

face to face with the wreck of his own outraged authority.

What further progress was made by the domestic revolt, when the bedroom candles were lit, and the hour of retirement had arrived with the night, is naturally involved in mystery. This alone is certain: On the next morning, the luggage was packed, and the cab was called to the door. Mrs. Ronald spoke her parting words to her husband in private.

'I hope I have not expressed myself too strongly about taking Emma to the seaside,' she said in gentle pleading tones. 'I am anxious about our girl's health. If I have offended you—without meaning it, God knows!—say you forgive me before I go. I have tried honestly, dear, to be a good wife to you. And you have always trusted me, haven't you? And you trust me still—I am sure you trust me still.'

She took his lean, cold hand, and pressed it fervently: her eyes rested on him with a strange mixture of timidity and anxiety. Still in the prime of her life, she preserved the personal attractions—the fair, calm, refined face, the natural grace of look and movement—which had made her marriage to a man old enough to be her father a cause of angry astonishment among all her friends. In the agitation that now possessed her, her colour rose, her eyes brightened; she looked for the moment almost young enough to be Emma's sister. Her husband opened his hard old eyes in surly bewilderment. 'Why need you make this fuss?' he asked. 'I don't understand you.' Mrs. Ronald shrank at those words as if he had struck her. She kissed him in silence, and joined her daughter in the cab.

For the rest of that day, the persons in the stationer's employment had a hard time of it with their master in the shop. Something had upset Old Ronald. He ordered the shutters to be put up earlier that evening than usual. Instead of going to his club

(at the tavern round the corner), he took a long walk in the lonely and lifeless streets of the city by night. There was no disguising it from himself; his wife's behaviour at parting had made him uneasy. He naturally swore at her for taking that liberty, while he lay awake alone in his bed. 'Damn the woman! What does she mean?' The cry of the soul utters itself in various forms of expression. That was the cry of Old Ronald's soul, literally translated.

### III.

The next morning brought him a letter from Ramsgate.

'I write immediately to tell you of our safe arrival. We have found comfortable lodgings (as the address at the head of this letter will inform you) in Albion place. I thank you, and Emma desires to thank you also, for your kindness in providing us with ample means for taking our little trip. It is beautiful weather to-day; the sea is calm, and the pleasure boats are out. We do not, of course, expect to see you here. But if you do, by any chance, overcome your objection to moving out of London, I have a little request to make. Please let me hear of your visit beforehand—so that I may not omit all needful preparations. I know you dislike being troubled with letters (except on business), so I will not write too frequently. Be so good as to take no news for good news, in the intervals. When you have a few minutes to spare, you will write, I hope, and tell me how you and the shop are going on. Emma sends you her love, in which I beg to join.' So the letter was expressed, and so it ended.

'They needn't be afraid of my troubling them. Calm seas and pleasure-boats! Stuff and nonsense! Such was the first impression which his wife's report of herself produced on Old Ronald's mind. After awhile, he looked at the letter again—and