

"What such a man says," he said slowly, "makes no difference to any of us. You agree with me; Mrs. Sampson?"

"Perfectly, Sir Jacob."

"Quite so, and therefore—and therefore — John Gower, you and I will go into the library. Mrs. Sampson, might I ask you to have the goodness to ask my niece to step into the library?"

"I bring you, John Gower," said Sir Jacob airily, "a young lady to whom, I believe, you have something of importance to communicate, and I leave her with you in order that you may say it. I have already partly prepared her for what you have to say. But you are old friends, and that, we know, is the best preparation for—for such communications."

The library door closed behind him, and Rose was left to meet her fate.

Opposite her stood the man whom she was to marry.

He was a good-looking, stalwart young fellow, with a resolute bearing, and eyes that you could trust. She knew his character well, how straightforward he was, how determined. He had been her playmate and protector in childhood, her companion every day, and sometimes all day long, until seven years before, when her father died, and she then became her uncle's charge. John Gower was the creature in the world whom she had, then, most loved in her innocent childish way. But that kind of love was not what John Gower wanted; and even the friendship, the survival of the old love—a languid plant—after so long a separation seemed cold and dead in her heart, crushed out by the resentments which were burning within her against a man who could so use his power as to force himself upon her against her will. In her eyes he was a man wicked enough to set her happiness against the life-blood of thousands to win his way—a selfish inclination.

She did not understand at all. John, in his rough, simple way, took it for granted that the kisses with which they had parted, as boy and girl, were burning still upon her lips as on his: that the girl kept alive in her heart, as he did in his own, the old childish affection grown with her growth into the love of a woman for a man: that she thought of him, as he of her, with an ever-increasing love and desire. He judged the girl's heart—it is a mistake men generally commit—by

his own. He was unused to the ways and wiles of the world. He could not, had he been told, understand how widely divergent had been their paths, and how the old image was completely obliterated from her mind.

Consider: from a rough life in a manufacturing town, among people but a step removed from the factory hands themselves, Rose had been transplanted to a fashionable girls' school. There she learned, if nothing else, the tone of the social station to which she was about to belong. She imbibed the ideas prevalent among young ladies on all points. That these are not always healthy ideas need not be stated. She came from school with a great dislike of the rough sides of life. Work and the necessity for work, either with men or women, seemed to her, though she would not have put the idea into words, a kind of disgrace—mind, that is the natural result of a fashionable girls' school. Earnestness seemed ridiculous. She loved the light, half-in-earnest, half-in-jest, conversation which could be best enjoyed with such clever butterflies as Julian Carteret. No one makes the idle life appear so beautiful, although it must be really very dull, as your clever idler. She liked art. She liked to be surrounded by the atmosphere which surrounds and clings to things beautiful, and things æsthetic. She liked the march of life to be directed where pleasant prospects can be gained without fatigue, and where you are never beyond the sound of music.

In other words, she was a fit wife for Julian Carteret, but would never mate with John Gower.

And now, too, because she did not understand, again, how he had forced his way upwards in the world, she remembered the wretched unloveliness of the square, red brick streets, all alike, all ungraced by any single redeeming feature of beauty, smirched with smoke, with squalid fronts, squalid roads, squalid gutters, squalid children, squalid men, and squalid women. And was she to give up all the things which made life a joy, and to live again among the old surroundings?

And yet, if she refused, Julian would lose his all: her uncle would be ruined: the people would be beggars—

"Rose," said John Gower softly, but with an air of confidence which made her bitter heart more angry and bitter. "you know what I am going to say to you?"