

"Something like that, if you will know all about it, mother, with just a little *reservatio mentalis*, as the Jesuits say, perhaps. I have loved her, I think, since the day I first met her down in Cornwall,—a sort of natural love it may be, that might, I thought, have had its fruition without benison or formula. But the dream is over, mother. I have a taint of hereditary vice in my nature which sometimes gets the better of my reason and my manliness, but Amy Varcoe and impurity cannot live together. It is over, I assure you: do not let my evil thoughts be visited on her head. And now, let me go, you see I am wounded, not conquered; you shall see that I am able to conquer myself."

He went off to the library with a step jaunty enough, but his mother shook her head while listening to his footsteps. "I see how it is," she said to herself, "she has only made him ten times more ardent. It may be that the mirror in this, too, reflected the decree of Destiny; if so, I cannot avert it, but at least I can try, and I will, though I have learned to love the girl almost like a daughter."

Mrs. Arderne and her companion were closeted together quite late that evening. After dinner Gilbert had left the Priory to attend the petty sessions, so the time was favorable to his mother's purpose. She did not ask Amy to reveal what had transpired in the Copse, but she spoke gently but firmly her mind on the subject of what she termed Gilbert's infatuation, assuring her that such unequal matches seldom resulted in anything but life-long misery. When, at the close of her homily, Amy ventured to hint that it would be better for her to return to Cornwall, Mrs. Arderne reluctantly consented to her going, "at least for a time, until Gilbert's waywardness should take another turn." In the meantime, she proposed that financially and in respect to the feeling between her and Amy, they should stand on an unchanged footing, so that Amy might regard herself as being on a vacation-visit

to her home, at least during the Ardernes' stay in town. For the time Amy, resolved to minimize the pain that her protectress so evidently felt, assented to this, knowing that she could subsequently free herself by letter.

With great forethought Mrs. Arderne, the next day, drove to the village and returned with Eliza Teulon, thus enabling the two friends to part,—as Eliza thought only for a few weeks,—without Dorothy's animadversions or affected regrets. This last day at the Priory was therefore passed very happily by Amy, whose regret at having to leave her benefactress was counterbalanced by the proud thought that never before had Mrs. Arderne loved and respected her so much. This assurance grew out of a statement made by her to Amy in which she acknowledged that Gilbert himself had told her of his rejection. And so the day, albeit sad, was not at all depressing, although in her heart Amy Varcoe never thought to see Eliza again. With this conviction, she gladly assented to the latter's proposal for a weekly interchange of letters. When, however, she found herself within the seclusion of her room that night Amy could not help shedding a few tears while mentally reviewing the events of the past half-year. It was characteristic of her gentle nature that she did not blame Gilbert. If he loved her unwisely, was it not also true that her affection was placed beyond hope of fruition? To such a noble spirit there could be no better anodyne in trouble than the consciousness that she had been true to herself, true even to him whom she loved so well by refusing to encourage a passion that might tend to his disadvantage.

Abel Pilgrim himself drove her to the station at Watton early next morning. The old man scarcely spoke to her until he saw her seated safely in a first-class carriage of the express. Taking her hand to say goodbye he almost whispered in her ear:

"Keep a good heart, Miss Varcoe,