

"What on earth has he done to you, that you should call him all these terrible names?" says Mr. Peyton, laughing.

"He scolds me," says Clarissa, "he lectures me, and tells me I should have an aim in life. You have been my aim, darling, and I have been very devoted to it, haven't I?"

"You have, indeed. But now I shall be out in the cold, of course." His tone is somewhat wistful. "That is all one gains by lavishing one's affection upon a pretty child and centring one's every thought and hope upon her."

"No, you are wrong there; it must be something to gain love that will last for ever." She tightens her arm around his neck. "What a horrid little speech! I could almost fancy James dictated it to you. He is a sceptic, an unbeliever, and you have imbibed his notions. Cynical people are a bore. You wouldn't, for example, have me fall in love with James, would you?"

"Indeed I would," says George Peyton, boldly. "He is just the one man I would choose for you, – 'not Launcelot, nor another.' He is so genuine, so thorough in every way. And then the estates join, and that. I really wish you had fallen in love with Scrope."

"I love you dearly, – dearly," says Miss Peyton; "but you are a dreadful goose! James is the very last man to grow sentimental

about any one, – least of all, me. He thinks me of no account at all, and tells me so in very polite language occasionally. So you see what a fatal thing it would have been if I had given my heart to him. He would have broken it, and I should have died, and you would have put up a touching, and elaborate tablet to my memory, and somebody would have planted snowdrops on my grave. There would have been a tragedy in Pullingham, with Jim for its hero."

"You take a different view of the case from mine. I believe there would have been no broken heart, and no early grave, and you would have been happy ever after."

"That is a more comfortable theory, certainly for *me*. But think what a miserable life *he* would have had with me forever by his side."

"A very perfect life, I think," says Mr. Peyton, looking with pardonable pride upon the half-earnest, half-laughing, and wholly lovely face so near him. "I don't know what more a fellow could expect."

"You see I was right. I said you were a goose," says Miss Peyton, irreverently. But she pats his hand, in the very sweetest manner possible, as she says it. Then she goes on:

"Horace said he would come up to-morrow to speak to you."

"Very well, dear. That is the usual thing, I suppose. I hope he won't be long-winded, or lachrymose, or anything that way. When a thing is done it is done, and discussion is so unnecessary."

"Promise me to be very, very kind to him."

"I shan't eat him, if you mean that," says Mr. Peyton, half irritably. "What do you think I am going to say to him? 'Is thy father an ogre, that he should do this thing?' But have you quite made up your mind to this step? Remember there will be no undoing it."

"I know that; but I feel no fear." She has grown pale again. "I love him. How should I know regret when with him? I believe in him, and trust him; and I know he is worthy of all my trust."

Mr. Peyton sighs. Some words come to his memory, and he repeats them, – slowly, beneath his breath, —

"There are no tricks in plain and simple faith!"

Truly, her faith is pure and simple, and free from thought of guile.

"I wonder what James Scrope will say to it all?" he says, presently.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.