

vestry, owing to other occupation of the Parish Room. It had a door of its own from the churchyard, so that the members did not need to pass through the church, and the inspiring strains of "La Donna" drowned for the moment Mrs. Ramsden's voice. She had not mentioned to Eleanor that the Mothers' Meeting would be held there, because there was no reason to do so; at the same time, she knew that she would be able to hear (without listening) whether Eleanor practised in a diligent and reverent manner. Already the long pause after the anthem, when her stepdaughter was devouring the second act of her play, had roused her curiosity and now, as Eleanor passed down the church, eager to seek the refuge of the orchard again, the vestry-door was suddenly opened, and Mrs. Ramsden stood before her.

"What was that which you played last, Eleanor?" she asked, in a tone of strict impartiality.

Eleanor's face fell; all the potential brightness of it faded.

"A song by Verdi," she said.

"I have heard it on barrel-organs," said Mrs. Ramsden. "I have not before heard it in church. I shall be compelled to speak to your father about this."

And the vestry-door closed again.

Figuratively speaking, Eleanor's mind shrugged its shoulders. She hated vexing her father, but poor Daddy, she thought, ought to have got accustomed to it, and anything that was of the nature of friction between his wife and daughter always vexed him. As for the crime itself, the playing of Verdi on the village organ, Eleanor knew quite well what his real attitude would be. He would really be thinking to himself, "Well, my dear, it is more suitable to the barrel-organ or the theatre, is it not?" and Eleanor would agree with him. But when Mrs. Ramsden told him he would say to Eleanor: "Nellie, my dear, you have been vexing your mother again. I wish you would try to be more considerate." And he would look at her kindly, and gently, and weakly through his high-er spectacles.

Eleanor hated vexing anybody. She wanted all the world, particularly the lame, and the halt, and the blind, and all the animal creation, particularly ugly puppies and timid cats, and worn-out horses, to have a happy time, and she was willing and anxious to advance their happiness with a great deal of trouble of her own. But, except as regards her father, she did not in the least feel sorry for having played "La Donna e Mobile" with such spirit on the organ, because the