

her presence exerted. He even assured his own thought, with something like creditable success, that a regard which thus yielded to the analytic attempts of him who entertained it, must be a regard based upon the most lasting, safe and efficient foundations.

There was something, too, in the wholesome breeziness of the afternoon that presented to him, through the medium of sense, a clearly-realized analogy between its own bracing force or cheering radiance, and the atmosphere of vigorous mental hardihood, healthful womanly judgment, and fresh, large-souled charity surrounding his present estimate of Beatrice's character. Not unnaturally at such a moment, moreover, he recalled his mother's evident and often-hinted longing. Reginald was by instinct what his biographer owes him the justice of naming—a dutiful son, and to reflect upon the almost sacred importance of so marked a maternal wish, was an act that now linked itself in admirably proper sequence to the convictions which had just preceded it.

The most radiant mood has its solar spots of gloom; but if Reginald was so troubled this afternoon, while he spurred his good-blooded animal briskly down more than one agreeable slope of road, the gloom took its darkness from reminiscence rather than actuality. He had been, during his eight-and-twenty years of lifetime, the occasional prey to a certain sinister spasm of feeling which far rather merited the name of a nervous sensation than even to be placed on the list of half-reasonable impressions. It was a monster, *informe, ingens*, to which his imagination occasionally opened a door of sardonic mental hospitality; and the guest would now and then resist every method of ejection except, perhaps, that of the stoutest exorcising cudgel which common sense possesses within her armory. If he remembered, just now, the uncomfortable hours passed in this aggravating sort

of hostship, it was only to smile at the recollection of a nightmare which, at the present hour, seemed as incapable of molesting him by any grim assault as the very landscape through which he journeyed, green in its soft, leafy splendour, seemed inviolate against winter's disfiguring rigours.

Beatrice, on this same afternoon, had complained of a sad headache. Mrs. Ross had mildly insisted upon perfect retirement, and at least an attempt to secure slumber. No slumber came for a long time, but the headache began to beat surely yet sure retreat before the powers of silence and repose. It was about six o'clock when Mrs. Ross softly stole into the chamber for a fourth time, and seated herself at the bedside with a book. Beatrice at last had fallen into a peaceful and even-breathed sleep, and Mrs. Ross watched her clear, strong profile against the whiter background of the pillow, with that radical satisfaction felt when those whom we love are at length delivered from physical pain. If any deity of sleep had occupied a place in Mrs. Ross's theology, there is no doubt that more than one domestic tripod would now have been gratefully set smoking. These being the lady's feelings, it is not strange that an expression, almost like one of anger should have filled her face, when her maid suddenly burst into the room with the loud voiced and seemingly pointless observation:

'Oh, Mrs. Ross, are you here, ma'am?'

Stern thoughts of giving her maid summary discharge held brief sway in even this gentle mistress's bosom. The rare sparkle of indignation was in the mild darkness of her eyes, as Beatrice, roused by the rude tones, lifted her head with a great nervous start from the pillow.

'Oh, ma'am, Mr. Reginald,' the maid now said, in whimpering tones. . . 'I'm afraid he's hurt very bad. . . they're bringing him into the house now. . .'

The maid went on with her distress-