

the puckers, lines, spiders' webs, and map-like rills of which lent his face an incongruous expression, partly of surprise, partly of humour, partly of craft and subtlety. The rapid years of modern life, though his had been spent in the quiet of the north-west provinces, had in his case, instead of tearing the hair off temples and top, or making him prematurely gray, as happens to some shepherds, marked him in this singular fashion.

The reasons why you cannot see things as clearly as I have described them are that it is past nine o'clock on an evening in July; that the hall is lighted chiefly by upper windows which form a sort of clerestory; that most of the glass is painted; that what amber twilight of a summer evening can get in is caught in the black depths of a fifteenth century roof, across which stretches a whole forest of timber, a marvel of intricate beams; or falls upon tapestry, carpets, and the dull canvas of portraits which swallow it all up. In the east, behind the pair who wait, is a rose window emblazoned with the arms and crest, repeated in every light, of the great House of Dunlop. Looking straight before them, the expectants could make out nothing at all except black shadows, which might mean instruments of torture. Half way up the wall there ran a row of tiny gas-jets, which had been lighted, but were now turned down to little points of blue flame, pretty to look at, but of no value as illuminators.

Over their heads was an organ-loft, in which sat a musician playing some soft and melodious sort of prelude. Of course there were lights in the organ-loft; but there was a curtain behind him, while in front the organ, cased in black woodwork of the last century, rich with precious carvings, was capable of absorbing, without reflection, all the light, whether from candles, gas, oxyhydrogen, electricity, or magnesium wire, which modern science might bring to play upon it. So that no good came out of the organ-loft lights.

The minutes passed by, but no one came to relieve their meditation and suspense. The soft music, the great dark hall, the strange light in the painted glass, the row of tiny gas-jets, the novelty of the situation, produced a feeling as if they were in a church where the organist's mind was running upon secular things, or else on the stage at the opera waiting for the procession to begin. An odd feeling—such a feeling

as must have passed over the minds of a City congregation two centuries and a half ago, when their Puritan ministers took for Church use tunes which once delighted a court, and therefore belonged to the Devil.

The girl heaved a sigh of suspense, and her companion, who had all this time looked straight before him without daring to break upon the silence, or to look at his partner in this momentous ceremony, looked round. This is what he would have seen had the light been stronger; as it was, the poor man had to content himself with a harmony in twilight.

She wore, being a young lady who paid the very greatest attention to the subject of dress, as every young lady, outside Girton and Merton, ever should do, some sweet-looking light evening dress, all cloudy with lace and trimmings, set about with every kind of needlework art, looped up, tied round, and adorned in the quaint and pretty fashion of the very last year of grace, eighteen hundred and seventy-five. She wore a moss-rose in her dark hair, and a simple gold locket hanging round her neck by a light Indian chain. She is tall, and as is evident from the pose of her figure, she is *graceuse*; she is shapely of limb as you can see from the white arm which gleams in the twilight; she has delicately-cut features, in which the lips, as mobile as the tiny wavelets of a brook, dimple and curve at every passing emotion, like the pale lights of an electric battery; her eyes do most of her talking, and show all her moods—no hypocritical eyes are these—eyes which laugh and cry, are indignant, sorry, petulant, saucy, and pitiful, not in obedience to the will of their mistress whom they betray, but in accordance with some secret compact made with her heart. Give her a clear-cut nose, rather short than long; a dainty little coral of an ear, a chin rather pointed, and an oval face—you have as a whole, a girl who in her face, her figure, the grace of her bearing, would pass for a French girl, and who yet in language and ideas was English. Her godfather called her Eleanor, which proved much too stately a name for her, and so her friends always call her Nelly. Her father, while he breathed these upper airs, was a soldier, and his name was Colonel Despard.

Taking courage from the sigh, Roger Exton tried to begin a little conversation.