

not bring herself to speak of that. It was Eaton who halted and asked, "Shall we go on?"

"Wouldn't you like to?"

THEY walked on slowly. "I wish you could tell me more about yourself, Mr. Eaton."

"I wish so too," he said.

"Then why can you not?" She turned to him frankly; he gazed at her a moment and then looked away and shook his head. How had she answered, in what she already had said, the question which lay below what he had asked her? In her defence of business, did she know all the cruelties of business and defend the wrong she knew, together with the right, as inevitable? Or did she not know all of what was known even under her father's roof; and if she knew all, would she then loathe or defend it? Another motor sped near, halted and then speeded on again; Eaton, looking up, saw it was a runabout with Avery alone in it; evidently, seeing them in the road, Avery had halted to protest, then thought better of it and gone on. But other motors passed now with people who spoke to Harriet and who stopped to inquire for her father and wish him well.

"Your father does not seem to be one of the great men without honour in his own neighbourhood," Eaton said to her after one of these had halted and gone on.

"Every one who known Father likes and admires him!" she rejoiced.

"I don't mean exactly that," Eaton went on. "They must trust him too, in an extraordinary way. His associates must place most complete confidence in him when they leave to him the adjustment of matters such as I understand they do. There is no way, as I comprehend it, that any of the powerful men who ask his advice could hold him accountable if he were unfair to them; yet men of the most opposite types, the most inimical and hostile, place their affairs in his hands. He tells them what is just, and they abide by his decision."

Harriet shook her head. "No; it isn't quite that," she said.

"What, then?"

"You are correct in saying that men of the most opposite sorts—and most irreconcilable to each other—constantly place their fate in Father's hand; and when he tells them what they must do, they abide by his decision. But he doesn't decide for them what is just."

"I don't understand."

"Father cannot tell them which side is just because, if he did that, they wouldn't consider his decision; and they wouldn't ask him to make any more; he would lose all influence for better relations. So he doesn't tell them what is just."

"What does he tell them, then?"

"He tells them what would be the outcome if they fought, who would win and who would lose and by how much. And they believe him and abide by his decision without fighting; for he knows; and they know that he knows and is absolutely honest."

Eaton was silent for a moment as they walked along. "How can he come to his decision?" he asked at last.

"How?"

"I mean, much of the material presented to him must be documentary."

"Much of it is."

"You will pardon me," Eaton prefaced, "but of course I am immensely interested. How are these written out for him—in Braille characters or other letters for the blind?"

"No; that would not be practicable for all documents, and so it is done with none of them."

"Then some one must read them to him."

"Of course."

Eaton started to speak—then restrained.

"What were you going to say?" she questioned.

"That the person—or persons—who reads the documents to him must occupy an extremely delicate position."

"He does. In fact, I think that position is Father's one nightmare."

"Nightmare?"

"The person he trusts must not only

be absolutely discreet but absolutely honest."

"I should think so. If any one in that position wanted to use the information brought to your father, he could make himself millions overnight, undoubtedly, and ruin other men."

"And kill Father too," the girl added quietly. "Yes," she said as Eaton looked at her. "Father puts nothing above his trust. If that trust were betrayed—whether or not Father were in any way to blame for it—I think it would kill him."

"So you are the one who is in that position."

"Yes; that is, I have been."

"You mean there is another now; that is, of course, Mr. Avery?"

"Yes; here at this house Mr. Avery and I, and Mr. Avery at the office. There are some others at the office whom Father trusts, but not completely; and it is not necessary to trust them wholly, for all Father's really important decisions are made at the house, and the most important records are kept here. Before Mr. Avery came, I was the only one who helped here at the house."

"When was that?"

"When Mr. Avery came? About five years ago. Father had an immense amount of work at that time. Business conditions were very much unsettled. There was trouble at that time between some of the big Eastern and Western men, and at the same time the Government was prosecuting the Trusts. Nobody knew what the outcome of it all would be; many of the biggest men who consulted Father were like men groping in the dark. I don't suppose you would remember the time by what I say; but you would remember it, as nearly everybody else does by this: it was the time of the murder of Mr. Latron."

"Yes; I remember that," said Eaton; "and Mr. Avery came to you at that time?"

"YES; just at that time I was thrown from my horse, and could not do as much as I had been doing, so Mr. Avery was sent to Father."

"Then Mr. Avery was reading to him at the time you speak of—the time of the Latron murder?"

"No; Mr. Avery came just afterward. I was reading to him at that time."

"No one but you?"

"No one. Before that he had had Mr. Blatchford read to him sometimes, but—poor Cousin Wallace!—he made a terrible mistake in reading to Father once. Father discovered it before it was too late; and he never let Cousin Wallace know. He pretends to trust Cousin Wallace now with reading some things; but he always has Mr. Avery or me go over them with him afterward."

"The papers must have been a good deal for a girl of eighteen."

"At that time, you mean? They were; but Father dared trust no one else."

"Mr. Avery handles those matters now for your father?"

"The continuation of what was going on then? Yes; he took them up at the time I was hurt and so has kept on looking after them; for there has been plenty for me to do without that; and those things have all been more or less settled now. They have worked themselves out as things do, though they seemed almost unsolvable at the time. One thing that helped in their solution was that Father was able, that time, to urge what was just, as well as what was advisable."

"You mean that in the final settlement of them no one suffered?"

"No one, I think—except, of course, poor Mr. Latron; and that was a private matter not connected in any direct way with the questions at issue. Why do you ask all this, Mr. Eaton?"

"I was merely interested in you—in what your work has been with your father, and what it is," he answered quietly.

His step had slowed, and she, unconsciously, had delayed with him. Now she realized that his manner toward her had changed from what it had been a few minutes before; he had been strongly moved and drawn to

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