

Marta handed a candle to her master, but he dismissed her, telling her to go to bed.

As the sound of her departing footsteps died away, Edith clasped her hands and looked at the curate.

'God has heard you,' he said; 'he has accepted your sacrifice.'

She looked at him silently, with tears in her eyes.

Then in choking tones she added,—

'Nor to be able to defend him!'

After a moment's silence,—

My father, too. So unjust to him!'

'Not unjust!' Don Innocenzo endeavoured to say.

She raised a hand without speaking, then she caught hold of the back of the sofa, clutching it nervously, and, biting her lips, choked down a sob.

'Come here,' she said.

The curate, who had a choking sensation too, sat down on the sofa beside her.

'Do not let us talk of that matter,' he said. 'Let us talk about the good news your father brought. The rest has all been a bad dream, which we had better forget.'

'No,' said Edith, passionately, 'did not you tell me yesterday that I was to keep him in my heart? And now that everyone attacks him and insults him, and he cannot speak a word in his own defence, who could have said so much, am I to forget and abandon him, even in thought? Never while I live, and I trust that he knows this in the better world where he now is. He without fine feeling! Listen!'

The curate turned towards her.

'I would that you had known him as I knew him. He had finer feelings than a woman. This was his misfortune, because it prevented him from getting on