

‘Dutiful boy. Well, do you know it is five o’clock, and we promised to be at Mrs. Wilmot’s before seven? Isn’t it an hour’s drive? How long does that leave us to dress?’ As she spoke she left the table, and, with one of her swift gestures, knelt on one knee by her husband’s chair, and rested her bright head against his arm. There was a considerable disparity in years, as well as a strong contrast between them, and yet they were a handsome, well-matched pair. Hubert Westray looked his six-and-thirty years to the full. His dark hair and beard were streaked with grey, and his broad forehead had deep lines upon it. His whole appearance was that of a man who had had a long and possibly a bitter experience of life. It was a fine face in the main, but there was an irresolute droop in the lips, and a shifting glance in the deep blue eye which indicated a certain weakness of character, which had ever been the failing of his race.

Looking into his wife’s smiling, radiant face, the shadow which in solitude dwelt so darkly on his own was somewhat dispelled. It was as if the sun had shone suddenly upon some dark and gloomy spot, which only needed the cheering beam.

‘Hubert, why is it you look sometimes so very sad?’ asked the sweet voice at his elbow. ‘When I look at you, often when you do not know, I feel