

that Sir Robert disliked fuss to be made about his ailments. 'I was a little faint, I think, for want of my breakfast.'

If this was so, it was curious, since he made no attempt to eat anything beyond toying with a little toast and marmalade; but of this no one was supposed to take notice.

He was the first to rise from table, and Lady Arden followed him with her eyes, but with her eyes only. Mr. Walcot had already risen, leaving his devilled chicken only half consumed upon his plate, and left the room close at Sir Robert's heels.

Again no one hazarded a remark, but Gresham glanced significantly at Elise, as much as to say, 'You see his power;' and then turned scarlet on perceiving Evelyn remarked it.

Lady Arden showed no touch of annoyance, nor perhaps did she feel any. She had been long content with the affection of her second husband, shown in a hundred material ways to her and hers; she had never possessed his confidence; and on the few occasions when she had striven to minister to him in his little troubles—which were generally understood to be 'nerves'—she had not been very successful. She was homœopathic, and had suggested *Pulsatilla*, in which Sir Robert did not seem to have much confidence.

The Baronet passed through the folding-doors that led into his own study—which stood somewhat isolated from the house, forming one of its many projections—and threw himself into a chair.

'Great Heaven, Ferdinand,' were his first words, 'why did you not tell me?'

'Tell you what, my dear Arden?' inquired the other with simplicity.

'Why, about the likeness. That girl who came yesterday. I thought when I saw her face I should have dropped.'

'Do you mean Annabel Spruce?'

'Of course I do. Is it possible it never struck you that she is the very image of our lost Madeline?'

'The image? Surely not. Now you mention it; indeed, I do recall a resemblance—something in the look of the eyes.'

'The eyes! the features—the very expression!'

'My dear Arden—making every allowance for your sensitive organization,' answered Mr. Walcot, in a tone of alarmed remonstrance; 'it seems to me that your affectionate, nay, your devotional feelings towards our dear departed carry you sometimes too far. Remember, it is I alone who understand them, who appreciate them at their full value; and this exhibition of them before others——'

Sir Robert waved his hands in nervous protest.

'What does it matter—what does anything matter, in comparison with what I owe her!'

'Very true, my dear Arden; most true, no doubt. Still, you have since contracted other obligations.'

'I know it; I know it,' exclaimed the other impatiently; 'and I hope I have not neglected them.'

'Indeed you have not; no other man alive could have been so mindful of them.'

'Still I was wrong to contract them. I failed in fealty to the dead—if, indeed, I can call her dead, whose living voice is so present with me.'

'Why did you do it, my dear friend?' answered the other bluntly.

'Ay; why, indeed? I did it to escape from myself. You don't know what I suffered when she left me all alone. You were not here then, Ferdinand, to comfort me.'

'I wish I had been, with all my heart.'

The gentleness of his tone was only equalled by its genuineness; Sir Robert held out his hand, and the other grasped it warmly.

'I have no cause to complain, Ferdinand, of any human creature, save myself. Lady Arden and the children have been everything that I could have expected of them—more than I