

of them was open. and 'in it was standing Julian Carteret. He was come to make his formal proposal to Sir Jacob. This is always a serious thing to do, because, for some reason, a man always feels himself, while he is doing it, in a false position. I think the reason is that he is obliged for the moment to see himself as others see him—to strip off the trappings of imagination. But in Julian's case the matter was simple. Sir Jacob knew his whole affairs. He had to answer two questions, and only to ask one. Still he was embarrassed by the prospect of the interview, and it was a delightful surprise to find Rose in her uncle's place.

"Rose," he cried, "I thought to find Sir Jacob here, and I find you. I have been breakfasting early, and making up my little speech to your uncle. Happy transformation. May I come in?"

"Go away." She spoke with a hoarse voice, trembling with emotion. "Go away, Julian."

"Go away, Rose? Without a word with you first? Never!"

He seized her unresisting hand, and was proceeding further in the direction common among lovers, when he was struck by her pallor and the trembling of her lips.

"What is it, Rose?" he asked.

"Go away, Julian," she repeated. "Oh, for Heaven's sake, go away!"

"Has anything happened?"

"Anything?" she echoed in despairing tones. "What has not happened?"

"What is it? Tell me, Rose."

"I cannot tell you. Go away, Julian—only go away!"

"I will go, if I must, but I will come back. When will you see me again? Oh, my dear Rose, I cannot bear to think of you in suffering. And tell me what this means? May I come this afternoon?"

"Yes, only go away now. Go away, Julian."

That was all she had to say. She had no longer the privilege and the right to keep him near her. If she married him, he was ruined, and by that act. If she refused him, better to let him know it at once, and blame her while his love-dream was yet young.

As Julian left the room he turned to once more look at the girl he loved. She was standing just as when he saw her first through the window, motionless, her eyes

gazing before her, and seeing nothing, a bundle of papers in her hand.

What did it mean? What could it mean? The girl whom he had left so blithe and happy the night before, whom he had made happier by his wooing, was standing there alone, spiritless, crushed by some misfortune, and able only to bid him go away. What did it mean?

Well, he would obey. He would go away, and come back in the afternoon to try and find out this mystery.

He went away sadly. Rose heard his step upon the gravel walk, every footfall a fresh agony, and tried to return to her thinking.

What a decision! And yet—it flashed before her in a moment—what doubt as to the step she should take? Julian ruined, and by her? All these people ruined, and by her? That could not be.

The ten minutes had gone. Her uncle returned, and she met his look of inquiry with a forced smile.

"Well, Rose, what will you do with those papers?"

"I will give them back to you," she whispered.

He took them, and kissed her with a little emotion.

"You are a good girl, Rose—a good girl, and you shall never repent your decision. The mushroom passion of yesterday against the misery of thousands: what other decision could I expect? For myself, my girl, I care little. The applause of conscience is all I seek; that, at least, will not desert me, whatever fate may have in store. I would have gone out into the world as poor as when I began life; I could have borne without a murmur the pinches of poverty: all things are sent to us: we must accept them and go on, doing Good as best we may. But for the thousands who depend on me I care a great deal. Rose, in their name I thank you."

But she said nothing, standing rigid and pale, with her hands clasped. She was thinking of Julian's footstep on the gravel. Sir Jacob's phrases fell unnoticed on her ear.

"John Gower will call this afternoon, Rose. You will be kind to him, and—and if you cannot be warm, do not be repellent. Think of the victory you have achieved over yourself; think now of that which has yet to be won by promising what we hope, indeed, you will be able to perform. Prepare your-