

sorrow spoke the old heroic resolute spirit which she had cherished for so many years—the heroism of love, the resoluteness of a woman's constancy.

'You have heard from your uncle, Derwent?' she began quite quietly.

'Yes,' he answered.

'I also. He tells me that he has written to you; and he tells me of the offer that he has made to you and Muriel.'

Derwent's voice suddenly ran dry. He bent his head in token of the assent he could not pronounce.

'He gives you little time for your decision,' continued the mother. 'By return of post, he says.'

'Yes,' half-whispered Derwent; then with a supreme effort he added: 'Time enough; I have decided.'

The mother's pale face turned paler still, and her dark steady eyes suddenly failed and drooped. She did not speak for a few minutes, but presently she too conquered herself.

'What have you decided on doing?' she asked in a voice made artificially level. 'I feel that you must be left free to form your own judgment and to arrange your own life.'

'I am left no choice,' answered Derwent proudly. 'I accept my uncle's offer.'

The father looked up swiftly, a spasm as if of acute pain passing over his face; the mother caught her breath and mechanically pressed her hand against her heart.

'Yes?' she then said. 'You renounce us altogether?'

'I begin a new life under new conditions,' he answered with unintentional disingenuousness.

'No, my boy,' said his father, suddenly waking as it were into life and self-assertion. 'You leave us because you, my son, have judged me more harshly than anyone else has done; because you have neither mercy nor pity, and less love for us than for yourself.'

'I leave you because I cannot and will not live with dishonour,' flashed out Derwent. 'If my mother had wished me to be able to bear the truth, which she knew must be told some day, she should have brought me up with the indifference to shame and the looseness of principle that alone could reconcile a son to such a family history as mine. It was cruel to teach me to love honour only to give me as my inheritance disgrace and humiliation.'

'Perhaps she trusted to the son's natural piety of love, and to the man's power of seeing all round a question and understanding how one may fail under a sudden temptation and yet not be bad all through,' Edmund answered, with a certain pride for which