

at all in it to prevent your becoming my amanuensis."

"I cannot, I must not. Let me go."  
"But why? I do not understand."  
"You never will understand. I can only repeat that I must not come here."

Mrs. Home could look proud when she liked. It was now Miss Harman's turn to become the suppliant; with a softness of manner which in so noble-looking a girl was simply bewitching, she said gently—  
"You confess that you love me."

Mrs. Home's eyes filled with tears.  
"Because I do I am going away," she said.

She had just revealed by this little speech a trifle too much, the trifle reflected a light too vivid to Charlotte Harman's mind, her face became crimson.

"I will know the truth," she said, "I will—I must. This story—you say it is about you; is it all about you? Has it anything to say to me?"

"No, no, don't ask me—good-bye."  
"I stand between you and the door until you speak. How old are you Mrs. Home?"

"I am twenty-five."  
"That is my age. Who was that Charlotte your dying father wished you to be a sister to?"

"I cannot tell you."  
"You cannot—but you must. I will know. Was it—but impossible! it cannot be—am I that Charlotte?"

Mrs. Home covered her face with two trembling hands. The other woman, with her superior intellect, had discovered the secret she had feebly tried to guard. There was a pause and a dead silence. That silence told all that was necessary to Charlotte Harman. After a time she said gently, but all the fibre and tune had left her voice—  
"I must think over your story, it is a very, very strange tale. You are right, you cannot come here: good-bye."

#### CHAPTER VIII.—THE WOMAN BY THE HEARTH.

Mrs. Home went back to the small house in Kentish Town, and Miss Harman sat on by her comfortable fire. The dainty lunch was brought in and laid on the table, the young lady did not touch it. The soft-voiced, soft-footed servant brought in some letters on a silver salver. They looked tempting letters, thick and bulky. Charlotte Harman turned her head to glance at them, but she left them unopened by her side. She had come in very hungry from her visit to the publishers, and these letters which now lay so close had been looked forward to with some impatience, but now she could neither eat nor read. At last a pretty little time-piece which stood on a shelf over her head struck four, and a clock from a neighboring church re-echoed the sound. Almost at the same instant there came a tap at her room door.

"That is John," said Charlotte. She shivered a little. Her face had changed a good deal, but she rose from her seat and came forward to meet her lover.

"Ready Charlotte?" he said, laying his two hands on her shoulders; then looking into her face he started back in some alarm.  
"My dear, my dearest, so, nothing has happened; what is the matter?"

"This young woman was the very embodiment of truth. She did not dream of saying 'Nothing is the matter.' She looked up bravely into the eyes she loved best in the world and answered—  
"A good deal is the matter, John. I am very much vexed and—troubled."

"You will tell me all about it; you will let me help you!" said the lover tenderly.  
"Yes, John dear, but not to-night. I want to think to-night. I want to know more. To-morrow you shall hear; certainly to-morrow. No, I will not go out with you. Is my father in? Is Uncle Jasper in?"

"Your father is out, and your uncle is going. I left him buttoning on his greatcoat in the hall."  
"Oh! I must see Uncle Jasper; forgive me, I must see him for a minute."

She flew down-stairs, leaving John Hinton standing alone, a little puzzled and a little vexed. Breathless she arrived in the hall to find her uncle descending the steps; she rushed after him and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Uncle Jasper, I want you. Where are you going?"  
"Hoity-toity," said the old gentleman

turning round in some surprise, and even dismay when he caught sight of her face.

"I am going to the club, child. What next? I sent Hinton up to you. What more do you want?"

"I want you. I have a story to tell you and a question to ask you. You must come back."

"Lottie, I said I would have nothing to do with these books of yours, and I won't. I hate novels, and I hate novelists. Forgive me, child. I don't hate you; but if your father and John Hinton between them mean to spoil a fine woman by encouraging her to become that monster of nature, a blue-stocking, I won't help them, and that's flat. There now. Let me go."

"It is no fiction I want to ask you, Uncle Jasper. It is a true tale, one I have just heard. It concerns me and you and my father. It has pained me very much, but I believe it can be cleared up. I would rather ask you than my father about it, at least at first; but either of you can answer what I want to know; so if you will not listen to me I can speak to my father after dinner."

Uncle Jasper had one of those faces which reveal nothing, and it revealed nothing now. But the keen eyes looked hard into the open grey eyes of the girl who stood by his side.

"What thread out of that tangled skein has she got into her head?" he whispered to himself. Aloud he said, "I will come back to dinner, Charlotte, and afterwards you shall take me up to your little soggery. If you are in trouble, my dear, you had better confide in me than in your father. He does not—does not look very strong."

Then he walked down the street; but when he reached his club he did not enter it. He walked on and on. He was puzzling, not so much over his niece's strange words as over something else. Who was that woman who sat by Charlotte's hearth that day?

CHAPTER IX.—CHARLOTTE CANNOT BEAR THE DARK.

The elder Mr. Harman had retired to his study, and Charlotte and her uncle sat side by side in that young lady's own private apartment. The room looked snug and sheltered, and the subdued light from a Queen's reading-lamp, and from the glowing embers of a half-burned-out fire, were very pleasant. Uncle Jasper was leaning back in an arm-chair, but Charlotte stood on the hearth-rug. Soft and faint as the light was, it revealed burning cheeks and shining eyes; but the old face these tokens of excitement appealed to remained completely in shadow.

Charlotte had told the story she had heard that day, and during the little recital her uncle had sat motionless, making no comment either by word or exclamation.

Mrs. Home's tale had been put into skillful hands. It was well told—all the better because the speaker so earnestly hoped that its existence might turn out a myth—that the phantom so suddenly conjured up might depart as quickly as it had arrived. At last the story came to a conclusion. There was a pause, and Charlotte said—  
"Well, Uncle Jasper?"

"Well, Lottie?" he answered. And now he roused himself, and bent a little forward.

"Is the story true, Uncle Jasper?"  
"It is certainly true, Charlotte, that my father, and your grandfather married again."

"Yes, uncle."  
"It is also highly probable that this young woman is the daughter of that marriage. When I saw her in this room to-day I was puzzled by an intangible likeness in her. This accounts for—"

"Then why—" began Charlotte, and then she stopped. There was a whole world of bitterness in her tone.

"Sit down, child," said her uncle. He pointed to a footstool at his feet. Whenever he came into this room Charlotte had occupied this footstool, and he wanted her to take it now, but she would not; she still kept her place on the hearth.

"I cannot sit," she said. "I am excited—greatly excited. This looks to me in the light of a wrong."

"Who do you think has committed the wrong, Charlotte?"  
Before she answered, Charlotte Harman lit a pair of candles which stood on the mantel-shelf.

"There, now," she said with a sigh of

relief, "I can see your face. It is dreadful to speak to any one in the dark. Uncle Jasper, if I had so near a relation living all these years why was I never told of it? I have over and over again longed for a sister, and it seems I had one, or one who might have been to me as a sister. Why was I kept in ignorance of her very existence?"

"You are like all women—unreasonable, Lottie. I am glad to find you so human, my dear; so human, and—and—womanly. You jump to conclusions without hearing reasons. Now I will give you the reasons. But I do wish you would sit down."

"I will sit here," said Charlotte, and she drew a chair near the table. The room abounded in easy chairs of all sizes and descriptions, but she chose one hard and made of cane, and she sat upright upon it, her hands folded upon her lap.

"Now Uncle Jasper," she said, "I am ready to hear your reasons."

"They go a good way back, my dear, and I am not clever at telling a story; but I will do my best. Your grandfather made his money in trade; he made a good business, and he put your father and me both into it. It is unnecessary to go into particulars about our special business; it was small at first, but we extended it until it became the great firm of which your father is the present head. We both, your father and I, showed even more aptitude for this life of mercantile success than our father did, and he perceiving this, retired while scarcely an old man. He made us over the entire business he had made, taking, however, from it for his own private use, a large sum of money. On the interest of this money, he would live, promising, however, to return it to us at his death. This money taken out of the business rather crippled us, and we begged of him to allow us to pay him the interest, and to let the capital remain at our disposal; but he wished to be completely his own master, and he bought a place in Hertfordshire out of part of the money. It was a year or two after that he met his second wife and married her. I don't pretend," continued Uncle Jasper, "that we liked this marriage or our step-mother. We were young fellows then, and we thought our father had done us an injustice. The girl he had chosen was an insipid little thing, with just a pretty face, and nothing whatever else. She was not quite a lady. We saw her, and came to the conclusion that she was common—most unsuited to our father. We also remembered our own mother; and most young men feel pain at seeing any one put into her place."

"We expostulated with our father. He was a fiery old man, and hot words passed between us. I won't repeat what we all said, my dear, or how bitter John and I felt when we rode away from that old place our father had just purchased. One thing he said as we were going off.

"My marrying again won't make any money difference to you two fellows, and I suppose I may please myself."

"I think my grandfather was very unjust," said Charlotte, but nevertheless a look of relief stole over her face.

"We went back to our business, my dear, and our father married; and when we wrote to him he did not answer our letters. After a time we heard a son had been born, and then, shortly after the birth of this child, the news reached us that a lawyer had been summoned down to the manor-house in Hertfordshire. We supposed that our father was making provision for the child; and it seemed to us fair enough. Then we saw the child's death in the *Times*, and shortly after the news also came to us that that same lawyer had gone down again to see our father."

"After this, a few years went by, and we, busy with our own life, gave little heed to the old man, who seemed to have forgotten us. Suddenly we were summoned to his death-bed. John, your father, my dear, had always been his favorite. On his death-bed he seemed to have returned to the old times, when John was a little fellow. He liked to have him by his side; in short, he could not bear to have him out of his sight. He appeared to have forgotten the poor, common little wife he had married, and to live his early days over again. He died quite reconciled to us both, and we held his hand as he breathed his last."

"To our surprise, my dear, we found that he had left us every penny of his fortune. The wife and baby girl were left totally unprovided for. We were amazed! We

thought it unjust. We instantly resolved to make provision for her and her baby. We did so. She never wanted to the day of her death."

"She did not starve," interrupted Charlotte, "but you shut her out, her and her child, from yourselves, and from me. Why did you do this?"

"My dear, you would scarcely speak in that tone to your father, and it was his wish as well as mine—indeed, far more his wish than mine. I was on the eve of going to Australia, to carry on a branch of our trade there; but he was remaining at home. He was not very long married. You don't remember your mother, Charlotte. Ah! what a fine young creature she was, but proud—proud of her high birth—of a thousand things. It would have been intolerable to her to associate with one like my step-mother. Your father was particular about his wife and child. He judged it best to keep these undesirable relations apart. I, for one, can scarcely blame him."

"I will not blame my father," said Charlotte. Again that look of relief had stolen over her face. The healthy tint, which was scarcely color, had returned to her cheek; and the tension of her attitude was also withdrawn, for she changed her seat, taking possession now of her favorite easy-chair.

"But I like Charlotte Home," she said after a pause. "She is—whatever her mother may have been—quite a lady. I think it is hard that when she is so nearly related to me she should be so poor and so rich. I will speak to my father. He asked me only this morning what I should like for a wedding present. I know what I shall like. He will give that three thousand pounds to Charlotte Home. The money her mother had for her life she shall have for ever. I know my father won't refuse me."

Charlotte's eyes were on the ground, and she did not see the dark expression which for a moment passed over Jasper Harman's face. Before he answered her he poked the fire into a vigorous flame.

"You are a generous girl, Lottie," he said then. "I admire your spirit. But it is plain, my dear, that money has come as easily to you as the very air you breathe, or you would not speak of three thousand pounds in a manner so light as almost to take one's breath away. But suppose—suppose the money could be given, there is another difficulty. To get that money for Mrs. Home, who, by the way, has her husband to provide for, you must tell this tale to your father—you must not do that."

"Why not?" asked Charlotte, opening her eyes wide in surprise.

"Simply because he is ill, and the doctors have forbidden him to be in the least agitated."

"Uncle Jasper—I know he is not well, but I did not hear this; and why—why should what I have to say agitate him?"

"Because he cannot bear any allusion to the past. He loved his father; he cannot dwell on those years when they were estranged. My dear," continued old Uncle Jasper, "I am glad you came with this tale to me—it would have done your father harm. The doctors hope soon to make him much better, but at present he must hear nothing likely to give rise to gloomy thoughts; wait until he is better, my dear. And if you want help for this Mrs. Home, you must appeal to me. Promise me that, Lottie."

"I will promise, certainly, not to injure my father, but I confess you puzzle me."

"I am truly sorry, my dear. I will think over your tale, but now I must go to John. Will you come with me?"

"No, thanks; I would rather stay here."

"Then we shall not meet again, for in an hour I am off to my club. Good night, my dear."

And Charlotte could not help noticing how soft and cat-like were the footsteps of the old Australian uncle as she stole away.

To be Continued.

SORE.—To make an excellent soup allow four pounds of beef to two and a half cups of water, one small onion, one carrot, and a small head celery. Let these boil for four or five hours. Three quarters of an hour before dinner strain this soup, salt it, and add a heaping cupful of macaroni, broken in bits; let this boil slowly. Add any other seasoning you like; for some tastes a pinch of curry powder improves it.