

voice: 'I shall see you again to wish you good-by,' strode off into the house, to prepare for his first and final departure from the old home.

'You are sure of yourself, my darling?' asked Edmund Smith, caressing his daughter. 'You will not repent, and wish that you had gone with your brother?'

'No, papa,' she answered, kissing him in return, but sobbing bitterly as she said, in the manner of a cry: 'my poor Derwent! poor Derwent! Mamma what can we do for our boy?'

'Nothing,' said Mrs. Smith in a low voice. 'He has chosen, and he must go.'

'Poor wife!' said Edmund tenderly, and with as much humility as tenderness. 'What a curse I have been to you! How far better it would have been if you had made me dead, and so have rid yourself for ever of such an infliction.'

She turned to him with feverish passion.

'Hush! hush!' she cried. 'Leave me my love, Edmund, and my belief that I can make you happy. It is all that I have left to me!'

And Muriel did not resent the implied exclusion. Derwent had been so long the spoilt darling of both mother and sister that it seemed only natural he should be held for all and she counted for nothing in comparison; but the father caught the omission.

'And this dear angel,' he said fondly taking Muriel's hand in both of his and pressing it to his heart.

'Muriel is part of myself,' said the mother, looking towards the house where her eldest, her best beloved, he in whose beauty she had taken such delight and whose stately pride of youth and honourable pride of purity had been her glory, was preparing to repudiate them all—his mother with the rest. 'Muriel and I have always been one; she is my daughter;' she continued vaguely, with a kind of wonder that she did not die of her pain. 'I have counted on her of course—a daughter comes so close to a mother; one does not think of things with her; but——'

She could not finish her sentence; she did not want to break down, and the trial was almost beyond her strength.

'Go to your brother, my dear,' she then said to Muriel after a short pause. 'He will like to have you for the last hour at the old home, and I will stay with your father. You like me to be with you, dear, do you not?' she added in the same passionate manner, as Muriel left them to go to Derwent. 'I do make you happy, Edmund, do I not?'

'My best happiness,' he said. 'With you and our child I can be perfectly happy.'