

his son involuntarily respected him. 'The sorrow and disappointment are not all on your side, Derwent; your mother and I feel both in another direction; and perhaps the son is as unsatisfactory in his own way as the father.'

'I am afraid, sir, that you must be content with me as I am without the hope of change,' the boy returned, holding up his head. 'I confess it—without shame—honour counts for more with me than love; and I prefer to tear my very heartstrings asunder rather than let them cling round a disgraced name and a dishonoured home.'

'You have said enough, Derwent,' said his mother hastily. 'Your decision is of itself sufficiently expressive—you need not dilate on it. And you, my Muriel?' she added, turning to her daughter. 'What is yours to be?'

The girl flung her arms round her brother, but she turned her sweet pale suffering face fondly to her parents.

'I love Derwent,' she said, clinging to him as she used in the old childish days when she had been tired or frightened or rebuked, and he had been her guardian and protector; 'but I cannot leave you and poor dear darling papa! You are always papa and mamma to us, and I cannot leave you.'

Edmund broke into a sudden fit of hysterical weeping, and even Mrs. Smith for all her self-possession sobbed softly to herself. Derwent, holding his sister closely pressed, looked far away into vacancy, his dry eyes full of passionate grief, his lips tightly closed, his nostrils quivering and dilated. He was sore to his very soul, but he was neither shaken nor unmanned. He had to finish his task as he had begun, and to find his strength sufficient for himself all through.

'God bless you, my darling!' said Edmund at last; 'you do not know how happy you have made me by your love in the midst of all my suffering.'

'God bless you, Muriel!' said her mother, looking at her son yearningly. 'You have chosen the better part, my child, and you will have your reward.'

Derwent put his sister gently from him.

'Go, dear,' he said with no petty jealousy, only with the quiet renunciation of heartbreak. 'You are theirs, not mine. I am alone.'

'Never alone while your mother lives to welcome you back to the home you have only to claim to have,' said his mother; while Muriel, clasping her hands round his arm tried to draw him nearer to them. But he unfastened her hands gently, and again put her away, as if giving her to her parents: then saying in a constrained