

sorrowful and heavy heart that beat under the blue merino bodice, and she had only worn the dress because it was the solitary one she possessed which was not hopelessly shabby; and with all her misery she was too genuinely feminine to relish the idea of looking like a dowdy, even in the eyes of Mr. Thurston. She had meant to meet him with calmness, even with dignity, conscious, from an innate sense of right, that the half-scornful, always contradictory, always wilful moods in which she had hitherto indulged would be out of place in their changed relations. Some moments of that half-hour of delay which Lucy had described as devoted wholly to the adornment of her person had been spent upon her knees in passionate prayer for strength to do what was right by this man, whom she was now to meet as her future husband; for she wanted to do what was right. Yes, wilful and perverse, and careless when it suited her, of the settled proprieties of life as she was, she had yet in her wayward little heart an earnest desire and purpose to be true to him.

"I cannot love him," she had said. "Oh, no! I can never, never love him; but I can at least be honest with him, and I will."

They were all in the room with him when she went down stairs; her father, mother, and the girls—and she was glad of it, for it gave him no chance to greet her in other than his usual way; but presently they slipped out one by one and left the two alone.

"Juliet," Mr. Thurston said, after a little pause, in which Juliet had been looking out of the window at the great, calm, purple sky with the moon treading silently its mysterious depths, "Juliet, your father tells me—" He stopped short, not knowing what to say next.

He was a nervous man now, though he had the very day before spoken for two hours at a public meeting of his constituents, and he felt abashed and awkward, and without the power of expressing himself. She looked up and waited for him to proceed.

"You know what I mean, I think," he went on confusedly. "I am not a good hand at expressing myself in affairs of

this kind: I know I am making a dreadful blunder of it; but, but surely you must understand me; you must know to what I allude."

"Yes," she said, "I know it." And then the tears that she had been all along struggling to keep back, burst forth with uncontrollable violence. He seemed surprised and greatly distressed.

"Don't, pray don't," he said, appealingly. "I am very sorry if I have distressed you. I cannot surely have misunderstood your father. But if there has been a mistake," he went on gravely, when she had grown a little calmer, "it is not yet too late to rectify it. I thought—he told me certainly that you knew and were quite willing."

"I am," she said slowly, drying her tears; "but, Mr. Thurston—"

It was her turn now to hesitate for words. How could she tell him the truth she had meant to tell him; tell him that she was willing to become his wife, but that the love that ought to go with the promise could never be his? She did not tell him then nor afterwards. The words seemed as if they would never come, and Mr. Thurston set down that first burst of passionate emotion, and the faltering abrupt words with which it broke off, to girlish diffidence, and concluded that it was but natural and to be expected from one of Juliet's impulsive temperament. It was a sad mistake, sadder far than the one she had first made, in consenting to become his wife. If their engagement had been a longer one, or if Mr. Thurston's duties as a public man and the extensive preparations he was making for her reception in her new home had not necessarily absorbed so large a share of his attention, and compelled him to be absent from her so much of his time, she would have found it less difficult to make the confession. But she saw comparatively little of him during those brief two months that intervened till their marriage; and when they met he had so much to consult her about, so many things to say to her of the house and its arrangements, of the special order to Jacques and Hayes, over which Mrs. Amhurst and the girls had gone into ecstasies, and to which Juliet had assented