

and an old uncle in the mourning coach which followed the hearse with its nodding plumes to the grave.

I wanted to be alone and sit and think, but those about me seemed to consider that it was their duty to try and comfort and cheer me in my affliction. when all they did was to worry me and make me more wretched than before. It troubled me, too, terribly, that people should think me callous and indifferent to my loss, when all the time my heart was throbbing, and I felt a sensation of desolation and misery that I tried my best to conceal.

I remember going on tiptoe towards the dining-room on the day of the funeral, dreading lest my new boots should make a noise, when, as I reached the mat at the door, I stopped short, for my uncle was saying roughly—

"Don't seem to trouble *him* much."

"No, of course not," Mr. Blakeford replied. "What can you expect? I dare say he's thinking more of his new black clothes."

I had to clench my hands and bite my lips to keep from bursting out into a passionate fit of weeping, and I stood there for some minutes, unable to move, as I heard all that was said.

"Well, it's no business of mine," said my uncle. "It was his own money."

"Yes," said Mr. Blakeford, with a sigh. "I was his legal adviser, but he would not be advised."

"Never would," said my uncle. "All he thought of was catching butterflies and drying weeds in blotting-paper."

"But he was a good man," said Mr. Blakeford.

"Bah! good? What, to plunge into speculation and ruin himself?"

"We are none of us perfect," said Mr. Blakeford.

"Who wants to be?" said my uncle. "Well, I wash my hands of the whole affair. You know where I am if you want me. He was never like a brother to me. I will do as you said."

"Yes," said Mr. Blakeford, "of course. You may trust me, Mr. Grace."

"I don't trust anybody," said my uncle, just as one of the servants, coming along the passage, said kindly—

"Why don't you go in, Master Tony?"

There was a sudden movement of a chair, and I saw Mr. Blakeford come forward and look at me curiously as I entered in a shamefaced way. Then he exchanged glances with my uncle, and my heart sank as I felt that they both suspected me of having been listening on the mat.

It was only at nights when I was alone in my own room that I could cry as a half heart-broken boy of eleven can cry in the desolation of his heart. My uncle had gone away the day after the funeral, telling me shortly that I must be a man now, and mind what Mr. Blakeford said; and Mr. Blakeford had looked at