

his youth as completely ended as if he were verging on the threescore years and ten of the old lady upstairs. Yes, youth and he had parted company; he did not know that he should desire a meeting again. It was well over; he had no more wish to bring it back, with its feverish moods, than to risk having again the scarlet fever, or anything else incident to one's early days. Perhaps if what he called his middle-age had been even as much as the precise middle of the allotted threescore years and ten; or had brought with it any other physical sign than an added breadth of shoulder: in other words, if youth had passed so far away from him, as to be beyond glancing over her shoulder at him as she went—he might have reached out eagerly after the mere retreating shadow. As it was, he was conscious of a faint, pleasurable amusement at Mme. de Landremont's odd mistake—a feeling which left him no time to wonder that, in speaking of young companionship, she should keep no note of the girl downstairs.

He was the more taken by surprise when, at an angle in the stairs, the girl stopped him, starting up suddenly from her seat on a lower step.

"Tell me, is she ill—my grandmother? You are a doctor: tell me, will she—will she *die*?"

"Your grandmother?" He repeated the words almost incredulously.