

mitted its grotesque, fantastic truth, the thought of two lives thus indissolubly twined, brought with it not a pang of anxiety or dread. Indeed, whenever it took the serious colours of an actual thought and ceased to float like a bodiless influence through the atmosphere of feeling only, she would ask herself whether the future of these two boys, if thus peculiarly viewed, did not teem with beautiful suggestion, did not differ from ordinary living with a rich positiveness of variation; and whether, at the same time, their case might not as definitely place itself outside the uncanny limits of nature's caprices, as the lower-graded example of two fruits mellowing to maturity on the same twig.

But when Julian's death occurred, and the terrible threat failed to fulfil itself under which Reginald's life seemed for days to quiver, then this poor lady found that her grief-stricken soul and her shattered nerves were eager to turn what had once been a pleasant, poetic vagary into a distressingly doleful fear. Since she had lost Julian, must not Reginald soon follow him? Would their living apart be a possibility? Ought she not to expect with certainty the crushing stroke of a second blow, now that the first had fallen. But as months passed, making themselves into a year, the sword over Reginald's head seemed to gain much stouter means of suspension. By degrees Mrs. Ross's wretched disquietude died a natural death; the boy continued healthful and vigorous. If the old fancy visited her now and then, it was summoned by something in Reginald's conduct, for whose singularity this visionary explanation sometimes offered its imaginative aid. Later on in her son's life she had incessantly caught herself clinging to that old dogma of mysticism, and interpreting his oddest actions by its convenient, insubstantial kind of glossary.

'I think that you and Beatrice have never been better friends than

just now,' Mrs. Ross made bold enough to say, on a special afternoon when Reginald, having learned that he must take a solitary horseback ride because his usual companion had a prostrating headache, manifested some wholly unconcealed disappointment.

'I don't know of any particular reason for such change,' he rather lightly answered, 'provided it really has taken place. Unless it is because we are thrown more than usual upon each other's mutual resources of entertainment,' he added, in a less careless tone, and after a slightly reflective look.

This reply disappointed his mother, but the remark which had called it forth dwelt with Reginald some time after he had begun his solitary ride. It seemed to the man as if every fibre of his spiritual being tingled with pleasant self-gratification while he told himself that he was indeed better friends with Beatrice Sedgwick now than ever before. She had always seemed to him, in comparison with the other women whom he had met and known, intellectually to overtop them all; but he silently admitted this afternoon (while riding his free-gaited five-year-old along country whose rich greeneries of meadow and foliage had been brightly freshened by recent rains), that Beatrice blended in a marvellous degree logic and intuition, sympathy and pure reason, poetry and sober sense. It is doubtful, indeed, whether plain admiration of man toward woman ever goes noticeably beyond the limits of Reginald's present feeling; the sort of admiration, let it be added, whose least and greatest thrill emanates from no such emotional vagueness that we cannot satisfactorily name for ourselves its exact source. He could look back over the past fortnight through the most accurate and unblurred glasses of retrospect. He could account to himself, with a kind of arithmetical tenderness, for each separate occasion when he had felt what a potent attraction