

City. If you admire the beauties of Nature, there is Finsbury-square with the beauties of Nature carefully selected and arranged. When we are in London, you (and I) are all right: and when we are out of London, you (and I) are all wrong.' As surely as the autumn holiday season set in, so surely Old Ronald resisted his wife's petition for a change of scene in that form of words. A man habitually fortified behind his own inbred obstinacy and selfishness is for the most part an irresistible power within the limits of his domestic circle. As a rule, patient Mrs. Ronald yielded; and her husband stood revealed to his neighbours in the glorious character of a married man who had his own way.

But in the autumn of 1856, the retribution which sooner or later descends on all despotisms, great and small, overtook the iron rule of Old Ronald, and defeated the domestic tyrant on the battlefield of his own fireside.

The children born of the marriage, two in number, were both daughters. The elder had mortally offended her father by marrying imprudently—in a pecuniary sense. He had declared that she should never enter his house again; and he had mercilessly kept his word. The younger daughter (now eighteen years of age) proved to be also a source of parental inquietude, in another way. She was the passive cause of the revolt which set her father's authority at defiance. For some little time past she had been out of health. After many ineffectual trials of the mild influence of persuasion, her mother's patience at last gave way. Mrs. Ronald insisted—yes, actually insisted—on taking Miss Emma to the seaside.

'What's the matter with you?' Old Ronald asked; detecting something that perplexed him in his wife's look and manner, on the memorable occasion when she asserted a will of her own for the first time in her life.

A man of finer observation would have discovered the signs of no ordinary anxiety and alarm, struggling to show themselves openly in the poor woman's face. Her husband only saw a change that puzzled him. 'Send for Emma,' he said, his natural cunning inspiring him with the idea of confronting the mother and daughter, and of seeing what came of *that*. Emma appeared, plump and short, with large blue eyes, and full pouting lips, and splendid yellow hair: otherwise, miserably pale, languid in her movements, careless in her dress, sullen in her manner. Out of health as her mother said, and as her father saw.

'You can see for yourself,' said Mrs. Ronald, 'that the girl is pining for fresh air. I have heard Ramsgate recommended.'

Old Ronald looked at his daughter. She represented the one tender place in his nature. It was not a large place; but it did exist. And the proof of it is, that he began to yield—with the worst possible grace.

'Well, we will see about it,' he said.

'There is no time to be lost,' Mrs. Ronald persisted. 'I mean to take her to Ramsgate to-morrow.'

Mr. Ronald looked at his wife as a dog looks at the maddened sheep that turns on him. 'You mean?' repeated the stationer. 'Upon my soul—what next! You mean? Where is the money to come from? Answer me that.'

Mrs. Ronald declined to be drawn into a conjugal dispute, in the presence of her daughter. She took Emma's arm, and led her to the door. There she stopped, and spoke. 'I have already told you that the girl is ill,' she said to her husband. 'And I now tell you again that she must have the sea air. For God's sake, don't let us quarrel! I have enough to try me without that.' She closed the door on herself and her daughter, and left her lord and master standing