

**GEORGE
MEREDITH**

EVAN

HARRINGTON,

VOLUME 7

George Meredith
Evan Harrington. Volume 7

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George Meredith

Evan Harrington – Volume 7

CHAPTER XXXIX

IN THE DOMAIN OF TAILORDOM

There was peace in Mr. Goren's shop. Badgered Ministers, bankrupt merchants, diplomatists with a headache—any of our modern grandees under difficulties, might have envied that peace over which Mr. Goren presided: and he was an enviable man. He loved his craft, he believed that he had not succeeded the millions of antecedent tailors in vain; and, excepting that trifling coquetry with shirt-fronts, viz., the red crosses, which a shrewd rival had very soon eclipsed by representing nymphs triangularly posed, he devoted himself to his business from morning to night; as rigid in demanding respect from those beneath him, as he was profuse in lavishing it on his patrons. His public boast was, that he owed no man a farthing; his secret comfort, that he possessed two thousand pounds in the Funds. But Mr. Goren did not stop here. Behind these external characteristics he nursed a passion. Evan was astonished and pleased to find in him an enthusiastic fern-collector. Not that Mr. Harrington shared the passion, but the sight of these brown roots spread out, ticketed, on the stained paper, after supper, when the shutters were up and the house defended from the hostile outer world; the old man poring over them, and naming this and that spot where, during his solitary Saturday afternoon and Sunday excursions, he had lighted on the rare samples exhibited this contrast of the quiet evening with the sordid day humanized Mr. Goren to him. He began to see a spirit in the rigid tradesman not so utterly dissimilar to his own, and he fancied that he, too, had a taste for ferns. Round Beckley how they abounded!

He told Mr. Goren so, and Mr. Goren said:

'Some day we'll jog down there together, as the saying goes.'

Mr. Goren spoke of it as an ordinary event, likely to happen in the days to come: not as an incident the mere mention of which, as being probable, stopped the breath and made the pulses leap.

For now Evan's education taught him to feel that he was at his lowest degree. Never now could Rose stoop to him. He carried the shop on his back. She saw the brand of it on his forehead. Well! and what was Rose to him, beyond a blissful memory, a star that he had once touched? Self-love kept him strong by day, but in the darkness of night came his misery; wakening from tender dreams, he would find his heart sinking under a horrible pressure, and then the fair fresh face of Rose swam over him; the hours of Beckley were revived; with intolerable anguish he saw that she was blameless—that he alone was to blame. Yet worse was it when his closed eyelids refused to conjure up the sorrowful lovely nightmare, and he lay like one in a trance, entombed-wretched Pagan! feeling all that had been blindly; when the Past lay beside him like a corpse that he had slain.

These nightly torments helped him to brave what the morning brought. Insensibly also, as Time hardened his sufferings, Evan asked himself what the shame of his position consisted in. He grew stiff-necked. His Pagan virtues stood up one by one to support him. Andrew, courageously evading the interdict that forbade him to visit Evan, would meet him by appointment at City taverns, and flatly offered him a place in the Brewery. Evan declined it, on the pretext that, having received Old Tom's money for the year, he must at least work out that term according to the conditions. Andrew fumed and sneered at Tailordom. Evan said that there was peace in Mr. Goren's shop. His sharp senses discerned in Andrew's sneer a certain sincerity, and he revolted against it. Mr John Raikes, too, burlesqued Society so well, that he had the satisfaction of laughing at his enemy occasionally. The latter gentleman was still a pensioner, flying about town with the Countess de Saldar, in deadly

fear lest that fascinating lady should discover the seat of his fortune; happy, notwithstanding. In the mirror of Evan's little world, he beheld the great one from which he was banished.

Now the dusk of a winter's afternoon was closing over London, when a carriage drew up in front of Mr. Goren's shop, out of which, to Mr. Goren's chagrin, a lady stepped, with her veil down. The lady entered, and said that she wished to speak to Mr. Harrington. Mr. Goren made way for her to his pupil; and was amazed to see her fall into his arms, and hardly gratified to hear her say: 'Pardon me, darling, for coming to you in this place.'

Evan asked permission to occupy the parlour.

'My place,' said Mr. Goren, with humble severity, over his spectacles, 'is very poor. Such as it is, it is at the lady's service.'

Alone with her, Evan was about to ease his own feelings by remarking to the effect that Mr. Goren was human like the rest of us, but Caroline cried, with unwonted vivacity:

'Yes, yes, I know; but I thought only of you. I have such news for you! You will and must pardon my coming—that's my first thought, sensitive darling that you are!' She kissed him fondly. 'Juliana Bonner is in town, staying with us!'

'Is that your news?' asked Evan, pressing her against his breast.

'No, dear love—but still! You have no idea what her fortune—Mrs. Bonner has died and left her—but I mustn't tell you. Oh, my darling! how she admires you! She—she could recompense you; if you would! We will put that by, for the present. Dear! the Duke has begged you, through me, to accept—I think it 's to be a sort of bailiff to his estates—I don't know rightly. It's a very honourable post, that gentlemen take: and the income you are to have, Evan, will be near a thousand a year. Now, what do I deserve for my news?'

She put up her mouth for another kiss, out of breath.

'True?' looked Evan's eyes.

'True!' she said, smiling, and feasting on his bewilderment.

After the bubbling in his brain had a little subsided, Evan breathed as a man on whom fresh air is blown. Were not these tidings of release? His ridiculous pride must nevertheless inquire whether Caroline had been begging this for him.

'No, dear—indeed!' Caroline asserted with more than natural vehemence. 'It's something that you yourself have done that has pleased him. I don't know what. Only he says, he believes you are a man to be trusted with the keys of anything—and so you are. You are to call on him to-morrow. Will you?'

While Evan was replying, her face became white. She had heard the Major's voice in the shop. His military step advanced, and Caroline, exclaiming, 'Don't let me see him!' bustled to a door. Evan nodded, and she slipped through. The next moment he was facing the stiff marine.

'Well, young man,' the Major commenced, and, seating himself, added, 'be seated. I want to talk to you seriously, sir. You didn't think fit to wait till I had done with the Directors today. You're devilishly out in your discipline, whatever you are at two and two. I suppose there's no fear of being intruded on here? None of your acquaintances likely to be introducing themselves to me?'

'There is not one that I would introduce to you,' said Evan.

The Major nodded a brief recognition of the compliment, and then, throwing his back against the chair, fired out: 'Come, sir, is this your doing?'

In military phrase, Evan now changed front. His first thought had been that the Major had come for his wife. He perceived that he himself was the special object of his visitation.

'I must ask you what you allude to,' he answered.

'You are not at your office, but you will speak to me as if there was some distinction between us,' said the Major. 'My having married your sister does not reduce me to the ranks, I hope.'

The Major drummed his knuckles on the table, after this impressive delivery.

'Hem!' he resumed. 'Now, sir, understand, before you speak a word, that I can see through any number of infernal lies. I see that you're prepared for prevarication. By George! it shall come out of you, if I get it by main force. The Duke compelled me to give you that appointment in my Company. Now, sir, did you, or did you not, go to him and deliberately state to him that you believed the affairs of the Company to be in a bad condition—infamously handled, likely to involve his honour as a gentleman? I ask you, sir, did you do this, or did you not do it?'

Evan waited till the sharp rattle of the Major's close had quieted.

'If I am to answer the wording of your statement, I may say that I did not.'

'Very good; very good; that will do. Are you aware that the Duke has sent in his resignation as a Director of our Company?'

'I hear of it first from you.'

'Confound your familiarity!' cried the irritable officer, rising. 'Am I always to be told that I married your sister? Address me, sir, as becomes your duty.'

Evan heard the words 'beggarly tailor' mumbled 'out of the gutters,' and 'cursed connection.' He stood in the attitude of attention, while the Major continued:

'Now, young man, listen to these facts. You came to me this day last week, and complained that you did not comprehend some of our transactions and affairs. I explained them to your damned stupidity. You went away. Three days after that, you had an interview with the Duke. Stop, sir! What the devil do you mean by daring to speak while I am speaking? You saw the Duke, I say. Now, what took place at that interview?'

The Major tried to tower over Evan powerfully, as he put this query. They were of a common height, and to do so, he had to rise on his toes, so that the effect was but momentary.

'I think I am not bound to reply,' said Evan.

'Very well, sir; that will do.' The Major's fingers were evidently itching for an absent rattan. 'Confess it or not, you are dismissed from your post. Do you hear? You are kicked in the street. A beggarly tailor you were born, and a beggarly tailor you will die.'

'I must beg you to stop, now,' said Evan. 'I told you that I was not bound to reply: but I will. If you will sit down, Major Strike, you shall hear what you wish to know.'

This being presently complied with, though not before a glare of the Major's eyes had shown his doubt whether it might not be construed into insolence, Evan pursued:

'I came to you and informed you that I could not reconcile the cash- accounts of the Company, and that certain of the later proceedings appeared to me to jeopardize its prosperity. Your explanations did not satisfy me. I admit that you enjoined me to be silent. But the Duke, as a Director, had as strong a right to claim me as his servant, and when he questioned me as to the position of the Company, I told him what I thought, just as I had told you.'

'You told him we were jobbers and swindlers, sir!'

'The Duke inquired of me whether I would, under the circumstances, while proceedings were going on which I did not approve of, take the responsibility of allowing my name to remain—'

'Ha! ha! ha!' the Major burst out. This was too good a joke. The name of a miserable young tailor!' Go on, sir, go on!' He swallowed his laughter like oil on his rage.

'I have said sufficient.'

Jumping up, the Major swore by the Lord, that he had said sufficient.

'Now, look you here, young man.' He squared his finger before Evan, eyeing him under a hard frown, 'You have been playing your game again, as you did down at that place in Hampshire. I heard of it—deserved to be shot, by heaven! You think you have got hold of the Duke, and you throw me over. You imagine, I dare say, that I will allow my wife to be talked about to further your interests—you self-seeking young dog! As long as he lent the Company his name, I permitted a great many things. Do you think me a blind idiot, sir? But now she must learn to be satisfied with people who

've got no titles, or carriages, and who can't give hundred guinea compliments. You're all of a piece—a set of . . .'

The Major paused, for half a word was on his mouth which had drawn lightning to Evan's eyes. Not to be baffled, he added: 'But look you, sir. I may be ruined.

I dare say the Company will go to the dogs—every ass will follow a Duke.

But, mark, this goes on no more. I will be no woman's tally. Mind, sir,

I take excellent care that you don't traffic in your sister!'

The Major delivered this culminating remark with a well-timed deflection of his forefinger, and slightly turned aside when he had done.

You might have seen Evan's figure rocking, as he stood with his eyes steadily levelled on his sister's husband.

The Major, who, whatever he was, was physically no coward, did not fail to interpret the look, and challenge it.

Evan walked to the door, opened it, and said, between his teeth, 'You must go at once.'

'Eh, sir, eh? what's this?' exclaimed the warrior but the door was open, Mr. Goren was in the shop; the scandal of an assault in such a house, and the consequent possibility of his matrimonial alliance becoming bruited in the newspapers, held his arm after it had given an involuntary jerk. He marched through with becoming dignity, and marched out into the street; and if necks unelastic and heads erect may be taken as the sign of a proud soul and of nobility of mind, my artist has the Major for his model.

Evan displayed no such a presence. He returned to the little parlour, shut and locked the door to the shop, and forgetting that one was near, sat down, covered his eyes, and gave way to a fit of tearless sobbing. With one foot in the room Caroline hung watching him. A pain that she had never known wrung her nerves. His whole manhood seemed to be shaken, as if by regular pulsations of intensest misery. She stood in awe of the sight till her limbs failed her, and then staggering to him she fell on her knees, clasping his, passionately kissing them.

CHAPTER XL IN WHICH THE COUNTESS STILL SCENTS GAME

Mr. Raikes and his friend Frank Remand, surnamed Franko, to suit the requirements of metre, in which they habitually conversed, were walking arm-in-arm along the drive in Society's Park on a fine frosty Sunday afternoon of midwinter. The quips and jokes of Franko were lively, and he looked into the carriages passing, as if he knew that a cheerful countenance is not without charms for their inmates. Raikes' face, on the contrary, was barren and bleak. Being of that nature that when a pun was made he must perforce outstrip it, he fell into Franko's humour from time to time, but albeit aware that what he uttered was good, and by comparison transcendent, he refused to enjoy it. Nor when Franko started from his arm to declaim a passage, did he do other than make limp efforts to unite himself to Franko again. A further sign of immense depression in him was that instead of the creative, it was the critical faculty he exercised, and rather than reply to Franko in his form of speech, he scanned occasional lines and objected to particular phrases. He had clearly exchanged the sanguine for the bilious temperament, and was fast stranding on the rocky shores of prose. Franko bore this very well, for he, like Raikes in happier days, claimed all the glances of lovely woman as his own, and on his right there flowed a stream of Beauties. At last he was compelled to observe: 'This change is sudden: wherefore so downcast? With tigrine claw thou mangiest my speech, thy cheeks are like December's pippin, and thy tongue most sour!'

'Then of it make a farce!' said Raikes, for the making of farces was Franko's profession. 'Wherefore so downcast! What a line! There! let's walk on. Let us the left foot forward stout advance. I care not for the herd.'

'Tis love!' cried Franko.

'Ay, an' it be!' Jack gloomily returned.

'For ever cruel is the sweet Saldar?'

Raikes winced at this name.

'A truce to banter, Franko!' he said sternly: but the subject was opened, and the wound.

'Love!' he pursued, mildly groaning. 'Suppose you adored a fascinating woman, and she knew—positively knew—your manly weakness, and you saw her smiling upon everybody, and she told you to be happy, and egad, when you came to reflect, you found that after three months' suit you were nothing better than her errand-boy? A thing to boast of, is it not, quotha?'

'Love's yellow-fever, jealousy, methinks,' Franko commenced in reply; but

Raikes spat at the emphasized word.

'Jealousy!—who's jealous of clergymen and that crew? Not I, by Pluto! I carried five messages to one fellow with a coat-tail straight to his heels, last week. She thought I should drive my curricule—I couldn't afford an omnibus! I had to run. When I returned to her I was dirty. She made remarks!'

'Thy sufferings are severe—but such is woman!' said Franko. 'Gad, it's a good idea, though.' He took out a note-book and pencilled down a point or two. Raikes watched the process sardonically.

'My tragedy is, then, thy farce!' he exclaimed. 'Well, be it so! I believe I shall come to song-writing again myself shortly—beneath the shield of Catnach I'll a nation's ballads frame. I've spent my income in four months, and now I'm living on my curricule. I underlet it. It 's like trade—it 's as bad as poor old Harrington, by Jove! But that isn't the worst, Franko!' Jack dropped his voice: 'I believe I'm furiously loved by a poor country wench.'

'Morals!' was Franko's most encouraging reproof.

'Oh, I don't think I've even kissed her,' rejoined Raikes, who doubted because his imagination was vivid. 'It 's my intellect that dazzles her. I 've got letters—she calls me clever. By Jove! since

I gave up driving I've had thoughts of rushing down to her and making her mine in spite of home, family, fortune, friends, name, position—everything! I have, indeed.'

Franko looked naturally astonished at this amount of self-sacrifice.

'The Countess?' he shrewdly suggested.

'I'd rather be my Polly's prince,
Than yon great lady's errand-boy!'

Raikes burst into song.

He stretched out his hand, as if to discard all the great ladies who were passing. By the strangest misfortune ever known, the direction taken by his fingers was toward a carriage wherein, beautifully smiling opposite an elaborately reverend gentleman of middle age, the Countess de Saldar was sitting. This great lady is not to be blamed for deeming that her errand-boy was pointing her out vulgarly on a public promenade. Ineffable disdain curled off her sweet olive visage. She turned her head.

'I'll go down to that girl to-night,' said Raikes, with compressed passion. And then he hurried Franko along to the bridge, where, behold, the Countess alighted with the gentleman, and walked beside him into the gardens.

'Follow her,' said Raikes, in agitation. 'Do you see her? by yon long-tailed raven's side? Follow her, Franko! See if he kisses her hand- anything! and meet me here in half an hour. I'll have evidence!'

Franko did not altogether like the office, but Raikes' dinners, singular luck, and superiority in the encounter of puns, gave him the upper hand with his friend, and so Franko went.

Turning away from the last glimpse of his Countess, Raikes crossed the bridge, and had not strolled far beneath the bare branches of one of the long green walks, when he perceived a gentleman with two ladies leaning on him.

'Now, there,' moralized this youth; 'now, what do you say to that? Do you call that fair? He can't be happy, and it's not in nature for them to be satisfied. And yet, if I went up and attempted to please them all by taking one away, the probabilities are that he would knock me down. Such is life! We won't be made comfortable!'

Nevertheless, he passed them with indifference, for it was merely the principle he objected to; and, indeed, he was so wrapped in his own conceptions, that his name had to be called behind him twice before he recognized Evan Harrington, Mrs. Strike, and Miss Bonner. The arrangement he had previously thought good, was then spontaneously adopted. Mrs. Strike reposed her fair hand upon his arm, and Juliana, with a timid glance of pleasure, walked ahead in Evan's charge. Close neighbourhood between the couples was not kept. The genius of Mr. Raikes was wasted in manoeuvres to lead his beautiful companion into places where he could be seen with her, and envied. It was, perhaps, more flattering that she should betray a marked disposition to prefer solitude in his society. But this idea illumined him only near the moment of parting. Then he saw it; then he groaned in soul, and besought Evan to have one more promenade, saying, with characteristic cleverness in the masking of his real thoughts: 'It gives us an appetite, you know.'

In Evan's face and Juliana's there was not much sign that any protraction of their walk together would aid this beneficent process of nature. He took her hand gently, and when he quitted it, it dropped.

'The Rose, the Rose of Beckley Court!' Raikes sang aloud. 'Why, this is a day of meetings. Behold John Thomas in the rear-a tower of plush and powder! Shall I rush-shall I pluck her from the aged stem?'

On the gravel-walk above them Rose passed with her aristocratic grandmother, muffled in furs. She marched deliberately, looking coldly before her. Evan's face was white, and Juliana, whose eyes were fixed on him, shuddered.

'I'm chilled,' she murmured to Caroline. 'Let us go.' Caroline eyed Evan with a meaning sadness.

'We will hurry to our carriage,' she said.

They were seen to make a little circuit so as not to approach Rose; after whom, thoughtless of his cruelty, Evan bent his steps slowly, halting when she reached her carriage. He believed—rather, he knew that she had seen him. There was a consciousness in the composed outlines of her face as she passed: the indifference was too perfect. Let her hate him if she pleased. It recompensed him that the air she wore should make her appearance more womanly; and that black dress and crape-bonnet, in some way, touched him to mournful thoughts of her that helped a partial forgetfulness of wounded self.

Rose had driven off. He was looking at the same spot, where Caroline's hand waved from her carriage. Juliana was not seen. Caroline requested her to nod to him once, but she would not. She leaned back hiding her eyes, and moving a petulant shoulder at Caroline's hand.

'Has he offended you, my child?'

Juliana answered harshly:

'No-no.'

The wheels rolled on, and Caroline tried other subjects, knowing possibly that they would lead Juliana back to this of her own accord.

'You saw how she treated him?' the latter presently said, without moving her hand from before her eyes.

'Yes, dear. He forgives her, and will forget it.'

'Oh!' she clenched her long thin hand, 'I pray that I may not die before I have made her repent it. She shall!'

Juliana looked glitteringly in Caroline's face, and then fell a-weeping, and suffered herself to be folded and caressed. The storm was long subsiding.

'Dearest! you are better now?' said Caroline.

She whispered: 'Yes.'

'My brother has only to know you, dear—'

'Hush! That's past.' Juliana stopped her; and, on a deep breath that threatened to break to sobs, she added in a sweeter voice than was common to her, 'Ah, why—why did you tell him about the Beckley property?'

Caroline vainly strove to deny that she had told him. Juliana's head shook mournfully at her; and now Caroline knew what Juliana meant when she begged so earnestly that Evan should be kept ignorant of her change of fortune.

Some days after this the cold struck Juliana's chest, and she sickened. The three sisters held a sitting to consider what it was best to do with her. Caroline proposed to take her to Beckley without delay. Harriet was of opinion that the least they could do was to write to her relatives and make them instantly aware of her condition.

But the Countess said 'No,' to both. Her argument was, that Juliana being independent, they were by no means bound to 'bundle' her, in her state, back to a place where she had been so shamefully maltreated: that here she would live, while there she would certainly die: that absence of excitement was her medicine, and that here she had it. Mrs. Andrew, feeling herself responsible as the young lady's hostess, did not acquiesce in the Countess's views till she had consulted Juliana; and then apologies for giving trouble were breathed on the one hand; sympathy, condolences, and professions of esteem, on the other. Juliana said, she was but slightly ill, would soon recover. Entreated not to leave them before she was thoroughly re-established, and to consent to be looked on as one of the family, she sighed, and said it was the utmost she could hope. Of course the ladies took this compliment to themselves, but Evan began to wax in importance. The Countess thought it nearly time to acknowledge him, and supported the idea by a citation of the doctrine, that to forgive is Christian. It happened, however, that Harriet, who had less art and more will than her sisters, was inflexible. She, living in a society but a few steps above Tailorship, however magnificent in expenditure and

resources, abhorred it solemnly. From motives of prudence, as well as personal disgust, she continued firm in declining to receive her brother. She would not relent when the Countess pointed out a dim, a dazzling prospect, growing out of Evan's proximity to the heiress of Beckley Court; she was not to be moved when Caroline suggested that the specific for the frail invalid was Evan's presence. As to this, Juliana was sufficiently open, though, as she conceived, her art was extreme.

'Do you know why I stay to vex and trouble you?' she asked Caroline. 'Well, then, it is that I may see your brother united to you all: and then I shall go, happy.'

The pretext served also to make him the subject of many conversations. Twice a week a bunch of the best flowers that could be got were sorted and arranged by her, and sent namelessly to brighten Evan's chamber.

'I may do such a thing as this, you know, without incurring blame,' she said.

The sight of a love so humble in its strength and affluence, sent Caroline to Evan on a fruitless errand. What availed it, that accused of giving lead to his pride in refusing the heiress, Evan should declare that he did not love her? He did not, Caroline admitted as possible, but he might. He might learn to love her, and therefore he was wrong in wounding her heart. She related flattering anecdotes. She drew tearful pictures of Juliana's love for him: and noticing how he seemed to prize his bouquet of flowers, said:

'Do you love them for themselves, or the hand that sent them?'

Evan blushed, for it had been a struggle for him to receive them, as he thought, from Rose in secret. The flowers lost their value; the song that had arisen out of them, 'Thou livest in my memory,' ceased. But they came still. How many degrees from love gratitude may be, I have not reckoned. I rather fear it lies on the opposite shore. From a youth to a girl, it may yet be very tender; the more so, because their ages commonly exclude such a sentiment, and nature seems willing to make a transition stage of it. Evan wrote to Juliana. Incidentally he expressed a wish to see her. Juliana was under doctor's interdict: but she was not to be prevented from going when Evan wished her to go. They met in the park, as before, and he talked to her five minutes through the carriage window.

'Was it worth the risk, my poor child?' said Caroline, pityingly.

Juliana cried: 'Oh! I would give anything to live!'

A man might have thought that she made no direct answer.

'Don't you think I am patient? Don't you think I am very patient?' she asked Caroline, winningly, on their way home.

Caroline could scarcely forbear from smiling at the feverish anxiety she showed for a reply that should confirm her words and hopes.

'So we must all be!' she said, and that common-place remark caused Juliana to exclaim: 'Prisoners have lived in a dungeon, on bread and water, for years!'

Whereat Caroline kissed her so tenderly that Juliana tried to look surprised, and failing, her thin lips quivered; she breathed a soft 'hush,' and fell on Caroline's bosom.

She was transparent enough in one thing; but the flame which burned within her did not light her through.

Others, on other matters, were quite as transparent to her.

Caroline never knew that she had as much as told her the moral suicide Evan had committed at Beckley; so cunningly had she been probed at intervals with little casual questions; random interjections, that one who loved him could not fail to meet; petty doubts requiring elucidations. And the Countess, kind as her sentiments had grown toward the afflicted creature, was compelled to proclaim her densely stupid in material affairs. For the Countess had an itch of the simplest feminine curiosity to know whether the dear child had any notion of accomplishing a certain holy duty of the perishable on this earth, who might possess worldly goods; and no hints—not even plain speaking, would do. Juliana did not understand her at all.

The Countess exhibited a mourning-ring on her finger, Mrs. Bonner's bequest to her.

'How fervent is my gratitude to my excellent departed friend for this!
A legacy, however trifling, embalms our dear lost ones in the memory!'

It was of no avail. Juliana continued densely stupid. Was she not worse? The Countess could not, 'in decency,' as she observed, reveal to her who had prompted Mrs. Bonner so to bequeath the Beckley estates as to 'ensure sweet Juliana's future'; but ought not Juliana to divine it?— Juliana at least had hints sufficient.

Cold Spring winds were now blowing. Juliana had resided no less than two months with the Cogglesbys. She was entreated still to remain, and she did. From Lady Jocelyn she heard not a word of remonstrance; but from Miss Carrington and Mrs. Shorne she received admonishing letters. Finally, Mr. Harry Jocelyn presented himself. In London, and without any of that needful subsistence which a young gentleman feels the want of in London more than elsewhere, Harry began to have thoughts of his own, without any instigation from his aunts, about devoting himself to business. So he sent his card up to his cousin, and was graciously met in the drawing-room by the Countess, who ruffled him and smoothed him, and would possibly have distracted his soul from business had his circumstances been less straitened. Juliana was declared to be too unwell to see him that day. He called a second time, and enjoyed a similar greeting. His third visit procured him an audience alone with Juliana, when, at once, despite the warnings of his aunts, the frank fellow plunged, 'medias res'. Mrs. Bonner had left him totally dependent on his parents and his chances.

'A desperate state of things, isn't it, Juley? I think I shall go for a soldier—common, you know.'

Instead of shrieking out against such a debasement of his worth and gentility, as was to be expected, Juliana said:

'That's what Mr. Harrington thought of doing.'

'He! If he'd had the pluck he would.'

'His duty forbade it, and he did not.'

'Duty! a confounded tailor! What fools we were to have him at Beckley!'

'Has the Countess been unkind to you Harry?'

'I haven't seen her to-day, and don't want to. It's my little dear old
Juley I came for.'

'Dear Harry!' she thanked him with eyes and hands. 'Come often, won't you?'

'Why, ain't you coming back to us, Juley?'

'Not yet. They are very kind to me here. How is Rose?'

'Oh, quite jolly. She and Ferdinand are thick again. Balls every night. She dances like the deuce. They want me to go; but I ain't the sort of figure for those places, and besides, I shan't dance till I can lead you out.'

A spur of laughter at Harry's generous nod brought on Juliana's cough. Harry watched her little body shaken and her reddened eyes. Some real emotion—perhaps the fear which healthy young people experience at the sight of deadly disease—made Harry touch her arm with the softness of a child's touch.

'Don't be alarmed, Harry,' she said. 'It's nothing—only Winter. I'm determined to get well.'

'That's right,' quoth he, recovering. 'I know you've got pluck, or you wouldn't have stood that operation.'

'Let me see: when was that?' she asked slyly.

Harry coloured, for it related to a time when he had not behaved prettily to her.

'There, Juley, that 's all forgotten. I was a fool—a scoundrel, if you like. I 'm sorry for it now.'

'Do you want money, Harry?'

'Oh, money!'

'Have you repaid Mr. Harrington yet?'

'There—no, I haven't. Bother it! that fellow's name's always on your tongue. I'll tell you what, Juley—but it's no use. He's a low, vulgar adventurer.'

'Dear Harry,' said Juliana, softly; 'don't bring your aunts with you when you come to see me.'

'Well, then I'll tell you, Juley. It's enough that he's a beastly tailor.'

'Quite enough,' she responded; 'and he is neither a fool nor a scoundrel.'

Harry's memory for his own speech was not quick. When Juliana's calm glance at him called it up, he jumped from his chair, crying: 'Upon my honour, I'll tell you what, Juley! If I had money to pay him to-morrow, I'd insult him on the spot.'

Juliana meditated, and said: 'Then all your friends must wish you to continue poor.'

This girl had once been on her knees to him. She had looked up to him with admiring love, and he had given her a crumb or so occasionally, thinking her something of a fool, and more of a pest; but now he could not say a word to her without being baffled in an elderly-sisterly tone exasperating him so far that he positively wished to marry her, and coming to the point, offered himself with downright sincerity, and was rejected. Harry left in a passion. Juliana confided the secret to Caroline, who suggested interested motives, which Juliana would not hear of.

'Ah,' said the Countess, when Caroline mentioned the case to her, 'of course the poor thing cherishes her first offer. She would believe a curate to be disinterested! But mind that Evan has due warning when she is to meet him. Mind that he is dressed becomingly.'

Caroline asked why.

'Because, my dear, she is enamoured of his person. These little unhealthy creatures are always attracted by the person. She thinks it to be Evan's qualities. I know better: it is his person. Beckley Court may be lost by a shabby coat!'

The Countess had recovered from certain spiritual languors into which she had fallen after her retreat. Ultimate victory hung still in the balance. Oh! if Evan would only marry this little sufferer, who was so sure to die within a year! or, if she lived (for marriage has often been as a resurrection to some poor female invalids), there was Beckley Court, a splendid basis for future achievements. Reflecting in this fashion, the Countess pardoned her brother. Glowing hopes hung fresh lamps in her charitable breast. She stepped across the threshold of Tailordom, won Mr. Goren's heart by her condescension, and worked Evan into a sorrowful mood concerning the invalid. Was not Juliana his only active friend? In return, he said things which only required a little colouring to be very acceptable to her.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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