

but least of all could she understand what was the matter with Sir Tinlock.

With their going there fell on Evan and Florence an awful silence. It was a question which heart beat hardest, and it seemed that both had lost the power of speech.

"Perhaps you did not wish to see father," Florence managed to say at length.

"It is best I should," said Evan vaguely. "I am sorry to see the ravages trouble has made."

"Poor papa!" said Florence, the tears gushing in spite of her, "fate has blown hard upon him and his."

"Keep courage and all will be well yet," returned Evan, drawing a little nearer her.

"I find it a hard thing to keep," she responded, regarding him out of swimming eyes. "I once could hope with the best; but that was long ago. Yet I will hope again if you ask me. Perhaps there is compensation to come. If things are not somehow in some place redressed, then indeed the old pagans were right, and we are the sport of the gods you used to tell me about. Sometimes I think we are. It used to be thought when they sported with their mortal victims the sun was darkened. The sun is darkened still. I was among my flowers to-day," dropping her voice plaintively, "and I wondered—poor foolish thing!—why there seemed to be no bloom on them, until I remembered they will never bloom for me any more."

"They must," he replied in a tense voice; "they will. You are not to lose heart. You have still a future."

"It is unkind of you to mock me. Oh, no! I did not mean that. You see how I forget myself. The only flower that can bloom for me in perfection is the flower of your goodness. That will bloom and be sweet till my dying day. Yes, and long after; long, long. I am too poor to pay my debts, but I shall never cease to think of them till I cease thinking for ever."

"Florence," he said, a tumult of passion in his tone, "Florence, we were once great friends."

"Great, great friends," she answered, looking eagerly in his face. "But we were never half such friends as we are now. Oh no, never half such friends. You are famous now; you have soared beyond our wildest dreams; but it is not for that I adore you."

His head was dizzy; a burning impulse was upon him to