

had more to bear than she. He must go up into his pulpit and preach, conscious that all eyes were watching him, all tongues gossiping concerning him! For in Easterham nothing was hid; rich and poor alike chattered of their neighbours' affairs, and James Dixon's visit to the House on the Hill, in all its particulars, was likely to be as fully known as Mr. Morecomb's interview with Lady Rivers, and its purport as regarded Hannah herself.

The Moat House, too, must be faced, for at breakfast-time a note had come asking them to dine there, though it was Sunday, as young Mrs. Melville had come over for the day, and particularly wished to see Miss Thelluson.

"You will go?" Bernard had said, passing the note over to her. Her first instinct had been a decided "No;" till looking down on the bright little face beside her, Aunt Hannah felt that, at whatever cost, she must boldly show her own—at church, at the Moat House, anywhere and everywhere. There were just two courses open to her—to succumb to the lie, or to meet it and trample it down. So again taking Rosie in her arms, she looked up fearlessly at Rosie's father.

"Yes, since Lady Rivers asked me, I will certainly go."

It was Hannah's custom to get ready for church quite early, that she might walk with Bernard thither—he disliked walking alone. Never was there a man who clung more affectionately to companionship, or to whom it was more necessary. But this Sunday he never summoned her, so she did not come. Indeed, she had determined not. She watched him start off alone, and then followed, going a longer way round, so that she only reached her pew when he reached his reading-desk. Then the sad tone of his voice as he read, evidently with an effort, the sentence, "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," &c., went to her heart.

Were they sinners? Was it a crime for her to look now at her dead sister's husband, her living Rosie's father, and think that his was one of the sweetest, noblest faces she had ever seen; that had she met him by chance, and he had cared for her, she could have tended him like a mother, served him like a slave—nay, have forgotten for his sake that sacred dream of so many years, the lost love of her girlhood, and become an ordinary human wife and mother—Rosie's mother. And it would all have seemed so right and natural, and they three would have been so happy? Could it be a sin now? Could any possible interpretation, secular or religious, construe it into a sin?

Poor Hannah! Even in God's house these thoughts pursued her; for, as before said, her only law of conduct was how things were, not in the sight of man, but of God. That love, which was either a righteous affection or a deadly sin, could she once assure herself that He did not forbid it, little she cared whether man forbade it or not. Nor, if it were holy, whether it were a happy love or not.

Thus, during her solitary walk home, and a long solitary afternoon that she spent with Rosie—earning that wonderful rest of mind and fatigue of body which the companionship of a child always brings—her thoughts grew clearer. Rosa's very spirit, which now and then looked strangely out of her daughter's eyes, seemed to say to her that the dead view all things with larger vision than ours, that in their passing