

him there. In the evening we went to the Winwoods', and I watched closely to discover any signs of a new relation between Silverthorn and the daughter. Mr. Winwood himself was a homely, perfectly commonplace man, whose face looked as if it had been stamped with a die which was to furnish a hundred different physiognomies. Mrs. Winwood was a fat, woolly sort of woman, who knitted, and rocked in her rocking-chair, keeping time to her needles. A smell of tea and chops came from the adjoining room, where they had been having supper; and there was a big, hot-colored lithograph of Stansby Mills hung up over the fireplace, with one or two awkward-looking engravings of famous men and their families on the remaining wall-spaces. Yet, even with these crude and barren surroundings, the girl Ida retained a peculiar and inspiring charm. She talked in a full, free tone of voice, and was very sensible; but in everything she said or did there was a mixture, with the prosaic, of something so sweet and fresh, that I could not help thinking she was very remarkable. In particular, there was that strong, fine look from the eyes, which had impressed me on my first casual meeting in the road. It had a transforming power, and seemed to speak of resolution, aspiration, or self-sacrifice. I noticed with what enthusiasm she glanced up at Silverthorn, when he was showing her some drawings of machinery, executed by himself, and was dilating upon certain improvements which he intended to make. Still, there was a reserve between them, and a timidity on his part, which showed that no engagement to marry had been made, as yet.

He was very silent as we walked together beside the dark river toward the railroad, after our call. But when we came abreast of the dam, with its sudden burst of noise and its continual hissing murmur, he stopped short, with a look of passion in his face.

"Things have changed since Vibbard went away," he said. "Yes, yes; very much. I used to think it was he who ought to love her."

"And you have found out—" I began.

He laid his hand quickly on my arm.

"Yes, I have found out that it is I who love her—eternally, truly! But don't tell any one of this; it seems to me strange that I should speak of it, even to you. I cannot ask her to marry me yet. But there seems to be a relief in letting you know."

I was expressing my pleasure at being of any use to him, when the ominous sound of the approaching cars made itself heard, and I had to hurry off. But, all the way back to the city, I could think of nothing but Silverthorn's announcement; and suddenly there flashed upon me the secret and the danger of the whole situation. This girl, who had so much interested the two friends, in spite of their strong contrasts of character, was, perhaps, the only one in the world who could have pleased them both; for in her own person she seemed to display a mixture of elements, much the same and quite as decided as theirs. What, then, if Vibbard also should wake up to the knowledge of a love for her?

The next time I saw Silverthorn, which was a full year later, I said to him:

"Do you hear from Vibbard anything about that agreement to divide your gains?"

"No!" he replied, avoiding my eye; "nothing about that."

"Do you expect him to keep it?"

"Yes!" he said, glancing swiftly up again, with a gleam of friendly vindication in his eyes. "I know he will."

"But I hear hard things said of him," I persisted. "Reports have lately come to me as to some rather close, not to say sharp, bargains of his. He is successful; perhaps he is changing."