

EVAN HARRINGTON

By

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***Free*editorial** 

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CHAPTER XXXII. IN WHICH EVANS LIGHT BEGINS TO TWINKLE AGAIN

The dowagers were now firmly planted on Olympus. Along the grass lay the warm strong colours of the evening sun, reddening the pine-stems and yellowing the idle aspen-leaves. For a moment it had hung in doubt whether the pic-nic could survive the two rude shocks it had received. Happily the youthful element was large, and when the band, refreshed by chicken and sherry, threw off half-a-dozen bars of one of those irresistible waltzes that first catch the ear, and then curl round the heart, till on a sudden they invade and will have the legs, a rush up Parnassus was seen, and there were shouts and laughter and commotion, as over other great fields of battle the corn will wave gaily and mark the reestablishment of nature's reign.

How fair the sight! Approach the twirling couples. They talk as they whirl. 'Fancy the run-away tailor!' is the male's remark, and he expects to be admired for it, and is.

'That make-up Countess—his sister, you know—didn't you see her? she turned green,' says Creation's second effort, almost occupying the place of a rib.

'Isn't there a run-away wife, too?'

'Now, you mustn't be naughty!'

They laugh and flatter one another. The power to give and take flattery to any amount is the rare treasure of youth.

Undoubtedly they are a poetical picture; but some poetical pictures talk dreary prose; so we will retire.

Now, while the dancers carried on their business, and distance lent them enchantment, Rose stood by Juliana, near an alder which hid them from the rest.

'I don't accuse you,' she was saying; 'but who could have done this but you? Ah, Juley! you will never get what you want if you plot for it. I thought once you cared for Evan. If he had loved you, would I not have done all that I could for you both? I pardon you with all my heart.'

'Keep your pardon!' was the angry answer. 'I have done more for you, Rose. He is an adventurer, and I have tried to open your eyes and make you respect your family. You may accuse me of what you like, I have my conscience.'

'And the friendship of the Countess,' added Rose.

Juliana's figure shook as if she had been stung.

'Go and be happy—don't stay here and taunt me,' she said, with a ghastly look. 'I suppose he can lie like his sister, and has told you all sorts of tales.'

'Not a word—not a word!' cried Rose. 'Do you think my lover could tell a lie?'

The superb assumption of the girl, and the true portrait of Evan's character which it flashed upon Juliana, were to the latter such intense pain, that she turned like one on the rack, exclaiming:

'You think so much of him? You are so proud of him? Then, yes! I love him too, ugly, beastly as I am to look at! Oh, I know what you think! I loved him from the first, and I knew all about him, and spared him pain. I did not wait for him to fall from a horse. I watched every chance of his being exposed. I let them imagine he cared for me. Drummond would have told what he knew long before—only he knew there would not be much harm in a tradesman's son marrying me. And I have played into your hands, and now you taunt me!'

Rose remembered her fretful unkindness to Evan on the subject of his birth, when her feelings toward him were less warm. Dwelling on that alone, she put her arms round Juliana's stiffening figure, and said: 'I dare say I am much more selfish than you. Forgive me, dear.'

Staring at her, Juliana replied, 'Now you are acting.'

'No,' said Rose, with a little effort to fondle her; 'I only feel that I love you better for loving him.'

Generous as her words sounded, and were, Juliana intuitively struck to the root of them, which was comfortless. For how calm in its fortune, how strong in its love, must Rose's heart be, when she could speak in this unwonted way!

'Go, and leave me, pray,' she said.

Rose kissed her burning cheek. 'I will do as you wish, dear. Try and know me better, and be sister Juley as you used to be. I know I am thoughtless, and horribly vain and disagreeable sometimes. Do forgive me. I will love you truly.'

Half melting, Juliana pressed her hand.

'We are friends?' said Rose. 'Good-bye'; and her countenance lighted, and she moved away, so changed by her happiness! Juliana was jealous of a love strong as she deemed her own to overcome obstacles. She called to her: 'Rose! Rose, you will not take advantage of what I have told you, and repeat it to any one?'

Instantly Rose turned with a glance of full contempt over her shoulder.

'To whom?' she asked.

'To any one.'

'To him? He would not love me long if I did!'

Juliana burst into fresh tears, but Rose walked into the sunbeams and the circle of the music.

Mounting Olympus, she inquired whether Ferdinand was within hail, as they were pledged to dance the first dance together. A few hints were given, and then Rose learnt that Ferdinand had been dismissed.

'And where is he?' she cried with her accustomed impetuosity. 'Mama!—of course you did not accuse him—but, Mama! could you possibly let him go with the suspicion that you thought him guilty of writing an anonymous letter?'

'Not at all,' Lady Jocelyn replied. 'Only the handwriting was so extremely like, and he was the only person who knew the address and the circumstances, and who could have a motive—though I don't quite see what it is—I thought it as well to part for a time.'

'But that's sophistry!' said Rose. 'You accuse or you exonerate. Nobody can be half guilty. If you do not hold him innocent you are unjust!' Lady Jocelyn rejoined: 'Yes? It's singular what a stock of axioms young people have handy for their occasions.'

Rose loudly announced that she would right this matter.

'I can't think where Rose gets her passion for hot water,' said her mother, as Rose ran down the ledge.

Two or three young gentlemen tried to engage her for a dance. She gave them plenty of promises, and hurried on till she met Evan, and, almost out of breath, told him the shameful injustice that had been done to her friend.

'Mama is such an Epicurean! I really think she is worse than Papa. This disgraceful letter looks like Ferdinand's writing, and she tells him so; and, Evan! will you believe that instead of being certain it's impossible any gentleman could do such a thing, she tells Ferdinand she shall feel more comfortable if she doesn't see him for some time? Poor Ferdinand! He has had so much to bear!'

Too sure of his darling to be envious now of any man she pitied, Evan said, 'I would forfeit my hand on his innocence!'

'And so would I,' echoed Rose. 'Come to him with me, dear. Or no,' she added, with a little womanly discretion, 'perhaps it would not be so well—you're not very much cast down by what happened at dinner?'

'My darling! I think of you.'

'Of me, dear? Concealment is never of any service. What there is to be known people may as well know at once. They'll gossip for a month, and then forget it. Your mother is dreadfully outspoken, certainly; but she has better manners than many ladies—I mean people in a position: you understand me? But suppose, dear, this had happened, and I had said nothing to Mama, and then we had to confess? Ah, you'll find I'm wiser than you imagine, Mr. Evan.'

'Haven't I submitted to somebody's lead?'

'Yes, but with a sort of "under protest." I saw it by the mouth. Not quite natural. You have been moody ever since—just a little. I suppose it's our manly pride. But I'm losing time. Will you promise me not to brood over that occurrence? Think of me. Think everything of me. I am yours; and, dearest, if I love you, need you care what anybody else thinks? We will soon change their opinion.'

'I care so little,' said Evan, somewhat untruthfully, 'that till you return I shall go and sit with my mother.'

'Oh, she has gone. She made her dear old antiquated curtsy to Mama and the company. "If my son has not been guilty of deception, I will leave him to your good pleasure, my lady." That's what she said. Mama likes her, I know. But I wish she didn't mouth her words so precisely: it reminds me of—' the Countess, Rose checked herself from saying. 'Good-bye. Thank heaven! the worst has happened. Do you know what I should do if I were you, and felt at all distressed? I should keep repeating,' Rose looked archly and deeply up under his eyelids, "'I am the son of a tradesman, and Rose loves me," over and over, and then, if you feel ashamed, what is it of?'

She nodded adieu, laughing at her own idea of her great worth; an idea very firmly fixed in her fair bosom, notwithstanding. Mrs. Melville said of her, 'I used to think she had pride.' Lady Jocelyn answered, 'So she has. The misfortune is that it has taken the wrong turning.'

Evan watched the figure that was to him as that of an angel—no less! She spoke so frankly to them as she passed: or here and there went on with a light laugh. It seemed an act of graciousness that she should open her mouth to one! And, indeed, by virtue of a pride which raised her to the level of what she thought it well to do, Rose was veritably on higher ground than any present. She no longer envied her friend Jenny, who, emerging from the shades, allured by the waltz, dislinked herself from William's arm, and whispered exclamations of sorrow at the scene created by Mr. Harrington's mother. Rose patted her hand, and said: 'Thank you, Jenny dear but don't be sorry. I'm glad. It prevents a number of private explanations.'

'Still, dear!' Jenny suggested.

'Oh! of course, I should like to lay my whip across the shoulders of the person who arranged the conspiracy,' said Rose. 'And afterwards I don't mind returning thanks to him, or her, or them.'

William cried out, 'I'm always on your side, Rose.'

'And I'll be Jenny's bridesmaid,' rejoined Rose, stepping blithely away from them.

Evan debated whither to turn when Rose was lost to his eyes. He had no heart for dancing. Presently a servant approached, and said that Mr. Harry particularly desired to see him. From Harry's looks at table, Evan judged that the interview was not likely to be amicable. He asked the direction he was to take, and setting out with long strides, came in sight of Raikes, who walked in gloom, and was evidently labouring under one of his mountains of melancholy. He affected to

be quite out of the world; but finding that Evan took the hint in his usual prosy manner, was reduced to call after him, and finally to run and catch him.

'Haven't you one single spark of curiosity?' he began.

'What about?' said Evan.

'Why, about my amazing luck! You haven't asked a question. A matter of course.'

Evan complimented him by asking a question: saying that Jack's luck certainly was wonderful.

'Wonderful, you call it,' said Jack, witheringly. 'And what's more wonderful is, that I'd give up all for quiet quarters in the Green Dragon. I knew I was prophetic. I knew I should regret that peaceful hostelry. Diocletian, if you like. I beg you to listen. I can't walk so fast without danger.'

'Well, speak out, man. What's the matter with you?' cried Evan, impatiently.

Jack shook his head: 'I see a total absence of sympathy,' he remarked. 'I can't.'

'Then stand out of the way.'

Jack let him pass, exclaiming, with cold irony, 'I will pay homage to a loftier Nine!'

Mr. Raikes could not in his soul imagine that Evan was really so little inquisitive concerning a business of such importance as the trouble that possessed him. He watched his friend striding off, incredulously, and then commenced running in pursuit.

'Harrington, I give in; I surrender; you reduce me to prose. Thy nine have conquered my nine!—pardon me, old fellow. I'm immensely upset. This is the first day in my life that I ever felt what indigestion is. Egad, I've got something to derange the best digestion going!

'Look here, Harrington. What happened to you today, I declare I think nothing of. You owe me your assistance, you do, indeed; for if it hadn't been for the fearful fascinations of your sister—that divine Countess—I should have been engaged to somebody by this time, and profited by the opportunity held out to me, and which is now gone. I'm disgraced. I'm known. And the worst of it is, I must face people. I daren't turn tail. Did you ever hear of such a dilemma?'

'Ay,' quoth Evan, 'what is it?'

Raikes turned pale. 'Then you haven't heard of it?' 'Not a word.'

'Then it's all for me to tell. I called on Messrs. Grist. I dined at the Aurora afterwards. Depend upon it, Harrington, we're led by a star. I mean, fellows with anything in them are. I recognized our Fallow field host, and thinking to draw him out, I told our mutual histories. Next day I went to these Messrs. Grist. They proposed the membership for Fallow field, five hundred a year, and the loan of a curricule, on condition. It 's singular, Harrington; before anybody knew of the

condition I didn't care about it a bit. It seemed to me childish. Who would think of minding wearing a tin plate? But now!—the sufferings of Orestes—what are they to mine? He wasn't tied to his Furies. They did hover a little above him; but as for me, I'm scorched; and I mustn't say where: my mouth is locked; the social laws which forbid the employment of obsolete words arrest my exclamations of despair. What do you advise?"

Evan stared a moment at the wretched object, whose dream of meeting a beneficent old gentleman had brought him to be the sport of a cynical farceur. He had shivers on his own account, seeing something of himself magnified, and he loathed the fellow, only to feel more acutely what a stigma may be.

'It 's a case I can't advise in,' he said, as gently as he could. 'I should be off the grounds in a hurry.'

'And then I'm where I was before I met the horrid old brute!' Raikes moaned.

'I told him over a pint of port-and noble stuff is that Aurora port!—I told him—I amused him till he was on the point of bursting—I told him I was such a gentleman as the world hadn't seen—minus money. So he determined to launch me. He said I should lead the life of such a gentleman as the world had not yet seen—on that simple condition, which appeared to me childish, a senile whim; rather an indulgence of his.'

Evan listened to the tribulations of his friend as he would to those of a doll—the sport of some experimental child. By this time he knew something of old Tom Cogglesby, and was not astonished that he should have chosen John Raikes to play one of his farces on. Jack turned off abruptly the moment he saw they were nearing human figures, but soon returned to Evan's side, as if for protection.

'Hoy! Harrington!' shouted Harry, beckoning to him. 'Come, make haste! I'm in a deuce of a mess.'

The two Wheedles—Susan and Polly—were standing in front of him, and after his call to Evan, he turned to continue some exhortation or appeal to the common sense of women, largely indulged in by young men when the mischief is done.

'Harrington, do speak to her. She looks upon you as a sort of parson. I can't make her believe I didn't send for her. Of course, she knows I 'm fond of her. My dear fellow,' he whispered, 'I shall be ruined if my grandmother hears of it. Get her away, please. Promise anything.'

Evan took her hand and asked for the child.

'Quite well, sir,' faltered Susan.

'You should not have come here.'

Susan stared, and commenced whimpering: 'Didn't you wish it, sir?'

'Oh, she's always thinking of being made a lady of,' cried Polly. 'As if Mr. Harry was going to do that. It wants a gentleman to do that.'

'The carriage came for me, sir, in the afternoon,' said Susan, plaintively, 'with your compliments, and would I come. I thought—'

'What carriage?' asked Evan.

Raikes, who was ogling Polly, interposed grandly, 'Mine!'

'And you sent in my name for this girl to come here?' Evan turned wrathfully on him.

'My dear Harrington, when you hit you knock down. The wise require but one dose of experience. The Countess wished it, and I did dispatch.'

'The Countess!' Harry exclaimed; 'Jove! do you mean to say that the Countess—'

'De Saldar,' added Jack. 'In Britain none were worthy found.'

Harry gave a long whistle.

'Leave at once,' said Evan to Susan. 'Whatever you may want send to me for. And when you think you can meet your parents, I will take you to them. Remember that is what you must do.'

'Make her give up that stupidity of hers, about being made a lady of, Mr. Harrington,' said the inveterate Polly.

Susan here fell a-weeping.

'I would go, sir,' she said. 'I'm sure I would obey you: but I can't. I can't go back to the inn. They're beginning to talk about me, because—because I can't—can't pay them, and I'm ashamed.'

Evan looked at Harry.

'I forgot,' the latter mumbled, but his face was crimson. He put his hands in his pockets. 'Do you happen to have a note or so?' he asked.

Evan took him aside and gave him what he had; and this amount, without inspection or reserve, Harry offered to Susan. She dashed his hand impetuously from her sight.

'There, give it to me,' said Polly. 'Oh, Mr. Harry! what a young man you are!'

Whether from the rebuff, or the reproach, or old feelings reviving, Harry was moved to go forward, and lay his hand on Susan's shoulder and mutter something in her ear that softened her.

Polly thrust the notes into her bosom, and with a toss of her nose, as who should say, 'Here 's nonsense they 're at again,' tapped Susan on the other shoulder, and said imperiously: 'Come, Miss!'

Hurrying out a dozen sentences in one, Harry ended by suddenly kissing Susan's cheek, and then Polly bore her away; and Harry, with great solemnity, said to Evan:

"Pon my honour, I think I ought to! I declare I think I love that girl. What's one's family? Why shouldn't you button to the one that just suits you? That girl, when she's dressed, and in good trim, by Jove! nobody 'd know her from a born lady. And as for grammar, I'd soon teach her that.'

Harry began to whistle: a sign in him that he was thinking his hardest.

'I confess to being considerably impressed by the maid Wheedle,' said Raikes.

'Would you throw yourself away on her?' Evan inquired.

Apparently forgetting how he stood, Mr. Raikes replied:

'You ask, perhaps, a little too much of me. One owes consideration to one's position. In the world's eyes a matrimonial slip outweighs a peccadillo. No. To much the maid might wheedle me, but to Hymen! She's decidedly fresh and pert—the most delicious little fat lips and cocky nose; but cease we to dwell on her, or of us two, to! one will be undone.'

Harry burst into a laugh: 'Is this the T.P. for Fallow field?'

'M.P. I think you mean,' quoth Raikes, serenely; but a curious glance being directed on him, and pursuing him pertinaciously, it was as if the pediment of the lofty monument he topped were smitten with violence. He stammered an excuse, and retreated somewhat as it is the fashion to do from the presence of royalty, followed by Harry's roar of laughter, in which Evan cruelly joined.

'Gracious powers!' exclaimed the victim of ambition, 'I'm laughed at by the son of a tailor!' and he edged once more into the shade of trees.

It was a strange sight for Harry's relatives to see him arm-in-arm with the man he should have been kicking, challenging, denouncing, or whatever the code prescribes: to see him talking to this young man earnestly, clinging to him affectionately, and when he separated from him, heartily wringing his hand. Well might they think that there was something extraordinary in these Harringtons. Convicted of Tailordom, these Harringtons appeared to shine with double lustre. How was it? They were at a loss to say. They certainly could say that the Countess was egregiously affected and vulgar; but who could be altogether complacent and sincere that had to fight so hard a fight? In this struggle with society I see one of the instances where success is entirely to be honoured and remains a proof of merit. For however boldly antagonism may storm the ranks of society, it will certainly be repelled, whereas affinity cannot be resisted; and they who, against obstacles of birth, claim and keep their position among the educated and refined,

have that affinity. It is, on the whole, rare, so that society is not often invaded. I think it will have to front Jack Cade again before another Old Mel and his progeny shall appear. You refuse to believe in Old Mel? You know not nature's cunning.

Mrs. Shorne, Mrs. Melville, Miss Carrington, and many of the guests who observed Evan moving from place to place, after the exposure, as they called it, were amazed at his audacity. There seemed such a quietly superb air about him. He would not look out of his element; and this, knowing what they knew, was his offence. He deserved some commendation for still holding up his head, but it was love and Rose who kept the fires of his heart alive.

The sun had sunk. The figures on the summit of Parnassus were seen bobbing in happy placidity against the twilight sky. The sun had sunk, and many of Mr. Raikes' best things were unspoken. Wandering about in his gloom, he heard a feminine voice:

'Yes, I will trust you.'

'You will not repent it,' was answered.

Recognizing the Duke, Mr. Raikes cleared his throat.

'A-hem, your Grace! This is how the days should pass. I think we should diurnally station a good London band on high, and play his Majesty to bed—the sun. My opinion is, it would improve the crops. I'm not, as yet, a landed proprietor—'

The Duke stepped aside with him, and Raikes addressed no one for the next twenty minutes. When he next came forth Parnassus was half deserted. It was known that old Mrs. Bonner had been taken with a dangerous attack, and under this third blow the pic-nic succumbed. Simultaneously with the messenger that brought the news to Lady Jocelyn, one approached Evan, and informed him that the Countess de Saldar urgently entreated him to come to the house without delay. He also wished to speak a few words to her, and stepped forward briskly. He had no prophetic intimations of the change this interview would bring upon him.

CHAPTER XXXIII. THE HERO TAKES HIS RANK IN THE ORCHESTRA

The Countess was not in her dressing-room when Evan presented himself. She was in attendance on Mrs. Bonner, Conning said; and the primness of Conning was a thing to have been noticed by any one save a dreamy youth in love. Conning remained in the room, keeping distinctly aloof. Her duties absorbed her, but a presiding thought mechanically jerked back her head from time to time: being the mute form of, 'Well, I never!' in Conning's rank of life and intellectual capacity.

Evan remained quite still in a chair, and Conning was certainly a number of paces beyond suspicion, when the Countess appeared, and hurling at the maid one of those feminine looks which contain huge quartos of meaning, vented the cold query:

'Pray, why did you not come to me, as you were commanded?'

'I was not aware, my lady,' Conning drew up to reply, and performed with her eyes a lofty rejection of the volume cast at her, and a threat of several for offensive operations, if need were.

The Countess spoke nearer to what she was implying 'You know I object to this: it is not the first time.'

'Would your ladyship please to say what your ladyship means?'

In return for this insolent challenge to throw off the mask, the Countess felt justified in punishing her by being explicit. 'Your irregularities are not of yesterday,' she said, kindly making use of a word of double signification still.

'Thank you, my lady.' Conning accepted the word in its blackest meaning. 'I am obliged to you. If your ladyship is to be believed, my character is not worth much. But I can make distinctions, my lady.'

Something very like an altercation was continued in a sharp, brief undertone; and then Evan, waking up to the affairs of the hour, heard Conning say:

'I shall not ask your ladyship to give me a character.'

The Countess answering with pathos: 'It would, indeed, be to give you one.'

He was astonished that the Countess should burst into tears when Conning had departed, and yet more so that his effort to console her should bring a bolt of wrath upon himself.

'Now, Evan, now see what you have done for us—do, and rejoice at it. The very menials insult us. You heard what that creature said? She can make distinctions. Oh! I could beat her. They know it: all the servants know it: I can see it in their faces. I feel it when I pass them. The insolent wretches treat us as impostors; and this Conning—to defy me! Oh! it comes of my devotion to you. I am properly chastized. I passed Rose's maid on the stairs, and her reverence was barely perceptible.'

Evan murmured that he was very sorry, adding, foolishly: 'Do you really care, Louisa, for what servants think and say?'

The Countess sighed deeply: 'Oh! you are too thickskinned! Your mother from top to toe! It is too dreadful! What have I done to deserve it? Oh, Evan, Evan!'

Her head dropped in her lap. There was something ludicrous to Evan in this excess of grief on account of such a business; but he was tender-hearted and wrought upon to declare that, whether or not he was to blame for his mother's intrusion that afternoon, he was ready to do what he could to make up to the Countess for her sufferings: whereat the Countess sighed again: asked him what he possibly could do, and doubted his willingness to accede to the most trifling request.

'No; I do in verity believe that were I to desire you to do aught for your own good alone, you would demur, Van.'

He assured her that she was mistaken.

'We shall see,' she said.

'And if once or twice, I have run counter to you, Louisa—'

'Abominable language!' cried the Countess, stopping her ears like a child. 'Do not excruciate me so. You laugh! My goodness! what will you come to!'

Evan checked his smile, and, taking her hand, said:

'I must tell you; that, on the whole, I see nothing to regret in what has happened to-day. You may notice a change in the manners of the servants and some of the country squires, but I find none in the bearing of the real ladies, the true gentlemen, to me.'

'Because the change is too fine for you to perceive it,' interposed the Countess.

'Rose, then, and her mother, and her father!' Evan cried impetuously.

'As for Lady Jocelyn!' the Countess shrugged:

'And Sir Franks!' her head shook: 'and Rose, Rose is, simply self-willed; a "she will" or "she won't" sort of little person. No criterion! Henceforth the world is against us. We have to struggle with it: it does not rank us of it!'

'Your feeling on the point is so exaggerated, my dear Louisa', said Evan, 'one can't bring reason to your ears. The tattle we shall hear we shall outlive. I care extremely for the good opinion of men, but I prefer my own; and I do not lose it because my father was in trade.'

'And your own name, Evan Harrington, is on a shop,' the Countess struck in, and watched him severely from under her brow, glad to mark that he could still blush.

'Oh, heaven!' she wailed to increase the effect, 'on a shop! a brother of mine!'

'Yes, Louisa. It may not last... I did it—is it not better that a son should blush, than cast dishonour on his father's memory?'

'Ridiculous boy-notion!'

'Rose has pardoned it, Louisa—cannot you? I find that the naturally vulgar and narrow-headed people, and cowards who never forego mean advantages, are those only who would condemn me and my conduct in that.'

'And you have joy in your fraction of the world left to you!' exclaimed his female-elder.

Changing her manner to a winning softness, she said:

'Let me also belong to the very small party! You have been really romantic, and most generous and noble; only the shop smells! But, never mind, promise me you will not enter it.'

'I hope not,' said Evan.

'You do hope that you will not officiate? Oh, Evan the eternal contemplation of gentlemen's legs! think of that! Think of yourself sculptured in that attitude!' Innumerable little prickles and stings shot over Evan's skin.

'There—there, Louisa!' he said, impatiently; 'spare your ridicule. We go to London to-morrow, and when there I expect to hear that I have an appointment, and that this engagement is over.' He rose and walked up and down the room.

'I shall not be prepared to go to-morrow,' remarked the Countess, drawing her figure up stiffly.

'Oh! well, if you can stay, Andrew will take charge of you, I dare say.'

'No, my dear, Andrew will not—a nonentity cannot—you must.'

'Impossible, Louisa,' said Evan, as one who imagines he is uttering a thing of little consequence. 'I promised Rose.'

'You promised Rose that you would abdicate and retire? Sweet, loving girl!'

Evan made no answer.

'You will stay with me, Evan.'

'I really can't,' he said in his previous careless tone.

'Come and sit down,' cried the Countess, imperiously.

'The first trifle is refused. It does not astonish me. I will honour you now by talking seriously to you. I have treated you hitherto as a child. Or, no—' she stopped her mouth; 'it is enough if I tell you, dear, that poor Mrs. Bonner is dying, and that she desires my attendance on her to refresh

her spirit with readings on the Prophecies, and Scriptural converse. No other soul in the house can so soothe her.'

'Then, stay,' said Evan.

'Unprotected in the midst of enemies! Truly!'

'I think, Louisa, if you can call Lady Jocelyn an enemy, you must read the Scriptures by a false light.'

'The woman is an utter heathen!' interjected the Countess. 'An infidel can be no friend. She is therefore the reverse. Her opinions embitter her mother's last days. But now you will consent to remain with me, dear Van!'

An implacable negative responded to the urgent appeal of her eyes.

'By the way,' he said, for a diversion, 'did you know of a girl stopping at an inn in Fallow field?'

'Know a barmaid?' the Countess's eyes and mouth were wide at the question.

'Did you send Raikes for her to-day?'

'Did Mr. Raikes—ah, Evan! that creature reminds me, you have no sense of contrast. For a Brazilian ape—he resembles, if he is not truly one—what contrast is he to an English gentleman! His proximity and acquaintance—rich as he may be—disfigure you. Study contrast!'

Evan had to remind her that she had not answered him: whereat she exclaimed: 'One would really think you had never been abroad. Have you not evaded me, rather?'

The Countess commenced fanning her languid brows, and then pursued: 'Now, my dear brother, I may conclude that you will acquiesce in my moderate wishes. You remain. My venerable friend cannot last three days. She is on the brink of a better world! I will confide to you that it is of the utmost importance we should be here, on the spot, until the sad termination! That is what I summoned you for. You are now at liberty. Ta-ta, as soon as you please.'

She had baffled his little cross-examination with regard to Raikes, but on the other point he was firm. She would listen to nothing: she affected that her mandate had gone forth, and must be obeyed; tapped with her foot, fanned deliberately, and was a consummate queen, till he turned the handle of the door, when her complexion deadened, she started up, trembling, and tripping towards him, caught him by the arm, and said: 'Stop! After all that I have sacrificed for you! As well try to raise the dead as a Dawley from the dust he grovels in! Why did I consent to visit this place? It was for you. I came, I heard that you had disgraced yourself in drunkenness at Fallow field, and I toiled to eclipse that, and I did. Young Jocelyn thought you were what you are I could spit the word at you! and I dazzled him to give you time to win this minx, who will spin you like a top if you get her. That Mr. Forth knew it as well, and that vile young Laxley. They are gone! Why are they gone? Because they thwarted me—they crossed your interests—I said they should

go. George Uplift is going to-day. The house is left to us; and I believe firmly that Mrs. Bonner's will contains a memento of the effect of our frequent religious conversations. So you would leave now? I suspect nobody, but we are all human, and Wills would not have been tampered with for the first time. Besides, and the Countess's imagination warmed till she addressed her brother as a confederate, 'we shall then see to whom Beckley Court is bequeathed. Either way it may be yours. Yours! and you suffer their plots to drive you forth. Do you not perceive that Mama was brought here to-day on purpose to shame us and cast us out? We are surrounded by conspiracies, but if our faith is pure who can hurt us? If I had not that consolation—would that you had it, too!—would it be endurable to me to see those menials whispering and showing their forced respect? As it is, I am fortified to forgive them. I breathe another atmosphere. Oh, Evan! you did not attend to Mr. Parsley's beautiful last sermon. The Church should have been your vocation.'

From vehemence the Countess had subsided to a mournful gentleness. She had been too excited to notice any changes in her brother's face during her speech, and when he turned from the door, and still eyeing her fixedly, led her to a chair, she fancied from his silence that she had subdued and convinced him. A delicious sense of her power, succeeded by a weary reflection that she had constantly to employ it, occupied her mind, and when presently she looked up from the shade of her hand, it was to agitate her head pitifully at her brother.

'All this you have done for me, Louisa,' he said.

'Yes, Evan,—all!' she fell into his tone.

'And you are the cause of Laxley's going? Did you know anything of that anonymous letter?'

He was squeezing her hand—with grateful affection, as she was deluded to imagine.

'Perhaps, dear,—a little,' her conceit prompted her to admit.

'Did you write it?'

He gazed intently into her eyes, and as the question shot like a javelin, she tried ineffectually to disengage her fingers; her delusion waned; she took fright, but it was too late; he had struck the truth out of her before she could speak. Her spirit writhed like a snake in his hold. Innumerable things she was ready to say, and strove to; the words would not form on her lips.

'I will be answered, Louisa.'

The stern manner he had assumed gave her no hope of eluding him. With an inward gasp, and a sensation of nakedness altogether new to her, dismal, and alarming, she felt that she could not lie. Like a creature forsaken of her staunchest friend, she could have flung herself to the floor. The next instant her natural courage restored her. She jumped up and stood at bay.

'Yes. I did.'

And now he was weak, and she was strong, and used her strength.

'I wrote it to save you. Yes. Call on your Creator, and be my judge, if you dare. Never, never will you meet a soul more utterly devoted to you, Evan. This Mr. Forth, this Laxley, I said, should go, because they were resolved to ruin you, and make you base. They are gone. The responsibility I take on myself. Nightly—during the remainder of my days—I will pray for pardon.'

He raised his head to ask sombrely: 'Is your handwriting like Laxley's?'

'It seems so,' she answered, with a pitiful sneer for one who could arrest her exaltation to inquire about minutiae. 'Right or wrong, it is done, and if you choose to be my judge, think whether your own conscience is clear. Why did you come here? Why did you stay? You have your free will,—do you deny that? Oh, I will take the entire blame, but you must not be a hypocrite, Van. You know you were aware. We had no confidences. I was obliged to treat you like a child; but for you to pretend to suppose that roses grow in your path—oh, that is paltry! You are a hypocrite or an imbecile, if that is your course.'

Was he not something of the former? The luxurious mist in which he had been living, dispersed before his sister's bitter words, and, as she designed he should, he felt himself her accomplice. But, again, reason struggled to enlighten him; for surely he would never have done a thing so disproportionate to the end to be gained! It was the unconnected action of his brain that thus advised him. No thoroughly-fashioned, clear-spirited man conceives wickedness impossible to him: but wickedness so largely mixed with folly, the best of us may reject as not among our temptations. Evan, since his love had dawned, had begun to talk with his own nature, and though he knew not yet how much it would stretch or contract, he knew that he was weak and could not perform moral wonders without severe struggles. The cynic may add, if he likes—or without potent liquors.

Could he be his sister's judge? It is dangerous for young men to be too good. They are so sweeping in their condemnations, so sublime in their conceptions of excellence, and the most finished Puritan cannot out-do their demands upon frail humanity. Evan's momentary self-examination saved him from this, and he told the Countess, with a sort of cold compassion, that he himself dared not blame her.

His tone was distinctly wanting in admiration of her, but she was somewhat over-wrought, and leaned her shoulder against him, and became immediately his affectionate, only too-zealous, sister; dearly to be loved, to be forgiven, to be prized: and on condition of inserting a special petition for pardon in her orisons, to live with a calm conscience, and to be allowed to have her own way with him during the rest of her days.

It was a happy union—a picture that the Countess was lured to admire in the glass.

Sad that so small a murmur should destroy it for ever!

'What?' cried the Countess, bursting from his arm.

'Go?' she emphasized with the hardness of determined unbelief, as if plucking the words, one by one, out of her reluctant ears. 'Go to Lady Jocelyn, and tell her I wrote the letter?'

'You can do no less, I fear,' said Evan, eyeing the floor and breathing a deep breath.

'Then I did hear you correctly? Oh, you must be mad-idiotic! There, pray go away, Evan. Come in the morning. You are too much for my nerves.'

Evan rose, putting out his hand as if to take hers and plead with her. She rejected the first motion, and repeated her desire for him to leave her; saying, cheerfully—

'Good night, dear; I dare say we shan't meet till the morning.'

'You can't let this injustice continue a single night, Louisa?' said he.

She was deep in the business of arranging a portion of her attire.

'Go-go; please,' she responded.

Lingering, he said: 'If I go, it will be straight to Lady Jocelyn.'

She stamped angrily.

'Only go!' and then she found him gone, and she stooped lower to the glass, to mark if the recent agitation were observable under her eyes. There, looking at herself, her heart dropped heavily in her bosom. She ran to the door and hurried swiftly after Evan, pulling him back speechlessly.

'Where are you going, Evan?'

'To Lady Jocelyn.'

The unhappy victim of her devotion stood panting.

'If you go, I—I take poison!' It was for him now to be struck; but he was suffering too strong an anguish to be susceptible to mock tragedy. The Countess paused to study him. She began to fear her brother. 'I will!' she reiterated wildly, without moving him at all. And the quiet inflexibility of his face forbade the ultimate hope which lies in giving men a dose of hysterics when they are obstinate. She tried by taunts and angry vituperations to make him look fierce, if but an instant, to precipitate her into an exhibition she was so well prepared for.

'Evan! what! after all my love, my confidence in you—I need not have told you—to expose us! Brother? would you? Oh!'

'I will not let this last another hour,' said Evan, firmly, at the same time seeking to caress her. She spurned his fruitless affection, feeling, nevertheless, how cruel was her fate; for, with any other save a brother, she had arts at her disposal to melt the manliest resolutions. The glass showed her

that her face was pathetically pale; the tones of her voice were rich and harrowing. What did they avail with a brother? 'Promise me,' she cried eagerly, 'promise me to stop here—on this spot—till I return.'

The promise was extracted. The Countess went to fetch Caroline. Evan did not count the minutes. One thought was mounting in his brain—the scorn of Rose. He felt that he had lost her. Lost her when he had just won her! He felt it, without realizing it. The first blows of an immense grief are dull, and strike the heart through wool, as it were. The belief of the young in their sorrow has to be flogged into them, on the good old educational principle. Could he do less than this he was about to do? Rose had wedded her noble nature to him, and it was as much her spirit as his own that urged him thus to forfeit her, to be worthy of her by assuming unworthiness.

There he sat neither conning over his determination nor the cause for it, revolving Rose's words about Laxley, and nothing else. The words were so sweet and so bitter; every now and then the heavy smiting on his heart set it quivering and leaping, as the whip starts a jaded horse.

Meantime the Countess was participating in a witty conversation in the drawing-room with Sir John and the Duke, Miss Current, and others; and it was not till after she had displayed many graces, and, as one or two ladies presumed to consider, marked effrontery, that she rose and drew Caroline away with her. Returning to her dressing-room, she found that Evan had faithfully kept his engagement; he was on the exact spot where she had left him.

Caroline came to him swiftly, and put her hand to his forehead that she might the better peruse his features, saying, in her mellow caressing voice: 'What is this, dear Van, that you will do? Why do you look so wretched?'

'Has not Louisa told you?'

'She has told me something, dear, but I don't know what it is. That you are going to expose us? What further exposure do we need? I'm sure, Van, my pride—what I had—is gone. I have none left!'

Evan kissed her brows warmly. An explanation, full of the Countess's passionate outcries of justification, necessity, and innocence in higher than fleshly eyes, was given, and then the three were silent.

'But, Van,' Caroline commenced, deprecatingly, 'my darling! of what use—now! Whether right or wrong, why should you, why should you, when the thing is done, dear?—think!'

'And you, too, would let another suffer under an unjust accusation?' said Evan.

'But, dearest, it is surely your duty to think of your family first. Have we not been afflicted enough? Why should you lay us under this fresh burden?'

'Because it 's better to bear all now than a life of remorse,' answered Evan.

'But this Mr. Laxley—I cannot pity him; he has behaved so insolently to you throughout! Let him suffer.'

'Lady Jocelyn,' said Evan, 'has been unintentionally unjust to him, and after her kindness—apart from the right or wrong—I will not—I can't allow her to continue so.'

'After her kindness!' echoed the Countess, who had been fuming at Caroline's weak expostulations. 'Kindness! Have I not done ten times for these Jocelyns what they have done for us? O mio Deus! why, I have bestowed on them the membership for Fallow field: I have saved her from being a convicted liar this very day. Worse! for what would have been talked of the morals of the house, supposing the scandal. Oh! indeed I was tempted to bring that horrid mad Captain into the house face to face with his flighty doll of a wife, as I, perhaps, should have done, acting by the dictates of my conscience. I lied for Lady Jocelyn, and handed the man to a lawyer, who withdrew him. And this they owe to me! Kindness? They have given us bed and board, as the people say. I have repaid them for that.'

'Pray be silent, Louisa,' said Evan, getting up hastily, for the sick sensation Rose had experienced came over him. His sister's plots, her untruth, her coarseness, clung to him and seemed part of his blood. He now had a personal desire to cut himself loose from the wretched entanglement revealed to him, whatever it cost.

'Are you really, truly going?' Caroline exclaimed, for he was near the door.

'At a quarter to twelve at night!' sneered the Countess, still imagining that he, like herself, must be partly acting.

'But, Van, is it—dearest, think! is it manly for a brother to go and tell of his sister? And how would it look?'

Evan smiled. 'Is it that that makes you unhappy? Louisa's name will not be mentioned—be sure of that.'

Caroline was stooping forward to him. Her figure straightened: 'Good Heaven, Evan! you are not going to take it on yourself? Rose!—she will hate you.'

'God help me!' he cried internally.

'Oh, Evan, darling! consider, reflect!' She fell on her knees, catching his hand. 'It is worse for us that you should suffer, dearest! Think of the dreadful meanness and baseness of what you will have to acknowledge.'

'Yes!' sighed the youth, and his eyes, in his extreme pain, turned to the Countess reproachfully.

'Think, dear,' Caroline hurried on, 'he gains nothing for whom you do this—you lose all. It is not your deed. You will have to speak an untruth. Your ideas are wrong—wrong, I know they are.'

You will have to lie. But if you are silent, the little, little blame that may attach to us will pass away, and we shall be happy in seeing our brother happy.'

'You are talking to Evan as if he had religion,' said the Countess, with steady sedateness. And at that moment, from the sublimity of his pagan virtue, the young man groaned for some pure certain light to guide him: the question whether he was about to do right made him weak. He took Caroline's head between his two hands, and kissed her mouth. The act brought Rose to his senses insufferably, and she—his Goddess of truth and his sole guiding light—spurred him afresh.

'My family's dishonour is mine, Caroline. Say nothing more—don't think of me. I go to Lady Jocelyn tonight. To-morrow we leave, and there's the end. Louisa, if you have any new schemes for my welfare, I beg you to renounce them.'

'Gratitude I never expected from a Dawley!' the Countess retorted.

'Oh, Louisa! he is going!' cried Caroline; 'kneel to him with me: stop him: Rose loves him, and he is going to make her hate him.'

'You can't talk reason to one who's mad,' said the Countess, more like the Dawley she sprang from than it would have pleased her to know.

'My darling! My own Evan! it will kill me,' Caroline exclaimed, and passionately imploring him, she looked so hopelessly beautiful, that Evan was agitated, and caressed her, while he said, softly: 'Where our honour is not involved I would submit to your smallest wish.'

'It involves my life—my destiny!' murmured Caroline.

Could he have known the double meaning in her words, and what a saving this sacrifice of his was to accomplish, he would not have turned to do it feeling abandoned of heaven and earth.

The Countess stood rigidly as he went forth. Caroline was on her knees, sobbing.

CHAPTER XXXIV. A PAGAN SACRIFICE

Three steps from the Countess's chamber door, the knot of Evan's resolution began to slacken. The clear light of his simple duty grew cloudy and complex. His pride would not let him think that he was shrinking, but cried out in him, 'Will you be believed?' and whispered that few would believe him guilty of such an act. Yet, while something said that full surely Lady Jocelyn would not, a vague dread that Rose might, threw him back on the luxury of her love and faith in him. He found himself hoping that his statement would be laughed at. Then why make it?

No: that was too blind a hope. Many would take him at his word; all—all save Lady Jocelyn! Rose the first! Because he stood so high with her now he feared the fall. Ah, dazzling pinnacle! our darlings shoot us up on a wondrous juggler's pole, and we talk familiarly to the stars, and are so much above everybody, and try to walk like creatures with two legs, forgetting that we have but a pin's point to stand on up there. Probably the absence of natural motion inspires the prophecy that we must ultimately come down: our unused legs wax morbidly restless. Evan thought it good that Rose should lift her head to look at him; nevertheless, he knew that Rose would turn from him the moment he descended from his superior station. Nature is wise in her young children, though they wot not of it, and are always trying to rush away from her. They escape their wits sooner than their instincts.

But was not Rose involved in him, and part of him? Had he not sworn never to renounce her? What was this but a betrayal?

Go on, young man: fight your fight. The little imps pluck at you: the big giant assails you: the seductions of the soft-mouthed siren are not wanting. Slacken the knot an instant, and they will all have play. And the worst is, that you may be wrong, and they may be right! For is it, can it be proper for you to stain the silvery whiteness of your skin by plunging headlong into yonder pitch-bath? Consider the defilement! Contemplate your hideous aspect on issuing from that black baptism!

As to the honour of your family, Mr. Evan Harrington, pray, of what sort of metal consists the honour of a tailor's family?

One little impertinent imp ventured upon that question on his own account. The clever beast was torn back and strangled instantaneously by his experienced elders, but not before Evan's pride had answered him. Exalted by Love, he could dread to abase himself and strip off his glittering garments; lowered by the world, he fell back upon his innate worth.

Yes, he was called on to prove it; he was on his way to prove it. Surrendering his dearest and his best, casting aside his dreams, his desires, his aspirations, for this stern duty, he at least would know that he made himself doubly worthy of her who abandoned him, and the world would scorn him by reason of his absolute merit. Coming to this point, the knot of his resolve tightened again; he hugged it with the furious zeal of a martyr.

Religion, the lack of which in him the Countess deplored, would have guided him and silenced the internal strife. But do not despise a virtue purely Pagan. The young who can act readily up to the Christian light are happier, doubtless: but they are led, they are passive: I think they do not make such capital Christians subsequently. They are never in such danger, we know; but some in the flock are more than sheep. The heathen ideal it is not so very easy to attain, and those who mount from it to the Christian have, in my humble thought, a firmer footing.

So Evan fought his hard fight from the top of the stairs to the bottom. A Pagan, which means our poor unsupported flesh, is never certain of his victory. Now you will see him kneeling to his Gods, and anon drubbing them; or he makes them fight for him, and is complacent at the issue. Evan had ceased to pick his knot with one hand and pull it with the other: but not finding Lady

Jocelyn below, and hearing that she had retired for the night, he mounted the stairs, and the strife recommenced from the bottom to the top. Strange to say, he was almost unaware of any struggle going on within him. The suggestion of the foolish little imp alone was loud in the heart of his consciousness; the rest hung more in his nerves than in his brain. He thought: 'Well, I will speak it out to her in the morning'; and thought so sincerely, while an ominous sigh of relief at the reprieve rose from his over-burdened bosom.

Hardly had the weary deep breath taken flight, when the figure of Lady Jocelyn was seen advancing along the corridor, with a lamp in her hand. She trod heavily, in a kind of march, as her habit was; her large fully-open grey eyes looking straight ahead. She would have passed him, and he would have let her pass, but seeing the unusual pallor on her face, his love for this lady moved him to step forward and express a hope that she had no present cause for sorrow.

Hearing her mother's name, Lady Jocelyn was about to return a conventional answer. Recognizing Evan, she said:

'Ah! Mr. Harrington! Yes, I fear it's as bad as it can be. She can scarcely outlive the night.'

Again he stood alone: his chance was gone. How could he speak to her in her affliction? Her calm sedate visage had the beauty of its youth, when lighted by the animation that attends meetings or farewells. In her bow to Evan, he beheld a lovely kindness more unique, if less precious, than anything he had ever seen on the face of Rose. Half exultingly, he reflected that no opportunity would be allowed him now to teach that noble head and truest of human hearts to turn from him: the clear-eyed morrow would come: the days of the future would be bright as other days!

Wrapped in the comfort of his cowardice, he started to see Lady Jocelyn advancing to him again.

'Mr. Harrington,' she said, 'Rose tells me you leave us early in the morning. I may as well shake your hand now. We part very good friends. I shall always be glad to hear of you.'

Evan pressed her hand, and bowed. 'I thank you, madam,' was all he could answer.

'It will be better if you don't write to Rose.'

Her tone was rather that of a request than an injunction.

'I have no right to do so, my lady.'

'She considers that you have: I wish her to have, a fair trial.'

His voice quavered. The philosophic lady thought it time to leave him.

'So good-bye. I can trust you without extracting a promise. If you ever have need of a friend, you know you are at liberty to write to me.'

'You are tired, my lady?' He put this question more to dally with what he ought to be saying.

'Tolerably. Your sister, the Countess, relieves me in the night. I fancy my mother finds her the better nurse of the two.'

Lady Jocelyn's face lighted in its gracious pleasant way, as she just inclined her head: but the mention of the Countess and her attendance on Mrs. Bonner had nerved Evan: the contrast of her hypocrisy and vile scheming with this most open, noble nature, acted like a new force within him. He begged Lady Jocelyn's permission to speak with her in private. Marking his fervid appearance, she looked at him seriously.

'Is it really important?'

'I cannot rest, madam, till it is spoken.'

'I mean, it doesn't pertain to the delirium? We may sleep upon that.'

He divined her sufficiently to answer: 'It concerns a piece of injustice done by you, madam, and which I can help you to set right.'

Lady Jocelyn stared somewhat. 'Follow me into my dressing-room,' she said, and led the way.

Escape was no longer possible. He was on the march to execution, and into the darkness of his brain danced John Raikes, with his grotesque tribulations. It was the harsh savour of reality that conjured up this flighty being, who probably never felt a sorrow or a duty. The farce Jack lived was all that Evan's tragic bitterness could revolve, and seemed to be the only light in his mind. You might have seen a smile on his mouth when he was ready to ask for a bolt from heaven to crush him.

'Now,' said her ladyship, and he found that the four walls enclosed them, 'what have I been doing?'

She did not bid him be seated. Her brevity influenced him to speak to the point.

'You have dismissed Mr. Laxley, my lady: he is innocent.'

'How do you know that?'

'Because,'—a whirl of sensations beset the wretched youth, 'because I am guilty.'

His words had run ahead of his wits; and in answer to Lady Jocelyn's singular exclamation he could but simply repeat them.

Her head drew back; her face was slightly raised; she looked, as he had seen her sometimes look at the Countess, with a sort of speculative amazement.

'And why do you come to tell me?'

'For the reason that I cannot allow you to be unjust, madam.'

'What on earth was your motive?'

Evan stood silent, flinching from her frank eyes.

'Well, well, well!' Her ladyship dropped into a chair, and thumped her knees.

There was lawyer's blood in Lady Jocelyn's veins she had the judicial mind. A confession was to her a confession. She tracked actions up to a motive; but one who came voluntarily to confess needed no sifting. She had the habit of treating things spoken as facts.

'You absolutely wrote that letter to Mrs. Evremonde's husband!'

Evan bowed, to avoid hearing his own lie.

'You discovered his address and wrote to him, and imitated Mr. Laxley's handwriting, to effect the purpose you may have had?'

Her credulity did require his confirmation of it, and he repeated: 'It is my deed.'

'Hum! And you sent that premonitory slip of paper to her?'

'To Mrs. Evremonde?'

'Somebody else was the author of that, perhaps?'

'It is all on me.'

'In that case, Mr. Harrington, I can only say that it's quite right you should quit this house to-morrow morning.'

Her ladyship commenced rocking in her chair, and then added: 'May I ask, have you madness in your family? No? Because when one can't discern a motive, it's natural to ascribe certain acts to madness. Had Mrs. Evremonde offended you? or Ferdinand—but one only hears of such practices towards fortunate rivals, and now you have come to undo what you did! I must admit, that taking the monstrousness of the act and the inconsequence of your proceedings together, the whole affair becomes more incomprehensible to me than it was before. Would it be unpleasant to you to favour me with explanations?'

She saw the pain her question gave him, and, passing it, said:

'Of course you need not be told that Rose must hear of this?'

'Yes,' said Evan, 'she must hear it.'

'You know what that 's equivalent to? But, if you like, I will not speak to her till you, have left us.'

'Instantly,' cried Evan. 'Now-to-night! I would not have her live a minute in a false estimate of me.'

Had Lady Jocelyn's intellect been as penetrating as it was masculine, she would have taken him and turned him inside out in a very short time; for one who would bear to see his love look coldly on him rather than endure a minute's false estimate of his character, and who could yet stoop to concoct a vile plot, must either be mad or simulating the baseness for some reason or other. She perceived no motive for the latter, and she held him to be sound in the head, and what was spoken from the mouth she accepted. Perhaps, also, she saw in the complication thus offered an escape for Rose, and was the less inclined to elucidate it herself. But if her intellect was baffled, her heart was unerring. A man proved guilty of writing an anonymous letter would not have been allowed to stand long in her room. She would have shown him to the door of the house speedily; and Evan was aware in his soul that he had not fallen materially in her esteem. He had puzzled and confused her, and partly because she had the feeling that this young man was entirely trustworthy, and because she never relied on her feelings, she let his own words condemn him, and did not personally discard him. In fact, she was a veritable philosopher. She permitted her fellows to move the world on as they would, and had no other passions in the contemplation of the show than a cultured audience will usually exhibit.

'Strange,—most strange! I thought I was getting old!' she said, and eyed the culprit as judges generally are not wont to do. 'It will be a shock to Rose. I must tell you that I can't regret it. I would not have employed force with her, but I should have given her as strong a taste of the world as it was in my power to give. Girls get their reason from society. But, come! if you think you can make your case out better to her, you shall speak to her first yourself.'

'No, my lady,' said Evan, softly.

'You would rather not?'

'I could not.'

'But, I suppose, she'll want to speak to you when she knows it.'

'I can take death from her hands, but I cannot slay myself.'

The language was natural to his condition, though the note was pitched high. Lady Jocelyn hummed till the sound of it was over, and an idea striking her, she said:

'Ah, by the way, have you any tremendous moral notions?'

'I don't think I have, madam.'

'People act on that mania sometimes, I believe. Do you think it an outrage on decency for a wife to run away from a mad husband whom they won't shut up, and take shelter with a friend? Is that the cause? Mr. Forth is an old friend of mine. I would trust my daughter with him in a desert, and stake my hand on his honour.'

'Oh, Lady Jocelyn!' cried Evan. 'Would to God you might ever have said that of me! Madam, I love you. I shall never see you again. I shall never meet one to treat me so generously. I leave you, blackened in character—you cannot think of me without contempt. I can never hope that this will change. But, for your kindness let me thank you.'

And as speech is poor where emotion is extreme—and he knew his own to be especially so—he took her hand with petitioning eyes, and dropping on one knee, reverentially kissed it.

Lady Jocelyn was human enough to like to be appreciated. She was a veteran Pagan, and may have had the instinct that a peculiar virtue in this young one was the spring of his conduct. She stood up and said: 'Don't forget that you have a friend here.'

The poor youth had to turn his head from her.

'You wish that I should tell Rose what you have told me at once, Mr. Harrington?'

'Yes, my lady; I beg that you will do so.'

'Well!'

And the queer look Lady Jocelyn had been wearing dimpled into absolute wonder. A stranger to Love's cunning, she marvelled why he should desire to witness the scorn Rose would feel for him.

'If she's not asleep, then, she shall hear it now,' said her ladyship. 'You understand that it will be mentioned to no other person.'

'Except to Mr. Laxley, madam, to whom I shall offer the satisfaction he may require. But I will undertake that.'

'Just as you think proper on that matter,' remarked her philosophical ladyship, who held that man was a fighting animal, and must not have his nature repressed.

She lighted him part of the way, and then turned off to Rose's chamber.

Would Rose believe it of him? Love combated his dismal foreboding. Strangely, too, now that he had plunged into his pitch-bath, the guilt seemed to cling to him, and instead of hoping serenely, or fearing steadily, his spirit fell in a kind of abject supplication to Rose, and blindly trusted that she would still love even if she believed him base. In his weakness he fell so low as to pray that she might love that crawling reptile who could creep into a house and shrink from no vileness to win her.

CHAPTER XXXV. ROSE WOUNDED

The light of morning was yet cold along the passages of the house when Polly Wheedle, hurrying to her young mistress, met her loosely dressed and with a troubled face.

'What 's the matter, Polly? I was coming to you.'

'O, Miss Rose! and I was coming to you. Miss Bonner's gone back to her convulsions again. She's had them all night. Her hair won't last till thirty, if she keeps on giving way to temper, as I tell her: and I know that from a barber.'

'Tush, you stupid Polly! Does she want to see me?'

'You needn't suspect that, Miss. But you quiet her best, and I thought I'd come to you. But, gracious!'

Rose pushed past her without vouchsafing any answer to the look in her face, and turned off to Juliana's chamber, where she was neither welcomed nor repelled. Juliana said she was perfectly well, and that Polly was foolishly officious: whereupon Rose ordered Polly out of the room, and said to Juliana, kindly: 'You have not slept, dear, and I have not either. I am so unhappy.'

Whether Rose intended by this communication to make Juliana eagerly attentive, and to distract her from her own affair, cannot be said, but something of the effect was produced.

'You care for him, too,' cried Rose, impetuously. 'Tell me, Juley: do you think him capable of any base action? Do you think he would do what any gentleman would be ashamed to own? Tell me.'

Juliana looked at Rose intently, but did not reply.

Rose jumped up from the bed. 'You hesitate, Juley? What? Could you think so?'

Young women after a common game are shrewd. Juliana may have seen that Rose was not steady on the plank she walked, and required support.

'I don't know,' she said, turning her cheek to her pillow.

'What an answer!' Rose exclaimed. 'Have you no opinion? What did you say yesterday? It's silent as the grave with me: but if you do care for him, you must think one thing or the other.'

'I suppose not, then—no,' said Juliana.

Repeating the languid words bitterly, Rose continued:

'What is it to love without having faith in him you love? You make my mind easier.'

Juliana caught the implied taunt, and said, fretfully:

'I'm ill. You're so passionate. You don't tell me what it is. How can I answer you?'

'Never mind,' said Rose, moving to the door, wondering why she had spoken at all: but when Juliana sprang forward, and caught her by the dress to stop her, and with a most unwonted outburst of affection, begged of her to tell her all, the wound in Rose's breast began to bleed, and she was glad to speak.

'Juley, do you—can you believe that he wrote that letter which poor Ferdinand was—accused of writing?'

Juliana appeared to muse, and then responded: 'Why should he do such a thing?'

'O my goodness, what a girl!' Rose interjected.

'Well, then, to please you, Rose, of course I think he is too honourable.'

'You do think so, Juley? But if he himself confessed it—what then? You would not believe him, would you?'

'Oh, then I can't say. Why should he condemn himself?'

'But you would know—you would know that he was a man to suffer death rather than be guilty of the smallest baseness. His birth—what is that!' Rose filliped her fingers: 'But his acts—what he is himself you would be sure of, would you not? Dear Juley! Oh, for heaven's sake, speak out plainly to me.'

A wily look had crept over Juliana's features.

'Certainly,' she said, in a tone that belied it, and drawing Rose to her bosom, the groan she heard there was passing sweet to her.

'He has confessed it to Mama,' sobbed Rose. 'Why did he not come to me first? He has confessed it—the abominable thing has come out of his own mouth. He went to her last night...'

Juliana patted her shoulders regularly as they heaved. When words were intelligible between them, Juliana said:

'At least, dear, you must admit that he has redeemed it.'

'Redeemed it? Could he do less?' Rose dried her eyes vehemently, as if the tears shamed her. 'A man who could have let another suffer for his crime—I could never have lifted my head again. I think I would have cut off this hand that plighted itself to him! As it is, I hardly dare look at myself. But you don't think it, dear? You know it to be false! false! false!'

'Why should Mr. Harrington confess it?' said Juliana.

'Oh, don't speak his name!' cried Rose.

Her cousin smiled. 'So many strange things happen,' she said, and sighed.

'Don't sigh: I shall think you believe it!' cried Rose. An appearance of constrained repose was assumed. Rose glanced up, studied for an instant, and breathlessly uttered: 'You do, you do believe it, Juley?'

For answer, Juliana hugged her with much warmth, and recommenced the patting.

'I dare say it's a mistake,' she remarked. 'He may have been jealous of Ferdinand. You know I have not seen the letter. I have only heard of it. In love, they say, you ought to excuse... And the want of religious education! His sister...'

Rose interrupted her with a sharp shudder. Might it not be possible that one who had the same blood as the Countess would stoop to a momentary vileness.

How changed was Rose from the haughty damsel of yesterday!

'Do you think my lover could tell a lie?' 'He—would not love me long if I did!'

These phrases arose and rang in Juliana's ears while she pursued the task of comforting the broken spirit that now lay prone on the bed, and now impetuously paced the room. Rose had come thinking the moment Juliana's name was mentioned, that here was the one to fortify her faith in Evan: one who, because she loved, could not doubt him. She moaned in a terror of distrust, loathing her cousin: not asking herself why she needed support. And indeed she was too young for much clear self-questioning, and her blood was flowing too quickly for her brain to perceive more than one thing at a time.

'Does your mother believe it?' said Juliana, evading a direct assault.

'Mama? She never doubts what you speak,' answered Rose, disconsolately.

'She does?'

'Yes.'

Whereat Juliana looked most grave, and Rose felt that it was hard to breathe.

She had grown very cold and calm, and Juliana had to be expansive unprovoked.

'Believe nothing, dear, till you hear it from his own lips. If he can look in your face and say that he did it... well, then! But of course he cannot. It must be some wonderful piece of generosity to his rival.'

'So I thought, Juley! so I thought,' cried Rose, at the new light, and Juliana smiled contemptuously, and the light flickered and died, and all was darker than before in the bosom of Rose. She had borne so much that this new drop was poison.

'Of course it must be that, if it is anything,' Juliana pursued. 'You were made to be happy, Rose. And consider, if it is true, people of very low birth, till they have lived long with other people, and if they have no religion, are so very likely to do things. You do not judge them as you do real gentlemen, and one must not be too harsh—I only wish to prepare you for the worst.'

A dim form of that very idea had passed through Rose, giving her small comfort.

'Let him tell you with his own lips that what he has told your mother is true, and then, and not till then, believe him,' Juliana concluded, and they kissed kindly, and separated. Rose had suddenly lost her firm step, but no sooner was Juliana alone than she left the bed, and addressed her visage to the glass with brightening eyes, as one who saw the glimmer of young hope therein.

'She love him! Not if he told me so ten thousand times would I believe it! and before he has said a syllable she doubts him. Asking me in that frantic way! as if I couldn't see that she wanted me to help her to her faith in him, as she calls it. Not name his name? Mr. Harrington! I may call him Evan: some day!'

Half-uttered, half-mused, the unconscious exclamations issued from her, and for many a weary day since she had dreamed of love, and studied that which is said to attract the creature, she had not been so glowingly elated or looked so much farther in the glass than its pale reflection.

CHAPTER XXXVI. BEFORE BREAKFAST

Cold through the night the dark-fringed stream had whispered under Evan's eyes, and the night breeze voiced 'Fool, fool!' to him, not without a distant echo in his heart. By symbols and sensations he knew that Rose was lost to him. There was no moon: the water seemed aimless, passing on carelessly to oblivion. Now and then, the trees stirred and talked, or a noise was heard from the pastures. He had slain the life that lived in them, and the great glory they were to bring forth, and the end to which all things moved. Had less than the loss of Rose been involved, the young man might have found himself looking out on a world beneath notice, and have been

sighing for one more worthy of his clouded excellence but the immense misery present to him in the contemplation of Rose's sad restrained contempt, saved him from the silly elation which is the last, and generally successful, struggle of human nature in those who can so far master it to commit a sacrifice. The loss of that brave high young soul-Rose, who had lifted him out of the mire with her own white hands: Rose, the image of all that he worshipped: Rose, so closely wedded to him that to be cut away from her was to fall like pallid clay from the soaring spirit: surely he was stunned and senseless when he went to utter the words to her mother! Now that he was awake, and could feel his self-inflicted pain, he marvelled at his rashness and foolishness, as perhaps numerous mangled warriors have done for a time, when the battle-field was cool, and they were weak, and the uproar of their jarred nerves has beset them, lying uncherished.

By degrees he grew aware of a little consolatory touch, like the point of a needle, in his consciousness. Laxley would certainly insult him! In that case he would not refuse to fight him. The darkness broke and revealed this happy prospect, and Evan held to it an hour, and could hardly reject it when better thoughts conquered. For would it not be sweet to make the strength of his arm respected? He took a stick, and ran his eye musingly along the length, trifling with it grimly. The great Mel had been his son's instructor in the chivalrous science of fence, and a maitre d'armes in Portugal had given him polish. In Mel's time duels with swords had been occasionally fought, and Evan looked on the sword as the weapon of combat. Face to face with his adversary—what then were birth or position? Action!—action! he sighed for it, as I have done since I came to know that his history must be morally developed. A glow of bitter pleasure exalted him when, after hot passages, and parryings and thrusts, he had disarmed Ferdinand Laxley, and bestowing on him his life, said: 'Accept this worthy gift of the son of a tailor!' and he wiped his sword, haply bound up his wrist, and stalked off the ground, the vindicator of man's natural dignity. And then he turned upon himself with laughter, discovering a most wholesome power, barely to be suspected in him yet; but of all the children of glittering Mel and his solid mate, Evan was the best mixed compound of his parents.

He put the stick back in its corner and eyed his wrist, as if he had really just gone through the pretty scene he had just laughed at. It was nigh upon reality, for it suggested the employment of a handkerchief, and he went to a place and drew forth one that had the stain of his blood on it, and the name of Rose at one end. The beloved name was half-blotted by the dull-red mark, and at that sight a strange tenderness took hold of Evan. His passions became dead and of old date. This, then, would be his for ever! Love, for whom earth had been too small, crept exultingly into a nut-shell. He clasped the treasure on his breast, and saw a life beyond his parting with her.

Strengthened thus, he wrote by the morning light to Laxley. The letter was brief, and said simply that the act of which Laxley had been accused, Evan Harrington was responsible for. The latter expressed regret that Laxley should have fallen under a false charge, and, at the same time, indicated that if Laxley considered himself personally aggrieved, the writer was at his disposal.

A messenger had now to be found to convey it to the village-inn. Footmen were stirring about the house, and one meeting Evan close by his door, observed with demure grin, that he could not find the gentleman's nether-garments. The gentleman, it appeared, was Mr. John Raikes, who according to report, had been furnished with a bed at the house, because of a discovery, made at a late period over-night, that farther the gentleman could not go. Evan found him sleeping

soundly. How much the poor youth wanted a friend! Fortune had given him instead a born buffoon; and it is perhaps the greatest evil of a position like Evan's, that, with cultured feelings, you are likely to meet with none to know you. Society does not mix well in money-pecking spheres. Here, however, was John Raikes, and Evan had to make the best of him.

'Eh?' yawned Jack, awakened; 'I was dreaming I was Napoleon Bonaparte's right-hand man.'

'I want you to be mine for half-an-hour,' said Evan.

Without replying, the distinguished officer jumped out of bed at a bound, mounted a chair, and peered on tip-toe over the top, from which, with a glance of self-congratulation, he pulled the missing piece of apparel, sighed dejectedly as he descended, while he exclaimed:

'Safe! but no distinction can compensate a man for this state of intolerable suspicion of everybody. I assure you, Harrington, I wouldn't be Napoleon himself—and I have always been his peculiar admirer—to live and be afraid of my valet! I believe it will develop cancer sooner or later in me. I feel singular pains already. Last night, after crowning champagne with ale, which produced a sort of French Revolution in my interior—by the way, that must have made me dream of Napoleon last night, with my lower members in revolt against my head, I had to sit and cogitate for hours on a hiding-place for these—call them what you will. Depend upon it, Harrington, this world is no such funny affair as we fancy.'

'Then it is true, that you could let a man play pranks on you,' said Evan. 'I took it for one of your jokes.'

'Just as I can't believe that you're a tailor,' returned Jack. 'It 's not a bit more extraordinary.'

'But, Jack, if you cause yourself to be contemptible——'

'Contemptible!' cried Jack. 'This is not the tone I like. Contemptible! why it's my eccentricity among my equals. If I dread the profane vulgar, that only proves that I'm above them. Odi, etc. Besides, Achilles had his weak point, and egad, it was when he faced about! By Jingo! I wish I'd had that idea yesterday. I should have behaved better.'

Evan could see that the creature was beginning to rely desperately on his humour.

'Come,' he said, 'be a man to-day. Throw off your motley. When I met you that night so oddly, you had been acting like a worthy fellow, trying to earn your bread in the best way you could——'

'And precisely because I met you, of all men, I've been going round and round ever since,' said Jack. 'A clown or pantaloon would have given me balance. Say no more. You couldn't help it. We met because we were the two extremes.'

Sighing, 'What a jolly old inn!' Raikes rolled himself over in the sheets, and gave two or three snug jolts indicative of his determination to be comfortable while he could.

'Do you intend to carry on this folly, Jack?'

'Say, sacrifice,' was the answer. 'I feel it as much as you possibly could, Mr. Harrington. Hear the facts,' Jack turned round again. 'Why did I consent to this absurdity? Because of my ambition. That old fellow, whom I took to be a clerk of Messrs. Grist, said: "You want to cut a figure in the world—you're armed now." A sort of Fortunatus's joke. It was his way of launching me. But did he think I intended this for more than a lift? I his puppet? He, sir, was my tool! Well, I came. All my efforts were strained to shorten the period of penance. I had the best linen, and put on captivating manners. I should undoubtedly have won some girl of station, and cast off my engagement like an old suit, but just mark!—now mark how Fortune tricks us! After the pic-nic yesterday, the domestics of the house came to clear away, and the band being there, I stopped them and bade them tune up, and at the same time seizing the maid Wheedle, away we flew. We danced, we whirled, we twirled. Ale upon this! My head was lost. "Why don't it last for ever?" says I. "I wish it did," says she. The naivete enraptured me. "Oooo!" I cried, hugging her, and then, you know, there was no course open to a man of honour but to offer marriage and make a lady of her. I proposed: she accepted me, and here I am, eternally tied to this accursed insignia, if I'm to keep my promise! Isn't that a sacrifice, friend H.? There's no course open to me. The poor girl is madly in love. She called me a "rattle!" As a gentleman, I cannot recede.'

Evan got up and burst into damnable laughter at this burlesque of himself. Telling the fellow the service he required, and receiving a groaning assurance that the letter should, without loss of time, be delivered in proper style, the egoist, as Jack heartily thought him, fell behind his; knitted brows, and, after musing abstractedly, went forth to light upon his fate.

But a dread of meeting had seized both Rose and Evan. She had exhausted her first sincerity of unbelief in her interview with Juliana: and he had begun to consider what he could say to her. More than the three words 'I did it,' would not be possible; and if she made him repeat them, facing her truthful eyes, would he be man enough to strike her bared heart twice? And, ah! the sullen brute he must seem, standing before her dumb, hearing her sigh, seeing her wretched effort not to show how unwillingly her kind spirit despised him. The reason for the act—she would ask for that! Rose would not be so philosophic as her mother. She would grasp at every chance to excuse the deed. He cried out against his scheming sister in an agony, and while he did so, encountered Miss Carrington and Miss. Bonner in deep converse. Juliana pinched her arm, whereupon Miss Carrington said: 'You look merry this morning, Mr. Harrington': for he was unawares smiling at the image of himself in the mirror of John Raikes. That smile, transformed to a chuckling grimace, travelled to Rose before they met.

Why did she not come to him?

A soft voice at his elbow made his blood stop. It was Caroline. She kissed him, answering his greeting: 'Is it good morning?'

'Certainly,' said he. 'By the way, don't forget that the coach leaves early.'

'My darling Evan! you make me so happy. For it was really a mistaken sense of honour. For what can at all excuse a falsehood, you know, Evan!'

Caroline took his arm, and led him into the sun, watching his face at times. Presently she said: 'I want just to be assured that you thought more wisely than when you left us last night.'

'More wisely?' Evan turned to her with a playful smile.

'My dear brother! you did not do what you said you would do?'

'Have you ever known me not to do what I said I would do?'

'Evan! Good heaven! you did it? Then how can you remain here an instant? Oh, no, no!—say no, darling!'

'Where is Louisa?' he inquired.

'She is in her room. She will never appear at breakfast, if she knows this.'

'Perhaps more solitude would do her good,' said Evan.

'Remember, if this should prove true, think how you punish her!'

On that point Evan had his own opinion.

'Well, I shall never have to punish you in this way, my love, he said fondly, and Caroline dropped her eyelids.

'Don't think that I am blaming her,' he added, trying to feel as honestly as he spoke. 'I was mad to come here. I see it all now. Let us keep to our place. We are all the same before God till we disgrace ourselves.' Possibly with that sense of shame which some young people have who are not professors of sounding sentences, or affected by missionary zeal, when they venture to breathe the holy name, Evan blushed, and walked on humbly silent. Caroline murmured: 'Yes, yes! oh, brother!' and her figure drew to him as if for protection. Pale, she looked up.

'Shall you always love me, Evan?'

'Whom else have I to love?'

'But always—always? Under any circumstances?'

'More and more, dear. I always have, and shall. I look to you now. I have no home but in your heart now.'

She was agitated, and he spoke warmly to calm her.

The throb of deep emotion rang in her rich voice. 'I will live any life to be worthy of your love, Evan,' and she wept.

To him they were words and tears without a history.

Nothing further passed between them. Caroline went to the Countess: Evan waited for Rose. The sun was getting high. The face of the stream glowed like metal. Why did she not come? She believed him guilty from the mouth of another? If so, there was something less for him to lose. And now the sacrifice he had made did whisper a tale of mortal magnificence in his ears: feelings that were not his noblest stood up exalted. He waited till the warm meadow-breath floating past told that the day had settled into heat, and then he waited no more, but quietly walked into the house with the strength of one who has conquered more than human scorn.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE RETREAT FROM BECKLEY

Never would the Countess believe that brother of hers, idiot as by nature he might be, and heir to unnumbered epithets, would so far forget what she had done for him, as to drag her through the mud for nothing: and so she told Caroline again and again, vehemently.

It was about ten minutes before the time for descending to the breakfast-table. She was dressed, and sat before the glass, smoothing her hair, and applying the contents of a pot of cold cream to her forehead between-whiles. With perfect sincerity she repeated that she could not believe it. She had only trusted Evan once since their visit to Beckley; and that this once he should, when treated as a man, turn traitor to their common interests, and prove himself an utter baby, was a piece of nonsense her great intelligence indignantly rejected.

'Then, if true,' she answered Caroline's assurances finally, 'if true, he is not his father's son!'

By which it may be seen that she had indeed taken refuge in the Castle of Negation against the whole army of facts.

'He is acting, Carry. He is acting the ideas of his ridiculous empty noddle!'

'No,' said Caroline, mournfully, 'he is not. I have never known Evan to lie.'

'Then you must forget the whipping he once had from his mother—little dolt! little selfish pig! He obtains his reputation entirely from his abominable selfishness, and then stands tall, and asks us to admire him. He bursts with vanity. But if you lend your credence to it, Carry, how, in the name of goodness, are you to appear at the breakfast?'

'I was going to ask you whether you would come,' said Caroline, coldly.

'If I can get my hair to lie flat by any means at all, of course!' returned the Countess. 'This dreadful horrid country pomade! Why did we not bring a larger stock of the Andalusian Regenerator? Upon my honour, my dear, you use a most enormous quantity; I must really tell you that.'

Conning here entered to say that Mr. Evan had given orders for the boxes to be packed and everything got ready to depart by half-past eleven o'clock, when the fly would call for them and convey them to Fallow field in time to meet the coach for London.

The Countess turned her head round to Caroline like an astonished automaton.

'Given orders!' she interjected.

'I have very little to get ready,' remarked Caroline.

'Be so good as to wait outside the door one instant,' said the Countess to Conning, with particular urbanity.

Conning heard a great deal of vigorous whispering within, and when summoned to re-appear, a note was handed to her to convey to Mr. Harrington immediately. He was on the lawn; read it, and wrote back three hasty lines in pencil.

'Louisa. You have my commands to quit this house, at the hour named, this day. You will go with me. E. H.'

Conning was again requested to wait outside the Countess's door. She was the bearer of another note. Evan read it likewise; tore it up, and said that there was no answer.

The Castle of Negation held out no longer. Ruthless battalions poured over the walls, blew up the Countess's propriety, made frightful ravages in her complexion. Down fell her hair.

'You cannot possibly go to breakfast,' said Caroline.

'I must! I must!' cried the Countess. 'Why, my dear, if he has done it-wretched creature! don't you perceive that, by withholding our presences, we become implicated with him?' And the Countess, from a burst of frenzy, put this practical question so shrewdly, that Caroline's wits succumbed to her.

'But he has not done it; he is acting!' she pursued, restraining her precious tears for higher purposes, as only true heroines can. 'Thinks to frighten me into submission!'

'Do you not think Evan is right in wishing us to leave, after—after—' Caroline humbly suggested.

'Say, before my venerable friend has departed this life,' the Countess took her up. 'No, I do not. If he is a fool, I am not. No, Carry: I do not jump into ditches for nothing. I will have something

tangible for all that I have endured. We are now tailors in this place, remember. If that stigma is affixed to us, let us at least be remunerated for it. Come.'

Caroline's own hard struggle demanded all her strength yet she appeared to hesitate. 'You will surely not disobey Evan, Louisa?'

'Disobey?' The Countess amazingly dislocated the syllables. 'Why, the boy will be telling you next that he will not permit the Duke to visit you! Just your English order of mind, that cannot—brutes!—conceive of friendship between high-born men and beautiful women. Beautiful as you truly are, Carry, five years more will tell on you. But perhaps my dearest is in a hurry to return to her Maxwell? At least he thwacks well!'

Caroline's arm was taken. The Countess loved an occasional rhyme when a point was to be made, and went off nodding and tripping till the time for stateliness arrived, near the breakfast-room door. She indeed was acting. At the bottom of her heart there was a dismal rage of passions: hatred of those who would or might look tailor in her face: terrors concerning the possible re-visitation of the vengeful Sir Abraham: dread of Evan and the efforts to despise him: the shocks of many conflicting elements. Above it all her countenance was calmly, sadly sweet: even as you may behold some majestic lighthouse glimmering over the tumult of a midnight sea.

An unusual assemblage honoured the breakfast that morning. The news of Mrs. Bonner's health was more favourable. How delighted was the Countess to hear that! Mrs. Bonner was the only firm ground she stood on there, and after receiving and giving gentle salutes, she talked of Mrs. Bonner, and her night-watch by the sick bed, in a spirit of doleful hope. This passed off the moments till she could settle herself to study faces. Decidedly, every lady present looked glum, with the single exception of Miss Current. Evan was by Lady Jocelyn's side. Her ladyship spoke to him; but the Countess observed that no one else did. To herself, however, the gentlemen were as attentive as ever. Evan sat three chairs distant from her.

If the traitor expected his sister to share in his disgrace, by noticing him, he was in error. On the contrary, the Countess joined the conspiracy to exclude him, and would stop a mild laugh if perchance he looked up. Presently Rose entered. She said 'Good morning' to one or two, and glided into a seat.

That Evan was under Lady Jocelyn's protection soon became generally apparent, and also that her ladyship was angry: an exhibition so rare with her that it was the more remarked. Rose could see that she was a culprit in her mother's eyes. She glanced from Evan to her. Lady Jocelyn's mouth shut hard. The girl's senses then perceived the something that was afloat at the table; she thought with a pang of horror: 'Has Juliana told?' Juliana smiled on her; but the aspect of Mrs. Shorne, and of Miss Carrington, spoke for their knowledge of that which must henceforth be the perpetual reproof to her headstrong youth.

'At what hour do you leave us?' said Lady Jocelyn to Evan.

'When I leave the table, my lady. The fly will call for my sisters at half-past eleven.'

'There is no necessity for you to start in advance?'

'I am going over to see my mother.'

Rose burned to speak to him now. Oh! why had she delayed! Why had she swerved from her good rule of open, instant explanations? But Evan's heart was stern to his love. Not only had she, by not coming, shown her doubt of him,—she had betrayed him!

Between the Countess, Melville, Sir John, and the Duke, an animated dialogue was going on, over which Miss Current played like a lively iris. They could not part with the Countess. Melville said he should be left stranded, and numerous pretty things were uttered by other gentlemen: by the women not a word. Glancing from certain of them lingeringly to her admirers, the Countess smiled her thanks, and then Andrew, pressed to remain, said he was willing and happy, and so forth; and it seemed that her admirers had prevailed over her reluctance, for the Countess ended her little protests with a vanquished bow. Then there was a gradual rising from table. Evan pressed Lady Jocelyn's hand, and turning from her bent his head to Sir Franks, who, without offering an exchange of cordialities, said, at arm's length: 'Good-bye, sir.' Melville also gave him that greeting stiffly. Harry was perceived to rush to the other end of the room, in quest of a fly apparently. Poor Caroline's heart ached for her brother, to see him standing there in the shadow of many faces. But he was not left to stand alone. Andrew quitted the circle of Sir John, Seymour Jocelyn, Mr. George Uplift, and others, and linked his arm to Evan's. Rose had gone. While Evan looked for her despairingly to say his last word and hear her voice once more, Sir Franks said to his wife:

'See that Rose keeps up-stairs.'

'I want to speak to her,' was her ladyship's answer, and she moved to the door.

Evan made way for her, bowing.

'You will be ready at half-past eleven, Louisa,' he said, with calm distinctness, and passed from that purgatory.

Now honest Andrew attributed the treatment Evan met with to the exposure of yesterday. He was frantic with democratic disgust.

'Why the devil don't they serve me like that; eh? 'Cause I got a few coppers! There, Van! I'm a man of peace; but if you'll call any man of 'em out I'll stand your second—'pon my soul, I will. They must be cowards, so there isn't much to fear. Confound the fellows, I tell 'em every day I'm the son of a cobbler, and egad, they grow civiller. What do they mean? Are cobblers ranked over tailors?'

'Perhaps that's it,' said Evan.

'Hang your gentlemen!' Andrew cried.

'Let us have breakfast first,' uttered a melancholy voice near them in the passage.

'Jack!' said Evan. 'Where have you been?'

'I didn't know the breakfast-room,' Jack returned, 'and the fact is, my spirits are so down, I couldn't muster up courage to ask one of the footmen. I delivered your letter. Nothing hostile took place. I bowed fiercely to let him know what he might expect. That generally stops it. You see, I talk prose. I shall never talk anything else!'

Andrew recommenced his jests of yesterday with Jack. The latter bore them patiently, as one who had endured worse.

'She has rejected me!' he whispered to Evan. 'Talk of the ingratitude of women! Ten minutes ago I met her. She perked her eyebrows at me!—tried to run away. "Miss Wheedle": I said. "If you please, I'd rather not," says she. To cut it short, the sacrifice I made to her was the cause. It's all over the house. She gave the most excruciating hint. Those low-born females are so horribly indelicate. I stood confounded. Commending his new humour, Evan persuaded him to breakfast immediately, and hunger being one of Jack's solitary incitements to a sensible course of conduct, the disconsolate gentleman followed its dictates. 'Go with him, Andrew,' said Evan. 'He is here as my friend, and may be made uncomfortable.'

'Yes, yes,—ha! ha! I'll follow the poor chap,' said Andrew. 'But what is it all about? Louisa won't go, you know. Has the girl given you up because she saw your mother, Van? I thought it was all right. Why the deuce are you running away?'

'Because I've just seen that I ought never to have come, I suppose,' Evan replied, controlling the wretched heaving of his chest.

'But Louisa won't go, Van.'

'Understand, my dear Andrew, that I know it to be quite imperative. Be ready yourself with Caroline. Louisa will then make her choice. Pray help me in this. We must not stay a minute more than is necessary in this house.'

'It's an awful duty,' breathed Andrew, after a pause. 'I see nothing but hot water at home. Why—but it's no use asking questions. My love to your mother. I say, Van,—now isn't Lady Jocelyn a trump?'

'God bless her!' said Evan. And the moisture in Andrew's eyes affected his own.

'She's the staunchest piece of woman-goods I ever—I know a hundred cases of her!'

'I know one, and that 's enough,' said Evan.

Not a sign of Rose! Can Love die without its dear farewell on which it feeds, away from the light, dying by bits? In Evan's heart Love seemed to die, and all the pangs of a death were there as he trod along the gravel and stepped beneath the gates of Beckley Court.

Meantime the gallant Countess was not in any way disposed to retreat on account of Evan's defection. The behaviour toward him at the breakfast-table proved to her that he had absolutely committed his egregious folly, and as no General can have concert with a fool, she cut him off from her affections resolutely. Her manifest disdain at his last speech, said as much to everybody present. Besides, the lady was in her element here, and compulsion is required to make us relinquish our element. Lady Jocelyn certainly had not expressly begged of her to remain: the Countess told Melville so, who said that if she required such an invitation she should have it, but that a guest to whom they were so much indebted, was bound to spare them these formalities.

'What am I to do?'

The Countess turned piteously to the diplomatist's wife.

She answered, retiringly: 'Indeed I cannot say.'

Upon this, the Countess accepted Melville's arm, and had some thoughts of punishing the woman.

They were seen parading the lawn. Mr. George Uplift chuckled singularly.

'Just the old style,' he remarked, but corrected the inadvertence with a 'hem!' committing himself more shamefully the instant after. 'I'll wager she has the old Dip. down on his knee before she cuts.'

'Bet can't be taken,' observed Sir John Loring. 'It requires a spy.'

Harry, however, had heard the remark, and because he wished to speak to her, let us hope, and reproach her for certain things when she chose to be disengaged, he likewise sallied out, being forlorn as a youth whose sweet vanity is much hurt.

The Duke had paired off with Mrs. Strike. The lawn was fair in sunlight where they walked. The air was rich with harvest smells, and the scent of autumnal roses. Caroline was by nature luxurious and soft. The thought of that drilled figure to which she was returning in bondage, may have thrown into bright relief the polished and gracious nobleman who walked by her side, shadowing forth the chances of a splendid freedom. Two lovely tears fell from her eyes. The Duke watched them quietly.

'Do you know, they make me jealous?' he said.

Caroline answered him with a faint smile.

'Reassure me, my dear lady; you are not going with your brother this morning?'

'Your Grace, I have no choice!'

'May I speak to you as your warmest friend? From what I hear, it appears to be right that your brother should not stay. To the best of my ability I will provide for him: but I sincerely desire to disconnect you from those who are unworthy of you. Have you not promised to trust in me? Pray, let me be your guide.'

Caroline replied to the heart of his words: 'I dare not.'

'What has changed you?'

'I am not changed, but awakened,' said Caroline.

The Duke paced on in silence.

'Pardon me if I comprehend nothing of such a change,' he resumed. 'I asked you to sacrifice much; all that I could give in return I offered. Is it the world you fear?'

'What is the world to such as I am?'

'Can you consider it a duty to deliver yourself bound to that man again?'

'Heaven pardon me, my lord, I think of that too little!'

The Duke's next question: 'Then what can it be?' stood in his eyes.

'Oh!' Caroline's touch quivered on his arm, 'Do not suppose me frivolous, ungrateful, or—or cowardly. For myself you have offered more happiness than I could have hoped for. To be allied to one so generous, I could bear anything. Yesterday you had my word: give it me back to-day!'

Very curiously the Duke gazed on her, for there was evidence of internal torture across her forehead.

'I may at least beg to know the cause for this request?'

She quelled some throbbing in her bosom. 'Yes.'

He waited, and she said: 'There is one—if I offended him, I could not live. If now I followed my wishes, he would lose his faith in the last creature that loves him. He is unhappy. I could bear what is called disgrace, my lord—I shudder to say it—I could sin against heaven; but I dare not do what would make him despise me.'

She was trembling violently; yet the nobleman, in his surprise, could not forbear from asking who this person might be, whose influence on her righteous actions was so strong.

'It is my brother, my lord,' she said.

Still more astonished, 'Your brother!' the Duke exclaimed. 'My dearest lady, I would not wound you; but is not this a delusion? We are so placed that we must speak plainly. Your brother I have reason to feel sure is quite unworthy of you.'

'Unworthy? My brother Evan? Oh! he is noble, he is the best of men!'

'And how, between yesterday and to-day, has he changed you?'

'It is that yesterday I did not know him, and to-day I do.'

Her brother, a common tradesman, a man guilty of forgery and the utmost baseness—all but kicked out of the house! The Duke was too delicate to press her further. Moreover, Caroline had emphasized the 'yesterday' and 'to-day,' showing that the interval which had darkened Evan to everybody else, had illumined him to her. He employed some courtly eloquence, better unrecorded; but if her firm resolution perplexed him, it threw a strange halo round the youth from whom it sprang.

The hour was now eleven, and the Countess thought it full time to retire to her entrenchment in Mrs. Bonner's chamber. She had great things still to do: vast designs were in her hand awaiting the sanction of Providence. Alas! that little idle promenade was soon to be repented. She had joined her sister, thinking it safer to have her upstairs till they were quit of Evan. The Duke and the diplomatist loitering in the rear, these two fair women sailed across the lawn, conscious, doubtless, over all their sorrows and schemes, of the freight of beauty they carried.

What meant that gathering on the steps? It was fortuitous, like everything destined to confound us. There stood Lady Jocelyn with Andrew, fretting his pate. Harry leant against a pillar, Miss Carrington, Mrs. Shorne, and Mrs. Melville, supported by Mr. George Uplift, held watchfully by Juliana, with Master Alec and Miss Dorothy, were in the background.

Why did our General see herself cut off from her stronghold, as by a hostile band? She saw it by that sombre light in Juliana's eyes, which had shown its ominous gleam whenever disasters were on the point of unfolding.

Turning to Caroline, she said: 'Is there a back way?'

Too late! Andrew called.

'Come along, Louisa, Just time, and no more. Carry, are you packed?'

This in reality was the first note of the retreat from Beckley; and having blown it, the hideous little trumpeter burst into scarlet perspirations, mumbling to Lady Jocelyn: 'Now, my lady, mind you stand by me.'

The Countess walked straight up to him.

'Dear Andrew! this sun is too powerful for you. I beg you, withdraw into the shade of the house.'

She was about to help him with all her gentleness.

'Yes, yes. All right, Louisa rejoined Andrew. 'Come, go and pack. The fly 'll be here, you know—too late for the coach, if you don't mind, my lass. Ain't you packed yet?'

The horrible fascination of vulgarity impelled the wretched lady to answer: 'Are we herrings?' And then she laughed, but without any accompaniment.

'I am now going to dear Mrs. Bonner,' she said, with a tender glance at Lady Jocelyn.

'My mother is sleeping,' her ladyship remarked.

'Come, Carry, my darling!' cried Andrew.

Caroline looked at her sister. The Countess divined Andrew's shameful trap.

'I was under an engagement to go and canvass this afternoon,' she said.

'Why, my dear Louisa, we've settled that in here this morning,' said Andrew. 'Old Tom only stuck up a puppet to play with. We've knocked him over, and march in victorious—eh, my lady?'

'Oh!' exclaimed the Countess, 'if Mr. Raikes shall indeed have listened to my inducements!'

'Deuce a bit of inducements!' returned Andrew. 'The fellow's ashamed of himself—ha! ha! Now then, Louisa.'

While they talked, Juliana had loosed Dorothy and Alec, and these imps were seen rehearsing a remarkable play, in which the damsel held forth a hand and the cavalier advanced and kissed it with a loud smack, being at the same time reproached for his lack of grace.

'You are so English!' cried Dorothy, with perfect languor, and a malicious twitter passed between two or three. Mr. George spluttered indiscreetly.

The Countess observed the performance. Not to convert the retreat into a total rout, she, with that dark flush which was her manner of blushing, took formal leave of Lady Jocelyn, who, in return, simply said: 'Good-bye, Countess.' Mrs. Strike's hand she kindly shook.

The few digs and slaps and thrusts at gloomy Harry and prim Miss Carrington and boorish Mr. George, wherewith the Countess, torn with wrath, thought it necessary to cover her retreat, need not be told. She struck the weak alone: Juliana she respected. Masterly tactics, for they showed her power, gratified her vengeance, and left her unassailed. On the road she had Andrew to tear to pieces. O delicious operation! And O shameful brother to reduce her to such joys! And, O Providence! may a poor desperate soul, betrayed through her devotion, unremunerated for her humiliation and absolute hard work, accuse thee? The Countess would have liked to. She felt it to be the instigation of the devil, and decided to remain on the safe side still.

Happily for Evan, she was not ready with her packing by half-past eleven. It was near twelve when he, pacing in front of the inn, observed Polly Wheedle, followed some yards in the rear by John Raikes, advancing towards him. Now Polly had been somewhat delayed by Jack's persecutions, and Evan declining to attend to the masked speech of her mission, which directed him to go at once down a certain lane in the neighbourhood of the park, some minutes were lost.

'Why, Mr. Harrington,' said Polly, 'it's Miss Rose: she's had leave from her Ma. Can you stop away, when it's quite proper?'

Evan hesitated. Before he could conquer the dark spirit, lo, Rose appeared, walking up the village street. Polly and her adorer fell back.

Timidly, unlike herself, Rose neared him.

'I have offended you, Evan. You would not come to me: I have come to you.'

'I am glad to be able to say good-bye to you, Rose,' was his pretty response.

Could she have touched his hand then, the blood of these lovers rushing to one channel must have made all clear. At least he could hardly have struck her true heart with his miserable lie. But that chance was lost they were in the street, where passions have no play.

'Tell me, Evan,—it is not true.'

He, refining on his misery, thought, She would not ask it if she trusted me: and answered her: 'You have heard it from your mother, Rose.'

'But I will not believe it from any lips but yours, Evan. Oh, speak, speak!'

It pleased him to think: How could one who loved me believe it even then?

He said: 'It can scarcely do good to make me repeat it, Rose.'

And then, seeing her dear bosom heave quickly, he was tempted to fall on his knees to her with a wild outcry of love. The chance was lost. The inexorable street forbade it.

There they stood in silence, gasping at the barrier that divided them.

Suddenly a noise was heard. 'Stop! stop!' cried the voice of John Raikes. 'When a lady and gentleman are talking together, sir, do you lean your long ears over them—ha?'

Looking round, Evan beheld Laxley a step behind, and Jack rushing up to him, seizing his collar, and instantly undergoing ignominious prostration for his heroic defence of the privacy of lovers.

'Stand aside'; said Laxley, imperiously. 'Rosey so you've come for me. Take my arm. You are under my protection.'

Another forlorn 'Is it true?' Rose cast toward Evan with her eyes. He wavered under them.

'Did you receive my letter?' he demanded of Laxley.

'I decline to hold converse with you,' said Laxley, drawing Rose's hand on his arm.

'You will meet me to-day or to-morrow?'

'I am in the habit of selecting my own company.'

Rose disengaged her hand. Evan grasped it. No word of farewell was uttered. Her mouth moved, but her eyes were hard shut, and nothing save her hand's strenuous pressure, equalling his own, told that their parting had been spoken, the link violently snapped.

Mr. John Raikes had been picked up and pulled away by Polly. She now rushed to Evan: 'Good-bye, and God bless you, dear Mr. Harrington. I'll find means of letting you know how she is. And he shan't have her, mind!'

Rose was walking by Laxley's side, but not leaning on his arm. Evan blessed her for this. Ere she was out of sight the fly rolled down the street. She did not heed it, did not once turn her head. Ah, bitter unkindness!

When Love is hurt, it is self-love that requires the opiate. Conning gave it him in the form of a note in a handwriting not known to him. It said:

'I do not believe it, and nothing will ever make me.
'JULIANA.'

Evan could not forget these words. They coloured his farewell to Beckley: the dear old downs, the hopgardens, the long grey farms walled with clipped yew, the home of his lost love! He thought of them through weary nights when the ghostly image with the hard shut eyelids and the quivering lips would rise and sway irresolutely in air till a shape out of the darkness extinguished it. Pride is the God of Pagans. Juliana had honoured his God. The spirit of Juliana seemed to pass into the body of Rose, and suffer for him as that ghostly image visibly suffered.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. IN WHICH WE HAVE TO SEE IN THE DARK

So ends the fourth act of our comedy.

After all her heroism and extraordinary efforts, after, as she feared, offending Providence—after facing Tailordom—the Countess was rolled away in a dingy fly unrewarded even by a penny, for what she had gone through. For she possessed eminently the practical nature of her sex; and though she would have scorned, and would have declined to handle coin so base, its absence was upbraidingly mentioned in her spiritual outcries. Not a penny!

Nor was there, as in the miseries of retreat she affected indifferently to imagine, a Duke fished out of the ruins of her enterprise, to wash the mud off her garments and edge them with radiance. Caroline, it became clear to her, had been infected by Evan's folly. Caroline, she subsequently learnt, had likewise been a fool. Instead of marvelling at the genius that had done so much in spite of the pair of fools that were the right and left wing of her battle array, the simple-minded lady wept. She wanted success, not genius. Admiration she was ever ready to forfeit for success.

Nor did she say to the tailors of earth: 'Weep, for I sought to emancipate you from opprobrium by making one of you a gentleman; I fought for a great principle and have failed.' Heroic to the end, she herself shed all the tears; took all the sorrow.

Where was consolation? Would any Protestant clergyman administer comfort to her? Could he? might he do so? He might listen, and quote texts; but he would demand the harsh rude English for everything; and the Countess's confessional thoughts were all innuendoish, aerial; too delicate to live in our shameless tongue. Confession by implication, and absolution; she could know this to be what she wished for, and yet not think it. She could see a haven of peace in that picture of the little brown box with the sleekly reverend figure bending his ear to the kneeling Beauty outside, thrice ravishing as she half-lifts the veil of her sins and her visage!—yet she started alarmed to hear it whispered that the fair penitent was the Countess de Saldar; urgently she prayed that no disgraceful brother might ever drive her to that!

Never let it be a Catholic priest!—she almost fashioned her petition into words. Who was to save her? Alas! alas! in her dire distress—in her sense of miserable pennilessness, she clung to Mr. John Raikes, of the curicle, the mysteriously rich young gentleman; and on that picture, with Andrew roguishly contemplating it, and Evan, with feelings regarding his sister that he liked not to own, the curtain commiseratingly drops.

As in the course of a stream you come upon certain dips, where, but here and there, a sparkle or a gloom of the full flowing water is caught through deepening foliage, so the history that concerns us wanders out of day for a time, and we must violate the post and open written leaves to mark the turn it takes.

First we have a letter from Mr. Goren to Mrs. Mel, to inform her that her son has arrived and paid his respects to his future instructor in the branch of science practised by Mr. Goren.

'He has arrived at last,' says the worthy tradesman. 'His appearance in the shop will be highly gentlemanly, and when he looks a little more pleasing, and grows fond of it, nothing will be left to be desired. The ladies, his sisters, have not thought proper to call. I had hopes of the custom of Mr. Andrew Cogglesby. Of course you wish him to learn tailoring thoroughly?'

Mrs. Mel writes back, thanking Mr. Goren, and saying that 'she had shown the letter to inquiring creditors, and that she does wish her son to learn his business from the root. This produces a second letter from Mr. Goren, which imparts to her that at the root of the tree, of tailoring the novitiate must sit no less than six hours a day with his legs crossed and doubled under him, cheerfully plying needle and thread; and that, without this probation, to undergo which the son resolutely objects, all hope of his climbing to the top of the lofty tree, and viewing mankind from an eminence, must be surrendered.

'If you do not insist, my dear Mrs. Harrington, I tell you candidly, your son may have a shop, but he will be no tailor.'

Mrs. Mel understands her son and his state of mind well enough not to insist, and is resigned to the melancholy consequence.

Then Mr. Goren discovers an extraordinary resemblance between Evan and his father: remarking merely that the youth is not the gentleman his father was in a shop, while he admits, that had it been conjoined to business habits, he should have envied his departed friend.

He has soon something fresh to tell; and it is that young Mr. Harrington is treating him cavalierly. That he should penetrate the idea or appreciate the merits of Mr. Goren's Balance was hardly to be expected at present: the world did not, and Mr. Goren blamed no young man for his ignorance. Still a proper attendance was requisite. Mr. Goren thought it very singular that young Mr. Harrington should demand all the hours of the day for his own purposes, up to half-past four. He found it difficult to speak to him as a master, and begged that Mrs. Harrington would, as a mother.

The reply of Mrs. Mel is dashed with a trifle of cajolery. She has heard from her son, and seeing that her son takes all that time from his right studies, to earn money wherewith to pay debts of which Mr. Goren is cognizant, she trusts that their oldest friend will overlook it.

Mr. Goren rejoins that he considers that he need not have been excluded from young Mr. Harrington's confidence. Moreover, it is a grief to him that the young gentleman should refrain from accepting any of his suggestions as to the propriety of requesting some, at least, of his rich and titled acquaintance to confer on him the favour of their patronage. 'Which they would not repent,' adds Mr. Goren, 'and might learn to be very much obliged to him for, in return for kindnesses extended to him.'

Notwithstanding all my efforts, you see, the poor boy is thrust into the shop. There he is, without a doubt. He sleeps under Mr. Goren's roof: he (since one cannot be too positive in citing the punishment of such a Pagan) stands behind a counter: he (and, oh! choke, young loves, that have hovered around him! shrink from him in natural horror, gentle ladies!) handles the shears. It is not my fault. He would be a Pagan. If you can think him human enough still to care to know how he feels it, I must tell you that he feels it hardly-at all. After a big blow, a very little one scarcely counts. What are outward forms and social ignominies to him whose heart has been struck to the dust? His Gods have fought for him, and there he is! He deserves no pity.

But he does not ask it of you, the callous Pagan! Despise him, if you please, and rank with the Countess, who despises him most heartily. Dipping further into the secrets of the post, we discover a brisk correspondence between Juliana Bonner and Mrs. Strike.

'A thousand thanks to you, my dear Miss Bonner,' writes the latter lady. 'The unaffected interest you take in my brother touches me deeply. I know him to be worthy of your good opinion. Yes, I will open my heart to you, dearest Juliana; and it shall, as you wish, be quite secret between us. Not to a soul!

'He is quite alone. My sisters Harriet and Louisa will not see him, and I can only do so by stealth. His odd other little friend sometimes drives me out on Sundays, to a place where I meet him; and the Duke of Belfield kindly lends me his carriage. Oh, that we might never part! I am only happy with him!

'Ah, do not doubt him, Juliana, for anything he does! You say, that now the Duke has obtained for him the Secretaryship to my husband's Company, he should not thing, and you do not understand why. I will tell you. Our poor father died in debt, and Evan receives money which enables him by degrees to liquidate these debts, on condition that he consents to be what I dislike as much as you can. He bears it; you can have no idea of his pride! He is too proud to own to himself that it debases him—too proud to complain. It is a tangle—a net that drags him down to it but whatever he is outwardly, he is the noblest human being in the world to me, and but for him, oh, what should I be? Let me beg you to forgive it, if you can. My darling has no friends. Is his temper as sweet as ever? I can answer that. Yes, only he is silent, and looks—when you look into his eyes—colder, as men look when they will not bear much from other men.

'He has not mentioned her name. I am sure she has not written.

'Pity him, and pray for him.'

Juliana then makes a communication, which draws forth the following:—

'Mistress of all the Beckley property-dearest, dearest Juliana! Oh! how sincerely I congratulate you! The black on the letter alarmed me so, I could hardly open it, my fingers trembled so; for I esteem you all at Beckley; but when I had opened and read it, I was recompensed. You say you are sorry for Rose. But surely what your Grandmama has done is quite right. It is just, in every sense. But why am I not to tell Evan? I am certain it would make him very happy, and happiness of any kind he needs so much! I will obey you, of course, but I cannot see why. Do you know, my dear child, you are extremely mysterious, and puzzle me. Evan takes a pleasure in speaking of you. You and Lady Jocelyn are his great themes. Why is he to be kept ignorant of your good fortune? The spitting of blood is bad. You must winter in a warm climate. I do think that London is far better for you in the late Autumn than Hampshire. May I ask my sister Harriet to invite you to reside with her for some weeks? Nothing, I know, would give her greater pleasure.'

Juliana answers this—

'If you love me—I sometimes hope that you do—but the feeling of being loved is so strange to me that I can only believe it at times—but, Caroline—there, I have mustered up courage to call you by your Christian name at last—Oh, dear Caroline! if you do love me, do not tell Mr. Harrington. I go on my knees to you to beg you not to tell him a word. I have no reasons indeed not any; but I implore you again never even to hint that I am anything but the person he knew at Beckley.

'Rose has gone to Elburne House, where Ferdinand, her friend, is to meet her. She rides and sings the same, and keeps all her colour.

'She may not, as you imagine, have much sensibility. Perhaps not enough. I am afraid that Rose is turning into a very worldly woman!

'As to what you kindly say about inviting me to London, I should like it, and I am my own mistress. Do you know, I think I am older than your brother! I am twenty-three. Pray, when you write, tell me if he is older than that. But should I not be a dreadful burden to you? Sometimes I have to keep to my chamber whole days and days. When that happens now, I think of you entirely. See how I open my heart to you. You say that you do to me. I wish I could really think it.'

A postscript begs Caroline 'not to forget about the ages.'

In this fashion the two ladies open their hearts, and contrive to read one another perfectly in their mutual hypocrisies.

Some letters bearing the signatures of Mr. John Raikes, and Miss Polly Wheedle, likewise pass. Polly inquires for detailed accounts of the health and doings of Mr. Harrington. Jack replies with full particulars of her own proceedings, and mild corrections of her grammar. It is to be noted that Polly grows much humbler to him on paper, which being instantly perceived by the mercurial one, his caressing condescension to her is very beautiful. She is taunted with Mr. Nicholas Frim, and answers, after the lapse of a week, that the aforesaid can be nothing to her, as he 'went in a passion to church last Sunday and got married.' It appears that they had quarrelled, 'because I danced with you that night.' To this Mr. Raikes rejoins in a style that would be signified by 'ahem!' in language, and an arrangement of the shirt collar before the looking-glass, in action.

END OF VOLUME-6

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