

left to him, and clasping the little girl in his arms, pressed his hot forehead upon Rosie's breast.

But all that day his words and tones rang warningly through Hannah's heart. This could not last—it was against human nature. So much, yet so little as they were to one another. They *must* be more—or less. Should she leave him; for a time perhaps? or should she go quite away? She knew not what to do. Nor what to say, when he should come home to her to-night, and appeal to her with the innocent half-childlike expression his face sometimes wore, for comfort, counsel. How could she give either? She needed both herself.

And when their formal dinner was over, and they sat together in their pleasant drawing-room, with the yellow twilight glimmering outside—for summer was coming back again, the third summer since Rosa died—life seemed to Hannah so hard, so hard!

She gave him his tea almost in silence, and then he proposed a stroll in the garden, up and down the front walk, which was in full view of the house. Into the sheltered green alley—the “lovers’ walk”—these two poor lovers never went; never dared to go.

But such happiness as they could get they took, and Hannah had risen to fetch her shawl, when they saw entering the gate the last apparition they expected to see—Lady Rivers. For months she had not crossed their threshold. But then—Hannah would have been more than mortal not to have remembered this—it had been crossed that morning by the Countess of Dunsmore.

Lady Rivers was by no means a stupid woman. Her faculty for discovering which way the wind blew and trimming her sails accordingly, amounted to absolute genius. Not being thin-skinned herself she never looked for that weakness in others; so had under all circumstances the most enviable coolness and self-possession. The graceful air with which she entered by the French window, kissed Bernard in motherly greeting, and shook hands with Miss Thelluson as if she had seen her only the day before, was most inimitable.

“How comfortable you look here! it is quite a pleasure to see you. May I ask for a cup of tea? your tea always used to be so good, Miss Thelluson. And you had a visit from Lady Dunsmore? So had we afterwards. What a charming person she is; and a great friend of yours, I understand.”

Hannah assented.

“I must congratulate you; for a lady, especially a single lady, is always judged by her choice of friends.”

“I did not choose Lady Dunsmore for my friend; I was her governess.”

“Indeed! Anyhow, she has evidently a great regard for you. By-the-bye, does she know anything of the—the little uncomfortable-ness between us lately, which, as I came to say to-night, is, I trust, entirely a thing of the past. Don’t speak, Bernard. In fact this visit is not meant for you. I came over to tell Miss Thelluson of something which—as Mr. Morecomb was the cause of difference between her and me” (Hannah opened her eyes)—“will, I trust, heal it. He is engaged to be married to my eldest daughter.”