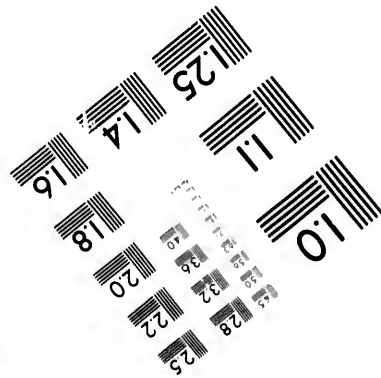
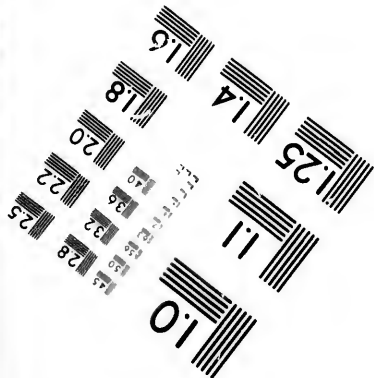
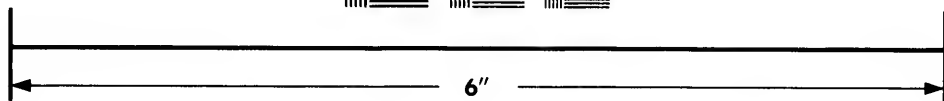
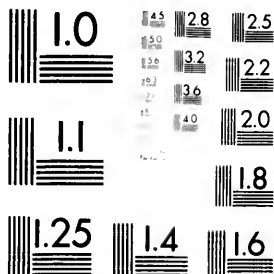


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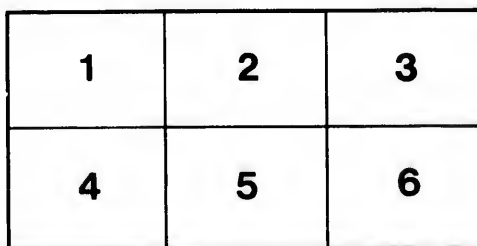
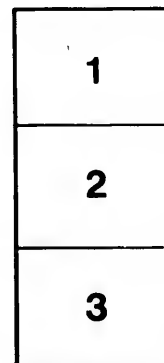
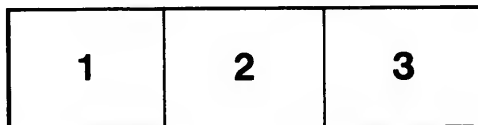
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A WICKED GIRL.



— BY —

MARY CECIL HAY,

— AUTHOR OF —

“THE ARUNDEL MOTTO;”
“FOR HER DEAR SAKE;”
“VICTOR AND VANQUISHED;”
ETC., ETC.

— — — — —
THE NATIONAL PUBLISHING COMPANY.
TORONTO.

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A WICKED GIRL.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

It was not to be supposed that that vigor us south west wind which had swept unhindered over the Channel, would not strive to avenge itself when the long stretch of down resisted it. In its angry astonishment it broke into disorderly and rampant gusts: one reaching to whistle down a cottage chimney; one whirling through a half-opened door; one bending, with a masterful derision, the row of poplars standing against the fading line of color in the west; one blustering among the firs that stood scattered, like grim sentinels, about the old tower on the wide slope of the darkening downs; and one whirling distractedly round the tower itself, chafed into a more and more boisterous mood, as it failed to find entrance there.

Sturdily meeting the jealous blasts, as if it liked to feel the freshness of their strength on its own breast, the old square tower stood upon that southern slope, proudly seeming to support, rather than be supported by, the two long-gabled wings, whose old black-timbered walls stand as firm, even in such a gale as this, as the hardy tower itself. Yet if any tower could have had the good excuse of age for tottering, surely it was this, which had been built when the workmen received a penny a day. But from generation to generation the Athelings—to whom it had been given as a reward for military services—had so carefully preserved it, that still on

its outer walls, the grotesque heads, carved by prisoners in far-back years, were, most of them, perfectly uninjured, and even the least so had only their harsh points rounded by a mellow old age. Even the great alarm bell was the very one which had been put upon the tower by the old family, whose name had been wedded to the property for so many hundreds of years, that the last century was getting middle-aged before they were divorced by the daring young soldier of fortune, who had refused to sink his own name and individuality in that of his wife, even though she were an Atheling.

The tower with its narrow loop-holes was but a hollow shell now, for all its stalwart outside show, and only formed the entrance hall of the old mansion. But the four stubborn walls rose higher than the wings, and its massive square measured the whole depth of the house, while up in its unchambered height there was obscurity even on a June day, and on this January evening heaviest darkness.

In the south wall was the arched entrance door, having on either side a narrow, heavily mullioned window. In the two walls east and west were doors into the living-rooms of the mansion, three on either side, the outer ones leading into separate rooms, the centre ones into the long wide corridors which connected them all. In the north wall stood only the open fireplace with its wide low chimney of carved black oak. High on the walls above these doors and windows, and the great fire-place in which a sulky fire generally burned, were relegated and lost in gloom the faded pennons of old tapestry which

had been the Athelings' pride, as well as the curious and hideous engraving, a thing which Hogarth's looked very modern; while lower down hung the innovations of that young Captain Basset, who had insisted on leaving his horse a new plebian name, as well as the trophies of his sport and the legends of his vandalism—for was it not even whispered that the four carved legs of his billiard-table had been the posts of a magnificent oak bed in which Queen Elizabeth had once stretched her stately limbs?

But he had left legends of his courage too, for had not he, a penniless young captain of dragoons, won by pure daring the beauty and heiress of the country? Was it not often told still, how he had brought his troops up from their barracks to the tower, where (apparently without even needing the word of command) they lined the hall, closing up to shut out the stolid old servants of the Athelings, while he, in full uniform, stepped boldly forward and took the hand of Primrose Atheling? She met him with no evidence of unwillingness, looking very lovely, and suspiciously like a bride prepared for him in her long cloak of soft easterhazy silk, and her beaver hat of the same dainty shade, with its broad brim buttoned up behind with cord and tassels. As proudly as if he were already her bridegroom, he led her to the post-chaise, which was in waiting, with four fresh horses panting for a start, and in a few moments they and it were out of sight.

But Squire Atheling had only been whistling through his morning toilet, and was soon made aware of what had happened.

Then what a hot pursuit began, for the squire's horses, always more or less overtaken, actually for this once rose to the occasion. Again and again he heard, at the road-side inns, of the yellow chaise being less than an hour in advance, and by afternoon he had so gained upon it that turning a corner suddenly he saw the great chariot on the long level road, not over half a mile ahead. For quite two hours then they kept so near, that once the young soldier in his conspicuous scarlet, leaned daringly from the window, and looking

back, seemed to the irate squire to be laughing defiance at him.

No wonder that then his heat increased, and that he spared the horses even less than he had done all day, shouting with insatiable impatience to the hostlers who changed them. And at last in the soft summer dusk what a moment of exultation it was for him, when he saw the great yellow chaise stationary outside one of the old posting-houses, and knew that he had overtaken the runaway couple on the safe side of the border! Panting with triumph he burst into the room where they were calmly dining, and the walls reverberated to the unmeasured force of his language. But its vehement tide ebbed abruptly at the very moment of its fullest flow, for the young man in officer's coat and cap who bowed to him so courteously was only Captain Basset's servant, and when the runaway bride coyly removed the long cloak and the wide heaver hat, she smilingly revealed to him the familiar face and form of his daughter's pretty maid.

For, hours before this, two people had left the chaise, and the penniless young soldier of fortune had quietly wedded the heiress of the Athelings in her native country.

But this had happened fully one hundred years before that January night, when the wind whistled round that staunch old tower, and when Primrose Basset came quietly into the old hall. Despite the melancholy of her face, she was beautiful like that other Primrose, but there the likeness ceased, for the young soldier of fortune who was certainly not one of the typical Englishmen who take their pleasure sadly, scattered the Atheling guineas to such purpose that his stolen wife was the last heiress of the long line.

Primrose Basset entered through a door on the east side of the tower, which led into the private room of the master of the house. A Skye terror lay on the bear-skin mat outside, and did not move as she stepped carefully past him; but as she crossed the hall, though the anxious face was turned from him, he lay regarding her wistfully as it seemed, his jet black eyes shining through the long silky hair. Lying thus watching her, with his short ears

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laid back, he seemed to be waiting for some expected sound, moving his silky tail slowly to and fro with a swaying motion, not to be confused with ordinary wagging, which would not have become an animal so keenly conscious of his own high birth could be proved in an instant by that firm appendage.

The girl passed on to the wide old grate, where a fire smoldered, and opening a violin-case on an oak table near, took from its nest of silk and flannel—with the tender touch of a mother awakening her sleeping child—the one dear friend and companion of her lonely life. After holding the violin for many minutes, caressingly, and then tuning it with reverent hands, she drew the bow slowly across the string in that first long note for which the dog seemed to be waiting. Yet before she had played even another note he had uneasily risen, turned his back to the slender figure he had watched with such devotion, and stood with his nose outstretched in the angle of the fast closed door.

At first the notes fell slowly on the shadowy silence, feeling their way, as it were, then they brightened and trembled into fuller life, until they framed themselves, beneath her delicate touch, into a tender, yearning melody. It had panted itself out uncertainly at first, quivering with intensest feeling, as her sad thoughts strove for utterance; but at last, being repeated and repeated, it grew into perfection, breathing like a lovely solo voice among a soft-toned choir. The girl knew that this pathetic air had slowly grown out of her memory of one beautiful, haunting strain in a symphony of Schubert's, but gradually it had become different. It was the utterance of lonely, longing thoughts that had often struggled for expression. It had grown to be her own; and when, at last, with a deep sigh, she dropped her bow, and put her lips for a moment to the violin, with a touching revelation of unstirred depths of love and tenderness, she knew she had made the sorrowful air a part of her very being.

For a few minutes she stood looking down into the fading fire; the rapt look still in her eyes, the wistful expression still upon the melancholy girlish face; then she lifted her head suddenly, and crossed the hall to the door from which

she entered scarcely half an hour before. Gently she put the terrier aside, but so mechanically that she was not aware he followed her into the parlor.

When she re-entered the hall, her face was stiff and drawn and haggard—like that of an old woman.

Faltering as if she could not see her way, she trod the silent tower, pausing beside the window simply for the rest of leaning there; yet presently, while looking vaguely through the small diamond panes, her unconscious eyes grew able to distinguish the scene beyond; she started forward and opened the entrance door, trying to move it noiselessly upon its long black hinges.

"Oliver," she whispered, out among the shadows; "Oliver."

There came no answer, and for a second she drew back, the eagerness suddenly restrained; but only for a second.

"Oliver!" she cried again, in a frightened whisper, and a young man came slowly and quietly up to her. His gaze went beyond her, far into the gloomy hall, as he stood, beside the door in silence for a minute that seemed an hour to the girl. She hastily caught one of hands in a nervous grip between her own, then dropped it as hastily, and pressed her fingers on her lips, through which the breath came panting.

"Oliver," she whispered, "how terrible!"

"Terrible? Only to children," he answered, the rather supercilious smile looking odd on his indifferent, handsome face. "The thief in the night again, but what matter? Unless you"—he put his hands on the girl's shoulders and scrutinized the pale young face. "Poor little Primrose! For a man's enemy to be his own brother, signifies little enough, but upon a woman, I dare say it falls pretty heavily. While I remember my own just cause to hate him, I must remember yours too."

"Oh, hush!" she cried, with an appealing glance into her brother's careless face. "I want to remember only yours. I want to remember how you have been forbidden to enter here—where it ought to be home to you—and obliged to come like a thief, as you say. I want to remember his selfishness—no," suddenly drawing herself away

from her brother's touch, "I want to remember—nothing. I will not even speak to you—to-night. He forbade it."

"Oh, you will remember only that?" he queried, with a hard laugh. "This is a change indeed. Your faith in me was not of a very wearing quality, despite its protestations—eh, Primrose? You would think it has lasted long enough."

"Long enough—to break my heart."

"Poor little heart!" the young man said, his rapid tones softening to gentleness. "You should be as indifferent as I. It would be wiser. We know that a man who makes others suffer must take his own turn at last, else we acknowledge no justice in life. What had he said to you this evening?"

"He would not listen. You know, Oliver, how he never would listen to me when I spoke on your behalf. He never was like a brother to me any more than to you. It must be my one comfort—now."

"I thought so. He did not listen to that final appeal of yours."

"I did not call it final—to him," she said, with a pitiful break in her voice. "And afterward I went back. I had grown to feel differently—after playing, and I fancied Miles might feel differently too; and—why are you looking at me so?" she broke off, sharply.

"It is you who are looking oddly at me. Go on. You went in to Miles again, you say?"

"Go, go now, Oliver," she cried, with startling abruptness, and, while an angry frown gathered on his face, he turned without another word, and left her.

She did not watch him, as she had always done before. Her gaze was fixed in the opposite direction, among the bare, swaying branches of a huge willow, so old and decrepit that it had been supported and repaired by iron hoops and bolts. The sudden harsh creaking of these roused her nervously at last—though the melancholy noise had grown to be a familiar one to her on windy nights—and she turned, and, without closing the door behind her, ran in the direction her brother had taken. No form was discernible, but she had intuitively taken the right path, for when she reached the one remaining fragment of the high wall, which had

once defended the tower, she saw him pausing on the edge of the dry moat.

"Oliver," she said, standing beside him with a pitiful attempt at ease, and a still more pitiful unconsciousness of its failure. "I know—oh! I know quite well, dear—how there come times when the old submission breaks its bonds, and the old endurance dies. There—there must come such times. But you know how I—I love you. You know my own life is nothing to me compared with bringing any happiness—or relief—into yours. And you will—as I trust you—trust me."

"Why, Primrose," he said, moving suddenly, while his foot sent a stone from the thick wall on which they stood, rolling down into the grass-grown moat below, "don't make more of our fraternal miseries than need be. I'm pretty sure I've generally deserved Miles' disagreeable speeches, and I've often enough paid him back for them—always when I wasn't too hard up. We'll forget it all—from to-night—shall we? Now, cheer up and give me a kiss."

"No—" He had taken her two hands between his own, and wondered why she wrenched them away in a manner so unlike herself. Afterward he remembered that, when they met his, they had shaken as if palsied. "No"—pushing the soft, dark hair from her temples—"but I love you, Oliver. so well! so cruelly, that—"

The words broke off suddenly, and she turned away in silence, while her brother let her go alone, though her step was slow enough now.

Shrinkingly she re-entered the tower, and stood by the dying fire, shivering in every limb.

"Primrose, Primrose!"

It was almost an hour later when this querulous cry broke the silence of the great dim hall, and the girl for the first time lifted her bowed head.

"I am here, grandmother."

She thought she uttered the words aloud, but no sound followed the laborious movement of her ashen lips.

"Always mooning somewhere in a bat's light," the peevish voice complained, as an upright, rigid looking little old lady came toward the hearth. "As usual, I look in vain for considera-

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tion from you, Primrose. You are always bent on your own selfish enjoyment—just as Oliver was before my house was happily rid of him. Always the same! Always the same! I am very sure that if Miles knew how you can leave me to myself, he would insist on my no longer giving you a home here, where I surely deserve a little attention. I mean to tell him of your ingratitude."

"Again, grandmother? You have done it so often."

The old woman turned sharply round to peer into her granddaughter's face. "Primrose?" she queried, as if uncertain who was beside her. But the girl's only answer now, was to silently stretch out a guiding hand.

"You startled me, child," old Mrs. Basset explained, crossly pushing the hand aside. "What motive can you have for upsetting my nerves by speaking in a voice so unlike your own that I thought I had some stranger here? If I were mercenary I should suspect you had some design in habitually endeavoring to shatter my nerves, as well as leaving me so much alone. I'm not a genius nor an idiot, to be content in solitude for hours at a time, as you are. I'm human enough to require human companionship, and I will have Miles made aware how seldom I get this from you who owe me everything. Now, go and tell him I want to speak to him. Tell him if he does not come and have a cup of tea and a game of cribbage with his neglected grandmother, I shall be positively ill. He has surely had plenty of time to dispatch whatever business took him from the dinner-table this evening. I hate to go into that room of his, with the hideous idols and weapons, so if you are not too indolent for that triding errand, go and bring Miles to my room."

"Grandmother, I will come. Let me do all you want. I will try hard. I will come with you—anywhere," the girl cried, throwing her arms impulsively round the unresponsive form. "I will try to be to you more than ever Miles—"

She had made a desperate effort, but as the name was uttered she fell senseless to the ground.

CHAPTER II.

The midday down express had panted out of the little station of Thawton, and one of the few passengers it had left behind it stood on the platform looking round in an unhurried sort of way, that had yet no listlessness in it. She had it on her mind to ask a question from any official whom she should encounter, but seeing none, she waited with the patient alertness of an experienced traveller, who knows that no lady with a liberal hand need vainly look for attention among railway porters.

As she stood, fragments reached her of a conversation carried on between the station-master and two or three people whose arrival had engrossed him to the exclusion of all else, and when she had listened to a few sentences she walked rather hastily away into the booking-office. Here two women sat close to a dusty fire, talking in half whispers, and while the girl crossed the room a few words reached her distinctly, though the heavy tones were lowered. She turned back at once to the chilly platform, and by that time a sleepy-eyed porter (who appeared to possess any amount of staying power, and none of going), had begun to feel a dull curiosity in her.

"Your luggage, miss?" he inquired, pointing back to the only box the train had disgorged.

"Yes," she answered, with an indifference to which he had not been accustomed where passengers' luggage was in question. "Is there any conveyance here?"

"The porter looked over his left shoulder, then over his right.

"Fly's gone," he remarked then, casually. "Perhaps at the Railway Inn—where do you want to go to?"

"I will tell the driver," she replied, with quiet dignity. "You mean that inn just outside the gates? Bring my luggage there."

The tone meant a shilling the man was confident, and he took from the lady the bag she had been holding before he should 'rod her box.

The glass door of the tall square inn was closed, but a flat-faced elderly waiter, who stood peering hopefully

out, opened it as the girl approached; then, as if he would rather not risk a question until she was secure in his department, he led her, without a word, through the hall, toward a door opposite them. At the bar window, as they passed, a small red-faced man in pink stood talking to the landlord, beating his hunting-crop against his boot with almost every word he said. The girl heard a few sentences, then made such an impulsive movement forward that she almost overtook the waiter before he had impressively thrown open the door of a room that had very little in it beside a long table ready laid for any promiscuous meal. But through its closed window there was a pretty peep of wintry garden ground beyond.

"While you are waiting for the fly, madame, what will you take?" inquired the waiter, noticing that this visitor stood looking straight through the window in an unbusiness-like way, after she had bespoken the fly on its return, just as if she were listening for something.

"Shall I order lunch?"

"Yes," indifferently.

"With sherry?"

"No," looking gravely now back into the room. "A sandwich and a cup of tea, if not inconvenient."

"Not in the least inconvenient, madame," he deprecated, his smile adding that though, up to then, he had only thought she might be idiotic, he now was assured of it.

When he had departed with his order, her ears followed his flat heavy tread, and presently he joined the two who were talking in the hall, and she knew he waited there, though without speaking, until he was cruelly summoned to carry in her tray.

Not until he had set down her modest little meal in order, did she speak to him, and then it was rather lightly. "What is that murder every one is talking of? Was it here?"

"In Thawton, madame? Oh, dear, no," the man said, and nothing further, because he required time to recover the insult offered to Thawton.

"Where, then?" she asked, taking up the huge teapot, and balancing it as if to tell whether it held sufficient to supply her wants.

"About four miles away, just beyond

the village of Dewring. At the Tower, of which you have probably heard."

"And who was murdered?"

"Mr. Miles Basset, the master of the Tower."

"And who murdered him?" The question was asked in the same tone, but the man, for all his natural denseness, had seen a passionate anxiety in the girl's eyes before she lowered them—such curious eyes he thought them: gray and green and blue all at once, like the sea-water sometimes was on a summer's day in a certain favorite nook of his. Curious, but very beautiful.

"That's of course what nobody can say, madame," he answered, while these thoughts ran in his mind. "There's nobody even took up to be tried for it. The coroner gave what he called open verdict."

"But surely someone is suspected?"

"Not a soul, I assure you. There isn't anybody the police can take up for it."

"It would be a satisfaction to the police to take somebody up?" suggested the girl, absently, while she sweetened her tea.

"Yes, madame, it would be a great comfort to them."

"Naturally. Tell me about it."

"In the papers they say—"

"Oh, I know what the papers say," she answered, leaning back, and seeming to forget the tea she had prepared. "You tell me in your own way."

"For myself I thought the papers very satisfactory and very correct," the man observed rather pointedly, as he whisked a crumb off the table-cloth, "and there were columns of it, whereas if you tell it, it is all over in a few words. Mr. Basset was writing alone in his library that evening—just a week to-day it was—and there he was found sitting dead, with one of his own foreign daggers in his heart. People say it wasn't right for it to lie on his table to be used as a paper-knife."

"Some thief came in, I suppose. The windows are low, perhaps."

"They are, both of them, and there's a door out into the park, but all were shut."

"But could be opened from the outside, no doubt?"

"Yes, madame. Neither was fasten-

ed on the inside that evening, strange to say. But nothing was stolen."

"You mean nothing they are yet aware of. Who else was in the Tower that evening?"

"Only the old lady—the widow of Mr Miles's grandfather—and his sister."

"Except servants," added the girl, unconsciously dropping the levelness of tone.

"Except servants, of course," the man allowed; but they are old servants and above suspicion. Besides, it is said their presence is accounted for all the evening. They don't keep many at the Tower at any time. It is very sad"—with a bland sympathy—"for Mr. Bassett was engaged to be married next month. We all feel for poor Miss 'Ope—"

"Yes, I know he was," the girl quietly interrupted.

"We all," persisted the man, chafing under a sense of injury because no lady (especially a young one) had any right to shiver sitting so near a fire of his compiling, "feel for the poor young lady at the Pines."

"I am going to the Pines."

The words were so grave as to sound like a rebuke, and were followed by such a meaning glance into the hall, that the man could not but take the hint.

When he returned, in ten minutes' time, it was to say the fly was at the door, and to find the visitor so lost in thought, that he had to remind her of having ordered a vehicle at all.

"No," the girl said, hurriedly, when she saw her box being hoisted to the roof of the fly. "I must leave that until I send for it—or return."

Then having satisfied the man with silver, in her composed accustomed way, she took her seat and was driven out of the sleepy little town of Thawton.

After enjoying about three miles of a road which rambled, with no directness of purpose, over the margin of flat country lying between the downs and sea, they passed through the little village of Dewring (at whose station this express train had not stopped), and instead of driving northward up the gradual ascent to the Tower, they went straight on for another mile, and then turned abruptly southward, until even on the girl's un-

listening ears, there fell the sound of the sea washing its long stretch of pebbly shore. Breaking a long wall on one side this road, came a little round lodge, like a swollen and moldy toy, and attached to it a yellow gate. Before this the driver reined in his horse, with a hoot intended to arouse the lodge-keeper, but which only startled the girl sitting behind him. He repeated it vainly again and again, yet all the time there was a woman sitting calmly looking out upon him from one of the round windows of the lodge.

When presently the girl caught sight of this woman's face, she at once told the driver she would walk the rest of the way, and dismissed him. She paid him in excess, in the old take-it-for-granted way, then opened the gate for herself, and walked up the yard of garden path to the door of the toy lodge, entering without any preliminary knock.

"I saw you, Sarah," she said to the woman who stood at her entrance, but gave her no smile of greeting. "Surely you have not become Miss Martin a lodge-keeper?"

"No, Miss Derry, I thought old Nat was out there ready to open the gate. Did Miss Ella send for you? She told me she had begged you not to come."

"So she did, and I tried to do as she wished, but it was impossible. How could I know her to be in trouble and stay away? I tried for a whole week, but had to give up at last and come. Something must be done, Sarah. This awful murder must be found out."

"It's a week since," the woman observed, with no change in her intent, unsmiling gaze.

"Yes, a whole week—" sadly. "As Ella begged me not to come, I thought I ought not—at first, but, as I say, something must be done, and isn't it natural that Ella's sister should try to do it?"

"Yes, it's natural," the woman agreed, the slow, level tones striking dully on the ear after the girl's clear, heart-stirring voice, but it will be of no use. Everything has been tried. The kindness to Miss Ella would be to teach her to forget it."

"Then I will teach her to forget it. But I must also try—"

"Miss Derry," the woman's interruption was quick enough though heavily

uttered—"you will remember she is not strong like you, and you will spare her any unnecessary harass?"

"Who should spare her if not I?" the girl asked, with simple, frank astonishment.

"You will remember how lately she has had such an awful shock?"

"You would not think me likely to forget it if you knew how terrible this week has been to me while she kept me from her."

"But you understood why, Miss Derry? She knew Mrs. Martin would make it disagreeable for you. Miss Ella thinks of you more than of herself. Did you expect to stay at the Pines?"

"If Ella asks me?"

"But she won't be allowed to. No, I'm sure she won't, so I must see about something, while you speak with Miss Ella. Will you come up to the house with me, and I will take you straight to her room?"

"As you like," said the girl, her lip curling more in amusement than contempt, as she turned out of the oppressive little room, the woman following her in silence.

"Sarah," she said, suddenly, when she had waited for her companion to come up to her in the short, straight avenue of stunted elms. "I wonder Mrs. Martin lets Ella keep you with her, as you are fond of Ella, and Mrs. Martin is so intolerably jealous."

"But she doesn't know I'm fond of Miss Ella," the woman said, with the first sign of a smile. "I pretend to be devoted only to her, and so I'm allowed to stay. I know well it's the only way."

"We were both your nurslings once," said the girl, with an unconscious pathos in her clear, musical voice, "but you were never fond of me as you were of Ella."

"No, Miss Derry—I'm fond of her, but I have no need to be."

"I never," the girl said cheerfully, strangling a sigh, "was quite the mistress of my temper, was I, Sarah? They say red-haired people never are."

"Red-haired!" The woman's voice was filled with astonishment, yet neither raised nor quickened. "Who ever said you had red hair?"

"All my best friends."

"Oh!"

That was all she said, and her eyes were utterly expressionless when she turned them on the girlish figure at her side, yet even she must have looked with pure delight on the glorious coloring which would have filled an artist soul with rapture.

"Miss Derry, please don't ring," Sarah said, hurrying forward to open the door when they reached the square white house. "Would you mind following me upstairs?"

"You will remember," (she had paused to whisper in an open door-way) "that Miss Ella is not strong, and has had such a shock?"

Ella's sister only smiled her answer as she passed into the room, and Sarah Eales had not the understanding to read in that smile a promise, strong as death.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

ON Derry's entrance, a pretty, delicate-looking girl, of about twenty, who lay on a couch beside the fire, looked up from a book, then sprang to her feet.

"Derry? You!"

"Me. No one else, my Sambo," was the merry answer, though the speaker's voice was stirred by some strong emotion. "Kiss me. Now again—and again. Yes, again. It is such ages since I saw you. Lock your arms round my neck, my dear, just as you used to do in old times—those very old times before rich aunts stole you away from me."

The younger sister—for Ella was the younger by almost two years—answered only by a grave, sweet smile; but, after pause, moved her head back to gaze into her sister's face.

"What brought you, Derry?"

"Tell me first that you care to see me."

"I do. Oh, yes, I do indeed, but you know I am not mistress here."

"No, I am glad to say you are not," returned Derry stoutly. "Of course I came to see you, but another motive brought me too, Ella. I'm afraid you may not like to hear it spoken of—yet."

"Why did you come?" gently and sadly asked Ella again.

"When I read that sorrowful letter of yours, I felt I ought to be with you, dear, though as you told me not to come, I submitted. But after thinking, thinking through six whole days, I knew I must come even if only for that other purpose. Ella, that mystery must be solved."

"Will you please not speak of it?" urged the younger girl, gently.

"Not speak of it! Must not I? Oh, Ella, just this once, if never again! You must forgive me. I can not be patient and resigned and gentle like you. I feel hot and mad against the man who did this awful murder. It seems to me cold of you—I mean" (with a caressing touch) "it is so submissive, too forgiving of you—of any one, Ella. Tell me—just one or two things. Did you not know of any quarrel he had had—even an old one, long ago?"

"No, none," with a slow shake of the head "Miles was not quarrelsome."

"Of course not, dear. I never meant it. But you must not be too unsuspecting—just yet. Some one might have resented something he had done which was in itself harmless—even noble, perhaps. Think it over—presently," as Ella gently shook her head again. "Is there any one who was jealous of him? You understand me, dear? Jealous of his being loved so well by pretty Ella Hope?"

"No," Ella answered simply, as she met her sister's beautiful questioning eyes. "Miles was not jealous. I know he was never jealous. Never!"

"And he was not robbed?"

"No."

"It is true that a five-guinea piece hung at his watch chain, close to where the dagger was?"

"I do not know."

"But have you heard it?"

"Oh, yes."

"Then they think it was no thief?"

"They seem quite sure."

"And, Ella, forgive me for asking one thing more. Does no one think it possible it might have been—himself? Oh, my dear, my dear," (with a hasty caress, as the soft brown eyes fill with tears), "what a wretch I must be to have uttered such an idea to you! Even to

have surmised it possible for one you love. Can you forgive me?"

"Derry"—it was not till a minute or two afterward that her sister broke the rather painful pause—"I am afraid that you forgot it would be impossible to stay here. Aunt is always telling me she will never forgive you. Did you fancy—"

"Oh, I fancy lots of absurdities," said Derry, her voice wavering a little timidly, though her eyes were brave and defiant. "I even fancy I have more to forgive Mrs Samuel Martin than she has to forgive me. But now I come to think of it, I'm lost in wonder how I could even momentarily have dreamed of staying in her house. Never mind, I'll go back to mine inn. I am only sorry I dismissed my luxurious 'post chaise,' but perhaps Sarah Eales will show me the way. Here she comes."

But Ella knew the rustling step better, and grew perceptibly nervous as there entered a middle-aged lady, handsomely attired, and with a handsome face, though its expression was hard even to cruelty.

"Ella, my love," she began, and then stopped short and looked at Derry, slowly scanning her from head to foot—a scrutiny the girl bore with cool indifference, after one anxious glance to see whether it pained her sister—"Ella," breaking the pause at last, "who is that?"

"It is Derry," began Ella, almost whispering in her timidity.

"Pray, my dear," said Mrs. Martin, "spare me such an imbecile nickname. If you mean your sister, of course it ought not to astonish me to see her anywhere, as she was always an odd young woman, wandering about alone; but still to come here, uninvited—"

"Derry is not my nickname, Mrs. Martin," observed the elder girl, in rather a kind and condescending sort of way, as with profound interest she studied the face, so ably powdered, and so skillfully tinged with rouge. "No one is to blame when memory fails, but, if you will try, you may recollect that I was baptized by that name because I was born in Londonderry, and my Irish father had little whims, like—an English aunt. For myself," speaking in a bright, friendly way, "I like it even better than the Sannuella you made dad bestow on my sisters"

year afterward! Dear old dad! His only compensation was to hear me tone it down to Sambo."

"Oh, hush, Derry," whispered Ella, pleadingly, and Derry put an arm around her as if to console her for something unmentioned between them.

"Ella, my love," inquired Mrs. Martin, "can you kindly inform me what brings your sister? It would be difficult to imagine her taste harmonizing with yours or mine, or the quiet life of the country possessing any charm for her, so I am curious to know what has attracted her to this neighborhood."

"I will answer for myself, Ella. Don't you be troubled, dear," said Derry, seating herself, and leaning back in a low chair, "I've taken a fancy to the country, Mrs. Martin. Is there any objection to my following my fancy?"

"I am glad" (with cutting emphasis) "that you are rich enough to follow a fancy now, instead of a trade."

"Are you really?" cried Derry, with warm geniality. "I was afraid you were not so deeply interested in dad and me. This knowledge would have given us unmixed rapture while we followed our trade, and I will try to appreciate it now I only follow a fancy."

"Ella, my love, if your sister's and father's circumstances are really improved, I would express satisfaction, as it will save you any worry in that quarter; but if this is only her vapid nonsense, and she has come here with any idea of my—"

"No," said Derry, placidly shaking her head, "I have come without any idea. I have come to spend my wealth in this neighborhood, Mrs. Martin, and it seems to offer fine attractions for a spendthrift."

She paused and sat quietly at ease, as if she had said all that could be desired, but the lady of the house had been taken by surprise, and for a few moments hesitated involuntarily. Then she smiled across at Ella before turning to leave room.

"My love," she said, with a gracious little wave of her hand, "as soon as your sister has left you will join me, and I wish you not to keep me waiting."

"I will not, aunt," she answered readily; but a forlorn expression crept over the pretty face when the door was

closed upon the two girls. "Oh, Derry," she sighed, "why don't you try to propitiate her?"

"Because—never mind," said Derry, bravely withholding what she had been tempted to say. "I can't help it. My sympathies are all with—the late Sammel."

"What did you mean, Derry, really, about your wealth?"

"This, dear. She hurried me into telling it in a way I did not mean. Uncle Joseph has sent me from Australia a whole thousand pounds, and offers to make me his heiress, if—as he puts it—I will leave off sculping."

"Oh, what a good thing for you."

"Is it?" the elder girl asked, dreamily, as she sat gazing into the fire. "The dear old dad says so, too, but like that soldier in the song, he 'wipes away a tear'."

"He never yet has been well off, you know, Derry."

"Well off!" The voice was stirred pathetically, and the beautiful eyes shone like stars for a moment; then the glow faded. "You forget it all, of course, Ella, as you left it so soon," she said, bringing her gaze from the fire to her sister's face, and speaking in a low, musing tone. "You can not understand what is in for Pat and me. We love the beautiful labor. I wonder whether a thousand pounds could ever seem to me worth so much as one of his words of praise when I have worked not unworthily. We love the freedom, the busy day-time, and the happy evenings, when he talks to me of books and art, or takes me where he thinks he can teach me even more. Oh, those delicious hours in the art galleries! or other evenings when busy friends can be idle too, and we have music or reading from a book we would discuss, or when we rush off in unpremeditated joy to a concert or a theatre."

"And you still call your father Pat, Derry! You seem to be invited out sometimes," added Ella, with a kind attempt at seeing a good side to everything.

"Yes, and I'm vain enough to like that too. To like wearing a pretty frock and looking at other women's, and noticing how differently men talk in dress-coats or velveteens. Oh, yes, I

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enjoy it all." The whimsical glance was directed straight into the fire, and Ella guessed nothing of how the society of the clever sculptor, and that of his beautiful daughter who inherited his talent, were almost humbly sued for by many whose aristocratic names the rich Mrs Martin would have given her right hand to have upon her visiting list.

"Of course I was a poor judge, being only thirteen when I left you," resumed Ella, "but I seem to remember we were always poor. Aunt Crystal says father always will be. That he is not contented with having to work hard for his money, but when he gets it he lends it."

"It is his privilege," said Derry, sedately. "He has a few very genial friends who give him opportunities of lending what they usually speak of as if it were a bore to have it. There's one young man who comes a good deal to the studio and owes Pat nearly two hundred pounds, and he calmly informed me yesterday that if he ever needed to borrow money he knew he should never ask a man who had to work for it! I will do him the justice to believe he thought he never had."

"Oh, Derry, what a shame! Did father hear?"

"No, several of us had just seen dad himself off to Paris. He has to sculpt Sara, and he is to do some business for Uncle Joseph on the same visit, so I shall be able to stay here all that time."

"But you will be so dull, Derry, and lonely too! It is horrid of aunt not to let you stay here, especially now we are not going out, and I am so miserable. Aunt herself is cross, too, because she hates to be without change and visiting, and she is worrying so about who I am to marry, now that Miles—"

"Where's Miles then?"

The shock of this sharp sudden question, made Derry's cheeks as white as the beautiful low forehead over which the hair was drawn back in wavy richness. Ella's face dimpled into a smile, while her eyes were lifted to a gilt bracket, on which there stood, peering down, a fine gray parrot.

"George has been silent a long time to-day," she said. "He always seems depressed if any stranger is here, else he talks of almost everybody; picks up

everything. Sometimes his keenness startles me almost as much as he startled you, Derry, but not often. I feel very angry with him, he invariably grows melancholy and silent."

"Where's Miles then?"

"Yes," resumed Ella, smiling again, "that is the question he generally asks now."

"How wretched for you," said her sister, kissing her pitifully as they stood. "I fear it is the cry he has often heard from your sad lips, dear, lately. Oh, Ella, it must be one of the greatest sorrows possible to lose—even without its being in that sudden and terrible manner—one's lover."

"So you can imagine it," asked Ella softly, "though you have so often said you could not fall in love?"

"I can feel for you, dear, just the same—perhaps more, being one of those women De Quincey speaks of, to whom a real female friendship can not be supplied by companionship of the other sex. Now, I must go, or darkness will fall upon me in a strange land. May Sarah walk with me?"

The woman entered so exactly at that moment that Derry caught herself uncomfortably regarding her, but after meeting the gaze with straightforward gravity, Sarah smiled tenderly into her young mistress's questioning eyes.

"I've got lodgings at Harrack's, Miss Ella," she said, with a quite perceptible anxiety in her even tones. "I thought I should, and I went there first. Mrs. Frayd has sent me back in her little cart with her man driving, and he's waiting to drive Miss Hope back."

"He must take me first to the Railway Inn for my luggage," said Derry as she kissed her sister and pretended not to be hastening her departure for that sister's sake. "Now don't harrass yourself about me, Ella. I shall be perfectly happy. I shall—shall. I don't quite know yet what I shall do; probably meditate over my thousand pounds."

"I dare say you shared it with father?"

"We tossed up for each hundred."

"Oh, Derry!"

"Don't look shocked, dear, for we really did. But I won quite enough to meditate upon."

"I guess you will write a letter for father's amusement," said Ella, trying

to be cheerful. "Give him my love and tell him I have not spirits to write. I will be sure to drive over to see you tomorrow."

"*W. e.'s Miles then?*"

The shrill, weird cry hurried Derry away, with a look in her eyes sadder than tears; yet she uttered several little polite commonplaces to Sarah, who conducted her down into the now shadowy avenue where the little yellow village cart waited.

"Miss Ella," Sarah said on her return for Ella had nervously waited to hear of her sister's departure before joining her aunt, "it was very kind of Miss Derry to come on purpose to comfort you, and I pray she may discover the man who went into Mr. Miles' that night. Of course it is not likely, as the police fail; but we'll do all we can. He had some enemy, of course, and it is just possible Miss Derry may find out who he was."

"Yes," Ella assented, in a sorrowful, wearied tone, and then joined her aunt.

"It was an eccentricity of that girl's to come all in black and yet not in mourning," Mrs. Martin began, as if the thought had been rankling all through her solitude. "Ella, my love, be with her as little as you need, for she—" Mrs. Martin paused abruptly. She had been going to say "throws you completely into the shade," but she changed it complacently into "she and I are utterly antipatica."

"Yes," said Ella, submissively, as she sat down to pour out the tea.

CHAPTER II.

DERRY HOPE sat in the yellow village cart at the door of the Railway Inn, wondering what the immediate future held for her, while she dreamily watched the wizen little old man who had driven her go into the inn for her box. She saw the flat-faced waiter accompany him out, with a skillful effect as if assisting, but for a wonder she failed to notice his hungry expression of countenance, and no shilling was forthcoming. While the little cart stood there a train came sauntering into the station, and seeing it the old man had

the appearance of being struck with an idea.

"Would you be nervous miss, to 'old the 'orse a minute?" he asked Derry, who absently confessed herself equal to that daring deed.

Idly she sat until his little bent form was swallowed by the station, then she made up her mind through natural deductions, that for an unlimited period she must possess her soul in patience. So that when within reasonable time the little man reappeared at the pony's head it took her so by surprise that she paid scant attention to the fact that the reins were taken out of her hands with a stiff conventional speech, which at another time would have made her smile, and that she was being whirled away, not from Thawton only, but from the cautious little old man who had driven her thither.

She looked round once or twice at the tall, heavy figure beside her, even taking cognizance of a strong silent profile; and each time with an added sense of injury, for she was not accustomed to men who were not entertaining, and she had no idea how very apparent she had made it that she was sombely wrapped in thought.

Often afterward she smiled to recall how she had broken at last the discourteous silence which was unusual with her.

In the elderly manner she thought fit to assume, she proffered an inch of encouragement to this grim-seeming person beside her, alluding affably to the want of picturesqueness around her. Possibly he considered the fact too self-evident to need discussion, for he assented in the holdest manner.

"I hate flatness," she continued pensively, "in scenery or people."

Again he agreed with no embellishment of language.

"Where is Harracks?"

The question was perhaps a little impatient considering the elderly style she had adopted; but to all appearances this did not strike her listener.

"Very little way ahead of us now."

"Who lives at Harracks?"

"I do."

"Oh!"

"He did not look round, so could not have been aware of her expression as

the startling fear swept over her that she had made some egregious blunder, or that Sarah Eales had done so for her.

"Do you mean it—that it is your house?" she asked feverishly.

"Oh no. I am sorry to have alarmed you. I have no house."

She would never have confessed what a relief the blunt words gave her. She certainly did her best not to betray it. "Why did not the man who drove me into Thawton bring me back?"

"Because I arrived in time though you were not aware of it, I asked your permission to take his place. I am staying in Dewring, and old Amos had to come and meet me. Did he not tell you so?"

"No."

"He ought to have done so, then I should not have seemed so impertinent. Still, had you deigned to listen to me at Thawton, you would have known my name and destination—not to mention my antecedents, and my ambition in taking this seat instead of Amos."

"I beg your pardon for not listening to you. Who is Amos?"

"The factotum at Harrack's Beacon, where I have billeted myself. People call it Harrack's to save time."

"I am going to lodge there."

It struck her afterward that she had expected him to say he was delighted, because it was such a surprise when he merely inquired with tranquility what she supposed she should find to do at Harrack's Beacon.

"What do you do?"

"I? Heaven knows. Sleep is a great resource."

"Indeed it is," with readiness. "I am happily a sleepy person. Why is it called Harrack's Beacon?"

"There used to be a church on the spot, and sailors knew its tower as one of the channel beacons. Long years ago the reigning Atheling blew up the old church that he might have a pretty site—separate from the Tower, yet within reach of it—to build a house for his imbecile child and his attendants."

"There always seemed a curse upon the house, though, and at last none of the Athelings would live there, so they sold it. One and another tried it and gave it up after sore disasters, until Harrack—whoever he may have been—

bought it and hopefully raised a wind-mill close to it. All sorts of things happened to that mill that never happened to any other, until the sails were gone, as well as Harrack's business, and the white mill stood useless. But then it became a beacon as the old church tower had been, and from that time things grew better, and everyone knew that Harrack had appeased the devil by this humanitarianism use of his mill."

"Should you have fancied," she asked, "the devil would have troubled himself to resent the destruction of a house of prayer?"

"A man may fancy but the fact remains. He did and was only consoled by this humanitarian use of his mill. You see we haven't been understanding him yet. To this day if any Atheling enters the mill, he comes in the form of a huge, black bird and fetches him or her away."

"But there no Athelings now."

"Not in name, but quite enough of the old stock still."

"What a good thing we are not Athelings, as we stay in Harrack's Beacon."

"It is good—for you," he said, looking straight before him.

"Who lives—I do not mean lodges—at Harrack's."

"Mrs. Frayd. May we oblige each other by avoiding the palpable pun and assume, without saying so, that she is always afraid of that thing of evil, whether bird or devil?"

"Who else?"

"Penkus—Wordsworth wrote of her if you recollect—'A child with a most knowing eye.' Shall I put you out of your suspense by giving you the information I have had to slowly acquire? She was baptized Pentecost. Then there is the factotum Amos Pickett, from whom I so cruelly parted you in Thawton, and there it is," pointing with his whip to where the ivy-covered trunk of a disused wind-mill stood upon the height. "We have to turn abruptly up to it from Dewring. The gradual ascent beyond is to the Tower."

At the mention of that word the girl suddenly began to be aware that she had wasted a valuable opportunity. "Is the Tower far from Harrack's?" she asked, her voice actually trembling in her anxiety to retrieve the loss of time.

"I thought so until I found that on the night of the murder at the Tower the din of the alarm bell was not heard at Harrack's. I suppose the wind was against it."

"I should think," shuddering, "you were glad you did not hear it."

"I came to Dewring next day."

"Then you were not in the neighborhood at the time of the murder?"

"Not at Harrack's," he answered, so briefly that her cheeks burned; yet for all her sensitive pride she turned round to him with a look of quiet determination.

"Do you object to hearing of—that?"

"Why should I," he asked, turning also and looking her square in the eyes.

And there and then she made up her mind that this was a really ugly man, with hollow cheeks and untidy hair, and eyes that were fierce as well as melancholy. It was not until she had the sun to aid her scrutiny, that she discovered how with all its lites, and they were not few for a man of thirty-five, there was no single line of weakness in the rugged face, and that at all times Steven Basset had that indescribable air of breeding which no man can counterfeit.

"Are they a proud family—arrogant, I mean, and likely to offend people?" she asked, feeling her way anxiously, not to waste the precious minutes they should occupy in mounting the steep lane up which, perhaps for the lazy pony's sake, perhaps for his own, in any case to the girl's delight, her driver was letting the pony creep as he would.

"Surely you will allow they ought to be, as they can bear their crest upon their cap of maintenance. You understand?"

"Of course."

"I am glad of that. I can't say I do."

"You don't like them?" asked the girl gravely.

"Them! would you sweep the whole family away in one liking? I confess to a sneaking affection for myself, and I am one of them."

"Oh!"

"That tone strikes me as very expressive, but what does it express, if I may ask?"

"I think,"—with a brilliant blush—"it meant to express an apology for speaking to you of your own family."

"Oh, you need not mind that. The late head of my family had an exalted aversion to me, and as I never could bear to be behind Miles in anything, I kept up with him in hatred too."

"Yet, you have chosen to stay here?"

He read more in her question than her natural surprise, but of course could not know that her voice was stirred by a wild hope that he might be here for the same purpose as herself and that he too, might be devoting himself to the discovery of Miles Basset's murderer.

"I am a writer," he said tersely. "I can write here as well as elsewhere."

The explanation had crushed her hope for a moment but it had given her a happy feeling, as if a warm ray from her own old life had touched her. "Are you—really, I know so many men who write. But then," hesitatingly, "that is in the heart of the busy world. Is it possible that," she paused deep in wonder as her eyes took in the quiet scene, for she was too young yet to breathe its rest—"you can compose here. I should have thought—"

The rich, half-laughing voice interrupted her.

"And you would have been quite right. Men with brains need to rub them occasionally against others. I don't, because I have none. When I want to evolve anything out of my head I screw it up in a vinegar bandage. If you ever chance to meet me you'll think me Lazarus coming forth. I think it right to prepare you, for I'm so accustomed to loneliness, I shall be sure to forget the possibility of encountering you."

"I shall be prepared," she said, without the laugh he had meant to provoke, without even a smile. She certainly was conscious of wondering whether she should find she knew his books, and whether he should ever speak to her of them, but still her strongest desire was to learn from him facts that had nothing to do with his writings.

"Was Mr. Basset a man who would be likely to have enemies?" she asked, making a new attempt.

"You mean beside his cousin?"

"Oh, yes."

"I should say that if any spirit was left in his younger brother, he was Miles' enemy too."

"How dreadful!"

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"Yes. Things generally are."

"I was thinking to day"—the little cart was so surely though slowly reaching the mill, that Derry, feeling that her vanishing opportunities must be grasped and made the most of, was hurriedly trying a new beginning. "What an unusual name his sister has. Don't you think Primrose a beautiful name?"

"Perhaps it is. For myself I don't go in for primness when I can get the rose without it."

"She is very lovely, is not she?"

"Yes, in a steel engraving sort of a way."

"Did her brother love her?"

"Presumably. At least I do not see why we should imagine he did not. But—presumably, also—he better loved another very pretty girl—painted on ivory—to whom he was to be married in a few weeks' time. Poor fellow! Poor girl!"

"You mean Ella Hope. You know her, then."

"Yes, I know Miss Hope a little. She suits me. I find it saves so much wear and tear to know exactly beforehand what a girl will say. There are times when she is a little wearisome, but that is my own fault, because I have not comfortably ascertained whether she affects unaffectedness or only has a vacuum where affectation ought to be."

"She does not affect anything. She is always good and natural," cried Derry, her eyes ablaze. "But I deserve this for my persistent questioning of you. She is my sister!"

"Is she," asked the young man, composedly. "I said she was very pretty, and she is."

"But you also said what was not true."

"I often do. Here is the house. I see Mrs. Frayd has come to the door to welcome you. Try always to invent some plausible diversion at her earliest full stop, for I assure you the Ancient Mariner was a reticent party compared with Mrs. Frayd. Ah!"

The gate into the mill enclosure had been opened for them by a well-dressed, middle-aged man, who had been leaning on it, and who raised his hat as they passed through, directing an interrogatory glance at Mr. Basset.

"All right," that gentleman observed,

"I will stroll back here and speak to you."

"That," he tersely explained to Derry, "is a detective."

"Oh, I am so glad," she cried, "then people are doing something to discover the truth. It is my one great absorbing desire."

"What a pity," lazily, as the pony walked to the door, "women—especially girls, and more especially, frank girls—are not cut out for that sort of thing. I would drop all thought of it if I were you. Take my advice. Though why on earth should you take my advice? And don't trouble your young head with such horrors."

"I must," she answered with grave steadfastness. "It is right."

"On the contrary, it is wrong," was the serene reply. "I shall lift no finger to help those idiots."

"If I were a man I would never rest till the murderer is punished," she cried, fully aware next moment, what ample excuse he would have for smiling at her worthless, impatient words. But he did not smile. She even fancied that his eyes had an anxious light in them when he coolly lifted her from the little cart.

"Oh, Miss 'Ope, I have been so upset," ejaculated Derry's landlady, leading her in-doors. "I've been blaming myself for not having told Mrs. Eales all about it, but it really she gave me no time, she was in such a hurry to get back to Miss Ella. You see Amos had to meet Mr. Basset by that train, and as my little carriage only 'olds two, of course Amos had to give up his place. I was so sorry. It was such a pity to have put you out so, just on your first evening."

"But why are you sorry?" asked the girl, wondering to herself whether she could really have been put out and whether that accounted for it all.

"Because you see, Miss 'Ope"—in lowered tones—"Mr. Basset is a constant smoker, and I felt you mightn't like nearly four miles of tobacco. And more than that"—in lower and more concentrated tones,—"he does so 'ate wom—ladies"

"I see," the girl said with perfect comprehension.

"Yes, I see," she said again to herself, half an hour later, as she looked from her window. For she saw Steven Bas-

set, his brown head bare, and a brown pipe in his mouth, leaning lazily against the gate as he listened to the detective, evidently reveling in the fact that his companion now was not a woman.

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PART III.

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CHAPTER I.

DERRY's cheeks were blushing under the wintry morning's kiss, when, after an early run, she reached the top of the steep lane up to Harrack's Beacon, and, making her pace more decorous through the inclosure, stopped at the door by which she remembered leaving her room. Its upper half was glass, serving the purpose of a window, its lower half painted in a dingy shade of chocolate, and she remembered what an obstinate objection it had made to open, and how she had wrestled with it before starting. Now she was glad she had left it unlatched, and, passing in, she did not trouble herself to wrestle inside, but left it again ajar. She had returned to breakfast by the hour she had ordered it, but forgetting all about the meal, she stood before the fire, thinking how little she had accomplished by that morning investigation. "Yet," she said, in her thoughts, as she threw down her muff and gloves, holding her palms to the blaze though she was in a glow, "I surely couldn't have expected to find people standing thickly about these forsaken roads, on purpose to deal out information to me, which others have sought in vain. Well, I've seen how the Tower lies from here, and I've had two little conversations, and I must be content—so far."

The morning air had given her an appetite, yet, standing on the rug, she began lazily to wonder why Mrs. Frayd should, even in her lodger's absence, have changed, for a certain oblong mirror, with a green gauze veil shrouding the frame, which last night had crowned the mantel-piece, an illustration of various admirals on board ship, all obviously dying through the rigidity of their shirt-frills. Had she, Derry, been

so barbarous as to utter aloud any of the melancholy thoughts which had possessed her, when she had caught her face in that looking-glass, and seen it aged into three times her twenty-two years, and as green as the veil over the frame? Assuredly she had never intended to hurt Mrs. Frayd's feelings by suggesting any alteration in the room, yet the glass had disappeared and in its stead hung this cluster of dying officers. Then she began to realize that the chimney ornaments had been changed too, for her glance fell upon one which she was certain she could not have overlooked on the previous evening—a photograph of Mrs. Frayd, smiling blandly out of a cheap and showy frame. Derry amused herself by practicing an imitation of this candid grin, until her thoughts had wandered from it down so many little side-ways, that she had forgotten all about it, when she became suddenly and startlingly aware of another now ornament on the mantel-shelf, a short brown pipe. Even before her first alarm had shaped itself to her, she turned and scrutinized the room. The truth was clear in a moment! This was not her room at all.

Too much shocked to see the humor of the position, or to be as fully grateful as she presently would be that she had left the door ajar, she crept noiselessly away; and that blush the morning air had given her, was almost pallor compared with the red that scorched her cheeks as, on her way to a similar door a few yards higher up, she became aware of a figure strolling with most suspicious unconsciousness—quite too conspicuous to be natural—in a direction markedly away from the adjoining door. Entering the haven of her own room, she sat down before the old looking-glass in its veiled frame, with a feeling of gratitude too profound even to allow her to smile. During breakfast her mind was deeply exercised between two desires—not to betray her *faux pas* to Mrs. Frayd, if that lady were not already aware of it—and not to attempt concealment if she were. When the meal was over, and her landlady was taking away the things, Derry looked at her again and again trying to read the truth; but the woman's coun-

tonance was a blank—it had even no memory of the photograph's smile!—and her monologue, though blandly continuous, betrayed no knowledge of any abnormal step her lodger had taken. When it came to the last minute, and Mrs. Frayd, still talking fluently, was replacing with mathematical precision, on the round table, two hair mats which might have been Indian scalps, Derry's patience could out no longer, and she told of her mistake.

"Yes, miss, I know," observed Mrs. Frayd, equably.

"How?" gasped Derry, her desire to laugh battling with her desire to turn out her landlady.

"I saw Mr. Basset walk in there and come out again like a shot, and so quiet, and he told me not to go in; I knew by that, miss."

For one moment the girl's cheeks burned again, seeing in this a proof of consideration for her feelings; in the next her landlady ruthlessly explained. "It's such a pity he 'ates wom—ladies, isn't it?"

"I think," remarked Derry, her cheeks quite cool again, "I saw your photograph there, Mrs. Frayd."

"Yes, miss. Mr. Basset prizes it. I gave it him years ago when he was at 'Arrack's first."

"Then he has been here before?"

"Oh, he's often here. Generally busy writing, but this time he's doing nothing, so it seems to me. I'm glad though, for he has a look of overdoing, or overgoing, I don't know which, and he doesn't tell me much. It's a pity, for it's good for us to hear each other talk, as I tell him often, though I'm not a talker myself. He's too much by himself, too, I tell him. It isn't well for a man to be always lonely. He hasn't any letters, it seems to me, except business-looking ones, and there's never anything friendly on his postal-cards."

"Perhaps," suggested Derry, without a smile for this candid remark, so anxiously was she schooling her voice to sound calm on the subject she longed to start, "Mr. Basset is here for the purpose of discovering the truth about his cousin's murder?"

"Praps so, miss, but somehow I don't believe he troubles about that.

I'm afraid I've even heard him laugh about the detective old Mrs. Basset employs. He never liked Mr. Miles."

He never liked Mr. Miles!

The words echoed painfully in Derry's ears. True, he had told her this himself last night, but it sounded differently from this woman's lips.

"This Mr. Basset was not here on the night of the murder, was he, Mrs. Frayd?"

"No, miss. I think he said he was in Thawton, though there are some that say he was in Dewring. Indeed, there are those that say he was at the 'Ines that night—next evening he was, any way. There was to have been a dinner-party there, but of course no one went, knowing about Mr. Miles. Whether Mr. Basset dined there or not I can't say, but I know he came from there here."

"He must have been to condole with or inquire after Miss Hope," explained Derry, musingly. "You do not hear him speak of the murder, I suppose," she continued, hating herself for meanness while she asked the question, which she still felt it right to ask.

"No, miss, I've scarcely heard him mention it, except once he said he wondered Mr. Oliver didn't come to the Tower, but he only said it in a lazy way, and not a bit as if he cared."

"Poor old Mrs. Basset!" said Derry, from her heart. "She at least is trying to solve the mystery."

"The man who did it's safe to be found out, miss." (There was no further excuse to delay, and Mrs. Frayd's hand was on the door, but she had a little more to say.) "It's always done fair. Didn't my own brother keep a rattlesnake quite against nature, and it was its bite that killed him? And wasn't there that wicked Corney, over Black Down way, determined to poison his wife and two innocent children? So he bought a leg of lamb as a treat for them, he said, and he first rubbed arsenic into it, and just before dinner-time he came in all in a hurry, and said he was called away on business and couldn't wait for their dinner-time, so his wife must fry him the sole he brought. His appetite seemed good and he eat it all up, and went cheerfully off. His wite, being a frugal young woman, had thought it a pity

to waste a leg of lamb on her and the children, so she put it away for next day, and they had eggs. Well, you see, miss, how it was? She had fried her husband's sole in the dripping, and so he died, not over comfortably, in the street. Oh, it always does come home to the sinner, doesn't it, miss?"

"I don't know—yet," said Derry, heavily, and then as she gave Mrs. Frayd no further opportunity of speaking, that silent woman disappeared.

An hour later Derry's room had a changed aspect, almost a pretty home look. She had brought in her books, and work, and photographs, and had put out of sight various articles highly prized by Mrs. Frayd, (such as the scalps upon the table, and a wax doll dressed as a bride under a glass case), and had given everything a beautifying touch; yet as she looked round she gave a little sigh of longing for the home studio. As it was still too early to expect her sister she decided to explore the surroundings of the mill, but not to go out of sight lest there might be a chance of missing even a minute of Ella's society. She went through the creaking half glass door, and in order to avoid the twin door lower down, she strolled upward, not pausing until she was on the highest spot. Standing in the broad daylight, looking down upon the house and noticing its sheer ugliness, Derry smiled over the legend she had been told, and the notion of any family ghost haunting such a building as this. Yet the instant she turned back from her contemplation and entered a magnificent clump of spruce firs, she caught herself starting at only a small figure in their midst, silently and busily engaged in picking a bone evidently taken from an open parcel on her knees. Derry stopped opposite to watch this process for some little time, then spoke with what her father called the brotherly way she had with children of all grades.

"Oh, indeed! You are dining quite early, aren't you?"

"It saves carrying it," returned the very small woman with round raised eyes, and a suspicious shine on her protruding chin.

"I see. It is your dinner packed to take to school, and you save carriage by eating it on the way. It is a bright

idea, but you had better put up what is left. And then you may open your mouth and shut your eyes."

Derry took out a box of sweets, the purchase of which had been her excuse that morning for a little talk with the village shop-mistress, but when the child expanded her lips dangerously and screwed together her eyelids, Derry could not resist popping her finger only into the yawning chasm. It was a test the weird-looking child bore so philosophically that Derry immediately took her to her heart and liberally rewarded her.

"What will they do to you for being late at school?" she inquired presently, with that warm air of sympathy and friendship which children love.

"Keep me in. Teacher always does."

"Poor teacher! And these are your usual hours, are they? How old are you?"

"Eight."

"Indeed!" (The little thing looked at most five.) "Quite old enough to carry your dinner when mother packs it so nicely for you."

"Mother's dead ten years ago."

"Oh!" gasped Derry, foundering over a new arithmetical problem, as she thought of the child's age. "What is your name?"

"Penkus."

"Penkus?" with an amused gleam of memory. "Then you are one of the adjuncts of Harrack's Beacon?"

"I live at Harrack's with ma."

"Then Mrs. Frayd is ma. Who is pa?"

"There is no pa?"

"I see. Who is your father?"

"Amos."

"Now run off to school. Do you go down?"

"Yes."

"Then you only climbed to obtain privacy over your dinner? You may well be called 'a child with a most knowing eye,' as Wordsworth said. Run."

But the child preferred her own unbiased gait, and Derry stood watching her, and rejoicing that that troublesome man was not about. But presently a tall figure came toward her among the trees, and she knew it had been too late to congratulate herself on that troublesome man not being about.

Derry, in her beautifully fitting bronze dress, braided by herself, as no one but an artist could have braided it, might be perhaps excused for looking with a little contempt on the sage-green hue of his shabby coat, but her keen glance detected that for all its shabbiness, its fit was perfect. The brim of a soft felt hat was pulled down over his ears, but even that weak equipment of the head did not rob it of its look of power. He did not offer his hand to Derry, only lifted his hat and put his pipe straight into his pocket. She had made up her mind to anticipate anything he might say or think of her morning's mistake, by plunging at once into the subject when she should see him, and she had distinctly dreaded it; but now that she was face to face with him, she found she had no feeling of dread at all, and knew that it would be quite easy to speak of her escapade, even though she did not plunge into it.

"Is it quite safe?" she asked, her eyes following his pipe. "You see I am not the typically silent English traveler who could do the silent German one."

"How?" Steven Bassett inquired, showing an idle willingness to be entertained. And it is no doubt forgiven him that he knew quite well before he asked.

"The silent German, after traveling silently opposite the silent Englishman for many hours, was at last impelled to tell him briefly that he had dropped a spark on his waist-coat. 'Let me alone,' growled the silent Englishman. 'Your coat-tail has been on fire for ten minutes, and I haven't bothered you about it.' Do you know, Mr. Bassett," she had made no pause, and he felt it a little uncomfortable to be thus hurried by his entertainer.—"I made a mistake this morning between those two glass doors at Harrack's. I opened the first and found myself in your room."

"I'm very glad. I've so often mistaken those two doors," he said, fibbing tranquilly, "that I have been hoping you would do it sooner or later."

"I couldn't have done it much sooner," interpolated Derry.

"But perhaps you are mistaken. The doors and rooms are so exactly alike—like our days and yesterdays in these parts—that I dare say you only fancied you went into the wrong one."

"You knew," assented Derry, relentlessly.

"What made you think you had," he continued, coolly ignoring this assertion; and she guessed he was laughing at the remembrance of how he had seen her standing placidly established before his fire.

"I knew I had left no pipe on my own mantel-piece last night."

"But perhaps it was I who had made a mistake, and left it this morning in your room."

"And I have no photograph of Mrs. Frayd in an orange-colored frame."

"You evidently rejoice in that fact."

"Well, it seems rather an unnecessary possession when the original is on view. You prize it though," mischievously, as she recalled Mrs. Frayd's statement.

"Yes, it is the only photograph that was ever given me." Though he answered so composedly, something in his tone made her look at him, and she felt no surprise at what he had said. It would have been hard for her to imagine he had ever praised a woman sufficiently to encourage her to offer him her representation.

"A different frame might be a slight alleviation," she suggested, looking away to the dismal stretch of sand binding the dim January sea.

"I shall keep it just as she gave it," he answered, too simply for the words to sound like a contradiction. "I should see no fitness in transporting the original from Harrack's to—marble halls, say; should you? In the flesh or the photograph, I like her best in the surroundings of her choice. And—"

"And it signifies nothing to others, you mean," added the girl, without any doubt that she had rightly interpreted his thought, though she did not.

"You could not understand," he explained, without correcting her, "what it is to spend one's life in lodgings. I have, and my nearest friends are of course my landladies. Of these, Mrs. Frayd is the only one who has proffered me her photograph, so I mean it to have an honored place. You find" (there had been no pause, but the tone was lighter now), "that she has a few words to say and says them? I thought you would think so." Derry had not ans-

wered and he had only looked into her eyes. "You will be even more favored with them than I, for your face will give her more encouragement. I wonder how far your thoughts will generally stray while she holds on."

"They went in to Cheshire this morning," replied Derry, "for I remember reading there on a woman's gravestone, a line her husband had put after the date of her death—'And there was a great calm.' But," (with sudden frank compunction), "that's despicable of me, for I have myself been leading Mrs. Fraydon to talk, and I mean to lure her further and furt'er—and further. For I've a purpose in being here."

"I feared so," he said, and Derry thought he had made an odd withdrawing movement, but the only thing she was sure of was that he frowned in a rather ugly manner. She was cogitating over this, and doubting the possibility of his having winced at her words, when he broke the silence.

"I owe you an apology, Miss Hope, for having intruded upon you yesterday in your drive. I should have walked certainly if I had understood how it was, but Amos merely said he had come to meet me, and left me to make my own discoveries."

"I think the intrusion was mine," amended Derry, "for as you said, you explained all to me while I was not listening. You had engaged the cart, and besides," (demurely), "it was worse for you because I've not any particular objection to your sex, while I understand that you have a particular objection to mine."

He had thrown his head back as if to laugh, but after all he only took the opportunity of looking beneath the brim of his hat intently into her debonair face. "Now I think we may cry quits, Miss Hope," he said then, coolly, "for though you have no particular objection to my sex, you have a general disregard for it, which is better for you and safer than my—particular objection."

It was such a ridiculous pause that occurred then, the girl thought, that she broke it with the exaggerated coolness a woman so often assumes when she is not at ease. "I feel the silence here wonderfully, I actually hear it."

"You prefer the sounds of London, of

course. No doubt you would rather have the planes upon the Thames Embankment, than such trees as these, growing unnoticed, and in silence here."

"Of course," she assented, as if there were no doubt about it, simply because his tone cut ironically. "Who could" (looking up among the splendid firs) "compare one of these with a real London deodar—or sumach? Why, the very names lift them higher. Besides, our life's bliss does not depend upon trees alone, we have pillar posts."

"That serves me right," he said, good humoredly, "and it was mean of me. Why, some of the finest trees I know are close to your London home. No, you could not, of course, live out of London, and if I can 'tis all the worse for me, as showing what a very old man I am."

"But, o' course," she suggested, graciously willing to allow an amelioration of his condition, "you keep yourself up in everything that goes on in the world?"

"The world? Oh, that is too far away," with a sort of smile in his voice. "We try to be aware when Parliament is sitting by listening for the prayer in church, but sometimes there is a mistake even among parsons, and that puts us all wrong."

"You have your papers?"

"Of course. They arrive at our station somewhere about the time when the next day's news is preparing for press, and first the station-master, and the postman, and the porters—sometimes with a select audience—have to learn their contents. Then the postman, who for a weekly consideration undertakes to deliver mine, starts off with it. I usually meet him and find out from him what it contains, to save myself the trouble he has passed through."

"I suppose," began Derry, presently, her voice a little unsteady, as she brought the subject round to her one absorbing desire, "the people have been very anxious to see the papers since that murder at the Tower?"

"Why? We know more than the London papers can tell us. I wonder" (quite markedly putting aside the topic she had with such a waste of ingenuity introduced) "what you will find here to

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"I don't want London now," she cried, impetuously resenting this repeated failure to make Mr. Basset speak of his cousin's murder. "and to-day my sister is coming to me."

"Then that," he observed, pointing to a dark object advancing fleetly on the level road below the downs, "will be Miss Hope's pony-carriage. I need not have given utterance to my unwarrantable wonder, for where Miss Hope has appeared others will soon follow. She is like that Mrs. Somebody at whose appearance the horizon became dark with majesty."

Derry's lips had been closely closed, for she had felt that her companion was about to be personal, and that it would be an impertinence in him; but his manner was so utterly without impertinence or presumption, and his tone so gentle in its carelessness, that she could not help smiling, after all; smiling was so natural to Derry! He had been coolly critical before, fully alive to a pretty chin, fair as a white rose petal; to sensitive lips; white regular teeth, and glorious Titian tints; but now calm criticism was at an end. This sudden warm smile broke on him as a gleam of summer sunshine breaks before we know that we have spring, and gave him the same sensation—a gladness that can not be described, or named, or held.

But Derry had made row a movement preparatory to going, and so he spoke, in the old cool tones: "For a young and delicate girl, how well your sister manages those ponies. And I have seen her in the saddle, mastering a horse with as much strength and quiet determination as—her late lover could have shown. Yet how very gentle she is and—feminine, if you will not laugh at such a ridiculous word. It expresses exactly what I mean."

"You know she is charming," declared Derry.

"Indeed she is. Unchangeably so. I wonder if you have ever felt the intense weariness of watching a gas fire; whether you have ever grown sick to death of seeing the flame always in the same spot."

"No," she said, while she calculated how many minutes she must take in de-

scending the slope, so as to meet Ella exactly at the door. "I suppose you hurled that at me as a bit of London. I was thinking of my sister."

"So was I," he answered, coolly. "Fitz," to the *dachshund* who had been lying at his feet—"go down and welcome Miss Hope. He declines the honor," as the hound having risen, stood close against his master's leg, looking up with an entreaty almost human. "Fitz was my cousin's dog, Miss Hope. I bought him from Miles, only a few days before his—end. Is he not beautiful?"

"Beautiful? With those crooked legs and ugly splay feet?"

"Wait," observed the young man, as he sauntered coolly at her side from the cluster of firs, "till you see him dig for badgers."

"I believe I may without anxiety consent to wait," said Derry, laughing as she ran down the slope.

He did not laugh, but his eyes closed at the corners rather comically as he watched her meet her sister; then he turned and strolled with Fitz away from Harrack's Beacon.

CHAPTER II.

"Derry, did I see some one with you?" asked Ella, drawing off a seal-skin gauntlet, and laying one firm little white hand in her sister's, "when you first came in sight?"

"I don't know when I first came in sight," replied Derry, gently, "for you were in sight of me a mile away."

"Was it Steven Basset?"

"Yes, dear, but I did not want to disturb you with that name the first minute you came to me. I fear the likeness distresses you."

"The likeness?" repeated the younger sister, with a start. "Why, Derry, you never saw Miles."

"Oh, no, but there's always a likeness between brothers, and I know Oliver Basset."

"Do you?" indifferently. "But Miles and Oliver were not really like. No one was like Miles."

"Not to you, dear, of course," ex-

plained Derry, pitifully aware of tears gathering.

"But this Mr. Bassot is a very different looking man, though indeed I don't dislike him, as Aunt Crystal does. I always find him very well informed when he converses with me."

"And I do believe," said Derry, her eyes warm with a laugh of which she was instantly ashamed, "he is just as well informed when he converses with me—though I can not get him to inform me."

As Sarah Eales had accompanied her young mistress, and was standing now waiting for orders, Derry felt a little awkward, having only one room into which to invite anybody, so she asked her sister whether she would prefer to walk about or go in.

"Go in," returned Ella, giving the reins to her small liveried groom. "Sarah can sit with Mrs. Frayd until I summon her. It was very stupid," Ella went on, in a whisper, as the girl entered the house, "of Sarah to beg to come with me this morning; very unkind too, as she has found that I seldom refuse her anything."

"She will enjoy Mrs. Frayd," observed Derry, pensively.

Though Ella would not remain to lunch, and would not have the ponies put up, she threw off her sealskin with the appearance of intending to stay a long time, and seated herself before the fire, looking very comfortable and pretty in the mourning, which, except for the absence of the cap, and the general enlivenment of jet glistening wherever it was possible, was as deep as that of a widow.

"Derry," she said, with a smile and sigh together, "I am so relieved to see you in your ordinary dress again. That affectation of mourning yesterday was a great mistake."

"Yes," said Derry, simply, "but I had felt unlike wearing colors since my own sister—"

"I know, dear, that you felt all that was kind. Now let us talk of something else."

The girls had had an hour of idle, loving, wandering sister talk (which Derry had not the heart to break with any of the questions which harassed her, when Sarah Eales appeared, and

asked if the ponies had not stood as long as it was wise for them to stand. She walked away when she had asked this, and Ella rose to bid farewell.

"Dear, stay, a little," cried Derry, drawing her back with a pleading look. "I have so much to ask you. I don't want to pain you—you know I don't—but I must speak to you. Am I to go to the Pines, or where will you come to me again?"

"Oh, Derry, you really must go back to town. I trust you will. It is wretched for you here, and indeed I came to-day almost solely to entreat you to return, and not make yourself so unhappy—and me. I really meant not to cease urging this, but it is so nice to be with you that I forgot."

"That's good, dear. But I am not going, so when will you come again?"

"Not at all if you speak to me of Miles."

"May I not ask you to think—to try to remember whether he ever said anything to you which could give a clue?"

"You have his cousin near, ask him," said Ella, with a look as if the tears were very near, though, to Derry's delight, they were kept back. "He must surely have plenty to say, for he hated Miles."

"But if I am to win help," said Derry, in deep earnest, "it will surely be from some one who loved Miles."

"Perhaps," continued Ella, looking dreamily into the fire, "Steven benefited by his death. I don't say he did—I don't know—but perhaps it was so. Oh, leave it all as it is," she broke off, meeting her sister's startled gaze.

"I can not leave it as it is," said Derry, dazedly. "I can not think how you can. You must be an angel, Ella; I mean it is so far beyond me to understand your resignation. I may go to the Tower, for Primrose and I have met, you know? May I go at once?"

"Of course, if you desire it. But I really do wish (quite perceptibly shrinking from what she was making an effort to say), "you need not go there, Derry. I—I have a fear of Primrose."

"A fear of Primrose!" The elder sister could only repeat the words.

"Yes, a fear. She was devoted to Oliver, and Miles was in Oliver's way. Oliver owns the property now, and lo

one is in his way, but I can not forget that Miles was. What is it, Derry?" for the long gaze of horror had forced Ella's eyes to her sister's face.

"You have given me a cruel thought," gasped Derry. "Primrose is a girl like our-selves."

"Yes," returned Ella, taking her sister's hand and caressing it, "but loving sisters—as I learned yesterday—will do daring things for those they love. I have only told you that Primrose adored her brother Oliver, and never cared for Miles. I had not even told you that she had been utterly changed since that night. She is more broken-hearted than even I have the right to be. Besides, why does Oliver, who was supposed to love her so, stay away from her now?"

"I made a mistake," said Derry, with a new compression of the full pretty lips, "in thinking there were no suspicions at work. Does not suspicion—seemingly so busy among Miles's relatives—touch Oliver?"

"I don't know," sighed Ella, wearily. "I have scarcely ever seen Oliver. But I always knew he was his sister's favorite, and that they both felt Miles in the way. I suppose," in tired tones, "they had both a sort of right to do so. But this cousin never—"

"Ella, why did so many people dislike Miles? It has been a great shock to me, for your love for him had lifted him high in my thoughts."

"Do you not know," in a pained half whisper, "what jealousy will do?"

"And Primrose loved Oliver best? Well," with uncharacteristic irony, "there is no accounting for a sister's taste."

"Then you did not admire Oliver? He is handsome like his brother," said Ella, speaking as one who knew, "but I did not mean to mention them. You will not force it upon me again, Derry? Oh, how I wish you would go back and be happy. There is nothing in the world to keep you here."

"Yes, there is. Didn't I tell Mrs. Martin I had come to spend my wealth? I began this morning at the village shop."

"You always jest when I am in earnest," fretted Ella. "Of course, something different from that keeps you."

"Yes, I have not heard yet—and

shall be a long time before I have heard, I assure you—one thousandth part of what Mrs. Frayd has it on her mind to mention."

"Nothing ever troubles you," said Ella, struggling after a smile. "I remember how father used to say, in old times, that you were as easy as an old shoe."

And was this all that Ella remembered of the brave efforts of those old times?

From Harrack's Beacon Miss Hope drove to the Tower, and again Sarah Eales pleaded to accompany her. Vexed as she was, she kindly gave way as she had done in the morning, but left Sarah in the phaeton outside the Tower when the old butler admitted her. In the hall she found Primrose Basset, sitting deep in thought before the fire in the great open grate, her Skye terrier lying opposite her on the rug, looking unwinkingly up into her face through his silken tresses.

"I don't want to disturb either of you," smiled Ella, deprecating the trouble Miss Basset took to bring another of the heavy old oak chairs up to the hearth, and the consequent unsettling of the dog.

"I like to be disturbed," said Primrose, simply, "and Jess will be the better for a run. Oh, she has gone already! That is right."

"I used to find you always playing," observed Ella, looking vainly for the violin case.

"I have never played since that night."

"I don't wonder," said Miss Hope, gently. In her glance round, she had let her eyes rest for a moment on the door of that room which used to belong to the master, and she locked her fingers together and set her lips, not allowing herself to cry.

"It is hard for you, dear Ella," said Miss Basset, her manner strangely reserved for all its softness. "You should have spared yourself this visit—yet."

"I felt I must come to-day though it is opening an old wound."

"Not an old one."

"No, too new a one indeed to bear a touch. Primrose, I wanted to tell you that my sister Derry has come to Dew-ring. She says she is going to stay and

devote herself to solving the mystery of Miles's death. She can do nothing, of course. What could a girl do? But she persists in opening this wound for me."

Primrose Basset's wan face had brightened at her companion's first words, but now it was paler even than before, and she was so silent that presently Ella went on—"She is coming here, Primrose. She is so bent upon questioning everybody, and she will speak of it to you as she has done to me. It is cruel to you."

"No, why should it be?" cried Primrose, hotly. "I mean—I do not think your sister would ever wish to be cruel."

"No, but she has no right to trouble us all with the painful subject. She should not forget that we have had to live through it. She ought to know that everything that can be done will be done—or has been—by those who were nearest to him."

"But she thinks she is helping, and she knows that we ought none of us to rest until, or rather she feels sure that none of us can rest until the murderer is found."

"Come and stay with me," suggested Ella, ardently, "and you will escape these painful questions, for Mrs. Martin will not have Derry at the Pines."

"No, oh no," was the soft answer. "I must learn to speak of my brother's death. It is time. And I never leave poor grandmother now."

"How good you are to her!" sighed Ella. "And to Oliver, for you never reproach him for not coming to you."

"Oliver will come," said Primrose, in jaded tones; and Ella, moved with compassion to see a curious haunting fear on the pale face, rose to leave.

As Primrose turned, she found that Sarah Eales had come into the hall, and was standing there awaiting her young mistress. "The ponies are restive, Miss Hope," she explained, in her respectful monotonous way, and then stood back for the girls to pass; looking first at Ella with anxious solicitude, then at Primrose with an intent, uneasy suspicion.

PART IV.

CHAPTER I.

It was a February morning, and Derry sat gazing into her fire while she made strenuous efforts to pursue a direct train of thought; to go back step by step over the three weeks of her stay in Dewring, that she might discover to what mistake or ignorance her failure hitherto had been due, and then if possible to map out a more auspicious line of action for the future. But though she resolutely set herself to keep thought to this one track, the veriest trifle would disperse it, and she had still no definite project formed, when at the end of two long hours the silence of her room was broken by the noisy flapping of wings. It was the involuntary memory of the legend she had heard which made her start from her seat in momentary alarm.

"Where's Miles then?"

The sharp question came from under the table, and Derry smiled disdainfully at her own childish fear. "It is you, George, is it?" she said, as she went for a lump of sugar for Ella's parrot. "This is a call I didn't expect, sir; why couldn't you bring your mistress?"

The bird was not to be lured from his retreat, and Derry was still fruitlessly enticing him, when Sarah Eales came hurriedly through the open glass door, calm in her demeanor, though Derry saw that her hand shook when she extended it to catch the parrot.

"Come, George! come, George!" she crooned, as if to a child. "Ella wants you."

But George remained unmoved until by a skillful sloop Sarah captured him. "I won't stay, Miss Derry," she said then, folding her shawl about him and leaving the room. "Miss Ella will be uneasy."

But outside the door, George, having craftily won confidence by his wary quietude, suddenly dived under Sarah's arm, and with a fiendish laugh flew to the top of the old mill, from which unalloyed seclusion he looked down with a solemn pensive rather exasperating to his baffled captor.

"If Ella would not be uneasy," ob-

served Della, regarding the parrot with admiration, "how much better he looks up there than in a room! Leave him, Sarah."

"I must have him," fretted Sarah, pointedly raising her voice when she saw that Mr. Basset was within hearing. "Could you get it down, sir?" nervously accosting him as he stood gazing up at the solemn bird.

"Oh, well, it will do the best for itself, you may depend," he returned, with an indifference Derry thought inexcusable, though she herself had offered similar advice to Sarah. As soon as the woman had unwillingly departed, Steven Basset returned lazily to Derry's side. "The cunning fellow will go into your room again probably, Miss Hep", if he does not fly home. Therefore, as the wind is very cold for you out here, will you ask me in, that I may be able to capture him for you—your sister? If there were any luxuries in my sitting-room," he added, coolly, in her rather dubious pause, "or anything to look at, I would invite you in most humbly. But there is not."

"There is Mrs. Frayd's photograph," corrected Derry, but could not hesitate to lead the way.

Before following her in he took off his hat and hung it on one of the nails among the ivy, and when she half laughingly thought this gave him the air of being at home there, she unwittingly touched the motive that had stirred the lonely and fanciful nature. His gaze wandered round the room as he noted its brightness and warmth; its cozy, untidy, artistic air of homeliness; the bright fire, the open piano, the books lying about, the work and flowers. He felt it all with a keen and glad appreciation which kept him silent, until she (not understanding) feared she was at fault, and hastened to bid him welcome.

"You can not guess what this is to me," he said, drawing his breath as if he drank in the air of the room. "You can not tell the weight of sick weariness that sometimes falls upon me in that parlor of mine, and this, quite lately, was its twin."

"But, Mr. Basset" (for all her debonaire ways, she invariably spoke with shyness of any one's brain-work), "you people your room at your will. If I

had your gift—if I were a writer, I should never find any place bare or lonely, I think."

He only smiled, for he could not tell her that it was its being *her* room that made its charm to him. He thought how all the light and warmth and brightness centered in her, and how it surely would all centre in her in whatever room she might be, however crowded, however brilliant; and from this thought he went on to picture her in a society dress and scene, and without that unsatisfied desire the lovely face wore now. "Surely," he said presently, "you are longing for your familiar dissipations?"

"Naturally," she answered, wondering how soon she might open to him the subject which through that morning—as through so many other days—had harassed her.

"What would you have been doing now—at home?"

"Let me see. To-night I might be at a costume ball, where all are to wear the dress of ancient Greece—whatever shape their noses may be."

"Then you," he mused, with his eyes still on her face, "would have had your hair piled high and tied with three snakes, I suppose. Or would you have chosen the loose knot?"

"Any way, don't you mean that of course I should have looked entrancing?" She asked it with what some men would have called finished coquetry, but he already understood her better.

"What I think signifies nothing. The question is what would not have been thought by those other ancient Greeks. How different this must be for you!"

She noticed the unconscious heaviness in his tone, and spoke with a warmth of which she was not aware. "If I had been in London to-day I should have been at work, hard at work; harder than you will be all day."

"How impossible to picture it! You look so unlike one who works; so like one for whom others would—"

"So indolent as that?" she queried in quick interruption. "You would never think it after you had once seen me plodding away in my great apron."

"And in russet gown?"

She nodded, but when he did not speak, and still stood by the mantel-

piece, looking down upon her, she went on, with a smile, "Now, do you imagine I work in silk brocade with old Meclin hanging about? Mr. Basset," nervously avoiding a pause, "may I ask you a few questions?"

"If I guess their drift aright, no," he said, almost sternly. "Let me have these few minutes for my own. Tell me of yourself. Do not ask about things here; but tell me of that different life of yours in town. This enforced one must be so tedious to you. If it were spring it would be different."

"Then be at ease," she said, lifting the pretty brows. "It is spring, for I found to-day that a brave little crocus has pushed its way through the softening earth."

"It was not spring when you first decided to stay here—so far from the world."

His smile recalled to her that this was her own expression, and she laughed. "You are disrespectful to your village," she said, speaking lightly, because she wished him to understand she would not force upon him yet the subject he avoided. "I wonder whether you appreciate the advantage it has over that village where the girl lived whose mother was so exacting in the matter of her binding her hair. That only seemed asleep or dead when Lubin was away, while this is surely more asleep or dead when Lubin is hanging about."

"Village loafing is wasted on you, Miss Hope. Why, those are the mute inglorious Miltons and Hampdens guiltless of their country's blood. Don't you understand?"

"Now I do," demurely. "By the way, could not something have been done all through the winter evenings to stir them up, or to use the time better? A good penny reading or a concert is amusing, isn't it?"

"Not so amusing as a bad one," said Stevens, dryly. "Still, we might hope. We could have deliciously local touches, and feel quite at home with 'The Sexton,' 'The Gravedigger,' 'The Bell-ringer,' 'The Worker,' not to mention the 'Village Blacksmith'—Harmonious, and otherwise. Let me see" (reflectively), "we have our organist to fall back upon. He had gone nearly all through 'With Verdue Clad' on Sunday before I recog-

nized it, but then I'm not particular about recognizing what he plays—why should I be?"

"Mrs. Thair would sing," said Derry, determined not to smile.

"An unmixed delight, if she would but recollect she has only two stories in her voice, and not climb after attic flats."

"You might read," suggested Derry, naughtily, while she was longing to speak to him about his own writing.

"So I might. You remind me of Mrs. Martin, who is sometimes determined to be gracious to me, and to talk of what I might be supposed to understand. So one evening she cheerfully began, 'Well, and what about books, Mr. Basset? Are there any good ones you have lately read or written?'"

"Mrs. Martin paid me a call yesterday," remarked Derry, presently, glancing up into the rugged face, and wondering whether she ever should be able to ask him under what name he wrote. "As you may probably guess, it was to press my departure. She declares this independent life of mine will utterly destroy all my chances of marriage, and that knowledge pains her deeply, of course, loving me as she does. She says a woman with no property should struggle hard to avert the awful doom of an old maid. So I assured her I had not the faintest desire to be an old maid, much preferring to be young. Indeed, I think that by my own desire I should never go beyond the age of twenty-two."

"And shall you—ever?"

"I must. I've decided, after deeply studying the question, that seven years is as much as a woman can with perfect impunity take off her age."

"You will never be able to do that," he declared, with a flash of real laughter in his melancholy eyes.

"What a sorrowful truth for me to hear, for I sometimes even yet feel almost as young as two and twenty! How young do you occasionally feel?"

"About as young as the everlasting hills. Did Mrs. Martin come only to cheer you in that style?"

"There was one thing more she had to say—that if I did not leave Dewring she should take Ella to town, as she did

not choose to have her darling worried by my eccentricities."

"Why on earth do you stay through it all?"

"You know why, and yet—sometimes I feel that I myself scarcely know why I care so much. Why should it be only I who cares?"

"My opinion is," he observed, unabashed by the wistfulness in her upward glance, "that you revel in this sort of life. You are like that man in the *Illustrator* who recommended to every one the pleasures of meditation, and the charms of the country, and sat all morning in his window at Islington counting the carriages that passed. You may just as well confess that an afternoon call from Mrs. Martin is a delight."

"Without afternoon calls life is empty to me. Can you wonder that I long for that land where it is always afternoon?"

"You find a wide range of subjects opened up by an afternoon call in Dewring?"

"The friendliest," said Derry, in a musing tone, "is of course the weather. To the male population of Dewring I have never spoken of anything else. But among my own sex there are other inferior topics introduced. Mrs. Noakes always goes conscientiously through the details of what she calls her great illness—now in its sixteenth year. I know it all and am hopefully prepared to correct her when she goes wrong, but she never does. But the best of all," with a glance of inimitable drollery, "is to go into the village to Mrs. Botting. She keeps no servant and all morning works like a Briton, but in the afternoon she is in great form. She receives me—I always let myself in at her desire—and sits opposite me in broad, benignant matronhood, with two or three comely chins resting on a tartan bow, and her cap hung with gorgeous creeping plants which take their growth very kindly over her shoulders. While I am there it generally happens that we hear a ring at the front door. She suddenly pauses, and with her head on one side listens for something to follow. Nothing does, and the rap is repeated.

"Oh, dear, dear," she sighs, 'they never will hear that door. Excuse me, one moment, my dear, while I look into the reason,' and so disappears, of course

to rouse her retinue of servants—no one could possibly imagine she went to answer the door. I—I am inexcusable," Derry cried, suddenly lifting her eyes to meet Steven Basset's, as he still stood upon the rug, thoughtfully regarding her. "I go to Mrs. Botting and elsewhere for my own purpose, and my own pleasure, and it is mean beyond words for me to laugh at any one."

"Never mind," he answered placidly. "Every one—I mean the few folks that are here—seem ready enough to make a friend of you."

"Then that," declared the girl, quite calm again though a little blush burned in her cheeks, "must be because I do nothing but listen, so no one has any chance of judging whether I've feelings or failings, or virtues or vices. Indeed, I often feel quite sure I haven't. Oh, I forgot"—as Steven Basset's eyes gathered a quiet amusement in their depths, "I forgot Mrs. Martin, of whom I have made an enemy, and you, to whom I have talked immoderately. I wonder why I speak to you so unguardedly of your neighbors"—with a smile meant to be supremely careless, but which was rather wistful.

"You need not be afraid," he said, composedly. "'Twas of us Dryden said We neither believe what either can say, and neither believing we neither betray."

Her eyes darkened with anger while, he quoted the lines, but scarcely a minute afterward they were filled with entreaty.

"You know why I talk with you—with every one, Mr. Basset. You know quite well what I want, and yet you—Miles Basset's cousin—laugh at all my efforts."

"Heaven forbid! Without such efforts how could we lift ourselves above the commonplace of our existence?"

For the last few minutes he had been standing where he could see out into the mill enclosure, and now he abruptly made a little remark about looking after the parrot and walked away. Scarcely had Derry noticed his unconcerned departure when her sister entered, asking, in her gentle way, why Steven Basset had so suddenly left the room.

"I suppose the time had come for him to lose all sense of the blessing of my society. Are you anxious about your

parrot, Sambo?" scrutinizing the pretty face.

"I was, and so I followed Sarah. But I am not anxious now. I found him under the hedge in the lane. He is dead."

"Oh, Sambo, how sad for you! Are you to lose ever, thing that loves you, my dear?"

"It can not be helped. He must have died sometime," said the girl, wearily.

"But how could it have happened?"

"There were some tools there, and an old garden line, and he was strangled in it."

"What an extraordinary clumsiness! Why, Ella, the poor fellow must have been bent on self-destruction to accomplish such a thing, musn't he?"

"It is a fatal place for anything that is fond of me, Derry. I wish you would go away."

"Not yet," returned the elder sister, quietly, for she had grown accustomed to the mournfully reiterated request.

"This sort of life is so dull for you."

"Not a bit," said Derry, cheerfully.

"On the contrary, it is what Amos Pickett calls jo'ful. Amos" (as she looked away from her sister's face into the fire, and resumed the careless, quiet tone) "is not a remarkably jo'ful man himself, but still he is the occasion of jo' in others. This morning I told him, just to ease my mind, that his little girl seemed to be occasionally a little bit obstinate. 'She hadn't ought to be,' he said, without committing himself to an opinion, 'for I often enough make her shoulders black and blue with the strap.' Don't you feel, Sambo, that she must have had a jo'ful childhood?"

"Derry, how idiotic you are when you want to turn aside a conversation. What are you staying for?"

"I have serious thoughts of sculping Amos. Or, what if I tried—Steven Basset? That long nose of his would look well in marble. But never mind my motive, dear. Will you stay with me to-day?"

"I can not. I have only come to tell you that I shall be at the foot of your lanc in the brougham to-morrow evening, at a quarter to seven exactly, and shall wait for you if you are not there. Mr. Carfe told me you had promised to dine at the vicarage with me, and I was

so glad. He knows aunt never asks you to the Pines, and he was sure it would be nice for both of us, and for themselves," he said. Of course he has no party. You will be punctual, won't you? And, Derry"—rather hesitatingly, "you have an appropriate dress with you, I suppose. There's no need of much, of course, and I will secrete you some flowers."

"No, don't, Ella. I wouldn't wear them. But I won't disgrace you, dear. Do you remember saying I did once when I wore the blossom of a vegetable marrow in my black net? Oh, dear, dear, what trouble I had to hide the clumsy stalk! And do you remember how Pat thought it was a magnificent foreign flower and was anxious to know who had brought me such an expensive gift?"

"You have improved since then, Derry," with loving scrutiny.

"What a consolation! Do you really mean to say that at last the bloom of my ugliness is wearing off?" Derry quoted, with a whimsical grimace.

"I only asked you about having a dress here," Ella explained, "because I noticed you have such a small box."

"I suppose it wouldn't hold your gloves alone, Sambo?"

"Nonsense. But you and father were always two economical ones," smiled the younger girl.

"Yes. Pat and I always had that specialty. When we were sketching in Devonshire last summer, I so well remember one day when we found an overcharge in our bill. It was a matter of ninepence or so, but our economical minds could not sit down meekly under such unrighteous dealing, and we went laboriously into the matter, and had it rectified before we could proceed on our way. True, we lost the train and had to post the twenty-one miles at one and sixpence a mile, and gave the driver five shillings to drink our health, but then we had *not* been overcharged! I wonder," with both her hands on her sister's shoulders, "how I can jest to you, Sambo, when you look so reproachful. Oh, don't go yet. It is such a treat to have you with me."

Absently, Ella dropped the gloves she was about to put on, and sat down to the piano. Perhaps remembering the time when Derry used to bribe her to play to

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her, while she sat and dreamed, and wishing to recall these times to her sister, she softly played some old familiar airs. But presently, still without opening any music, she fell dreamily into an air Derry did not recognize. Certainly, at the very first she fancied Ella had been going to play from Schubert's Unfinished Symphony, but she soon found she was wrong. This was new to her, distinctly new, a sadly haunting melody. Again and again Ella played it, sitting lost in thought, it seemed, and even when at last she ceased she did not leave her seat or turn. Coming up to her side, Derry kissed her, but said nothing, feeling pitifully that Ella must be suffering.

The sisters walked together down the lane to where Mrs. Martin's victoria was being driven slowly up and down waiting for Miss Hope, and a glimpse of the dead parrot lying at the coachman's feet made Derry's farewell to her sister the more loving in its compassion.

"Another caller?"

The unexpected question roused Derry from thought as the mill gate was opened for her on her return by Mr. Basset. As she lifted her eyes straight to his, a curious feeling stirred her heart to its depths, a passionate longing that all the world should know how impossible it was that this man could be guilty of any real ill feeling toward his murdered cousin. She never forgot with what wild strength it surged within her at that moment, when so unexpectedly her gaze met his.

"I did not see you, Mr. Basset. My sister came to seek her bird. She found it dead."

Steven did not answer, and it struck her that he was looking ridiculously grave, but even stern, over this intelligence. "She feels it very much," Derry added, scarcely knowing why.

"I have no doubt. Excuse that aberration of intellect, Miss Hope, but you came upon me just as I was trying to recall a verse. What is it?"

"Tears from Pluto's dark dominion
Can not now thy husband keep;
If they could 'tis my opinion
Those bright eyes would cease to weep."

"Of whom were you thinking then," inquired Derry, coldly, "while I was speaking of my sister?"

"Who is to know? It must have

been of Mrs. Frayd. She has been slinging on my solitude, because she knows yours was being shone upon, and she likes things fair between her lodgers. As usual, she expanded into interesting details," he went on, merely it seemed for the sake of speaking, as he and Derry walked up to the house together. "She related how she had cured her late lamented and intemperate husband of frequenting the public-house in Dewring. She conceived the wonderful plan of going with or following him there, and calling for a glass of ale every time he ordered one for himself, and drinking it convivially with him too—which he not unnaturally hated to see. At first he expected her soon to tire of this, but he little knew her if he did. Though she hated it, she assures me that she stood it better than he did, and would have stuck to it. His anger, disgust and shame had no result upon her determination, and he found that the only way to keep her at home would be to stay himself. So he stayed, and from that time, as she puts it, they were a 'appy pair. I ventured to hope that she and Amos would make another 'appy pair. Then I confess I have often felt curious as to the style of Mr. Pickett's wooing, having an idea that lovers' rhapsodies would not be much in his line, but I had scarcely prepared myself to hear that Amos never goes so far—so near, I mean—as kissing."

"What nonsense you talk to me!" exclaimed Derry, disdainfully, though laughing against her will. "You are afraid of allowing yourself to believe that any woman has common sense."

"I am afraid of worse than that," he answered, tranquilly. "I'm afraid of not minding anything about it. I'm afraid of falling so low as to say,

"Whatsoever faults I see,
In my soul still bideeth she."

"Mr. Basset," said Derry, apparently too deep in thought to have followed him, "when you joined me I was feeling acutely how I have failed in what I meant to do. I suppose in this sort of thing girls are failures! I—wish you would help me."

Her voice trembled a little, but she had given form at last to her request, and heaved a long sigh of relief.

"No," he answered, tersely.

"But," she cried, "it is most unfair and unkind of you to refuse just because—"

"Because what?"

"Because you hated Miles."

"Would it prove I had not hated him if I tried to find his murderer?"

"I—think so."

"No; you do *not* think so any more than I do, so do not ask me."

"And now that they have a fresh clew," pursued Derry, with sturdy resolution, "it seems so dreadful for nobody belonging to him to follow it up."

"What fresh clew?"

"Oh," she said, looking quickly round at his change of tone, for she began to think she had been utterly mistaken in fancying him negligent about this crime "you know. Surely you have heard that a woman was seen in the park—that night. The man who saw her was in Ireland, and he has come across to tell."

"In Ireland when he saw her?"

The tone had its old careless composure again, and Derry's breath quickened, for it was disappointing to have to go back to her old belief in his indifference. "It seems so dreadful to me," she sighed, "that nobody cares."

"I care. What have you found out—yourself, I mean."

"Scarcely anything. Miles had been writing a letter that evening—was writing it when his sister went into his room—and no letter was found afterward."

"Did Primrose tell you this?"

"She had not meant to. She only let it out through things I said."

"Was the letter to a woman?"

"Primrose thinks so."

"Then it would be to your sister, as Miles was her lover. There could have been no other woman for him to write to."

"No," said Derry, while she wondered why his lips were so firmly set. "Was any woman jealous of my sister, Mr. Basset?"

"None, I can swear."

"Yet that woman was seen going into the park. A tall woman."

"Miles never did admire tall women," declared Steven, with quiet absurdity.

"You will not help then, though your help is so much wanted?" asked Derry, with intense earnestness, for she felt

that this must be her final appeal to him. "Old Mrs. Basset, the only one who has done anything definite, like offering a reward and employing private detectives, never speaks now."

"Then *she* does not ask for my help."

"And Primrose seems broken-hearted with this double shadow upon her; one brother killed so cruelly and mysteriously, and one keeping away from her in her sorrow. So she shrinks from any allusion to that night."

"Then *she* does not require my help," interposed Steven, with an intent but unnoticed scrutiny of the girl's face.

"And my sister can not bear the crime mentioned in her presence."

"Then *she* does not seek my help. No one does, you see, Miss Hope."

"I do."

"You? Oh, you have nothing to do with it."

"It is cruel of you to say so," she cried, "and I should think—any one would think *you* would wish it discovered."

"Then any one would be wrong. I'm content to let things be. You would not wish to be cured to-day of your disease if you are to die to-morrow of your physician—I see you don't read *Mat Prior*. All the better. If I help, it will not be because I care to, but because you wish it. Let me think it over."

"Whatsoever faults I see—"

no, that is not what I want to think over. Give me a little time."

As he spoke, he raised his hat and stood aside, while she, looking quite determined not to comprehend him, went into her own room.

CHAPTER II.

No evening Derry Hope had ever spent had been like this one in the pleasant, homely, country vicarage. Yet it was only a quiet few hours, passed with her sister and the vicar and his wife and Steven Basset, for to her great surprise, when she and Ella entered the vicarage drawing-room, and the gentleman who had been standing on the rug talking with Mr. and Mrs. Carfe turned to greet them, she saw it was Mr. Basset.

Many and many a time was she to re-

call that evening, marveling over its intense enjoyment to her, and wondering wherein its perfect happiness could have lain. Ella was rather quiet, but all excused her, and spared her, and did their best to entertain her, while Derry fancied that perhaps she also ought to have felt a little low-spirited. But then she could not; the melancholy feeling would not come.

To Steven Basset, too, this evening was different from all others he had known. The rooms seemed to him to hold Derry only, while his intercourse with her was different utterly from their intercourse at Harrack's. Her gentle, gracious presence had an unutterable charm for him, perhaps the greater from his knowledge of her in so many different moods. He had felt her individuality, but not this graceful, self-forgetting sympathy; he had known her to be brightly piquant, but without this pretty easy entering into other lives and interests; he had known her quick and intelligent, but without this natural way of showing deeper knowledge and the originality of fresher thought. There was no forced jesting between them now, no careless commonplaces, no half-concealed defiance, or inclination to contradict; it was so different, yet so simple, and so exactly what he felt he should have expected. Through every tingling nerve Steven felt the wonderful charm of her presence, and dreaded losing it.

He started directly Miss Hope's carriage was ordered, intending to reach the foot of Harrack's lane before it stop there, and walk up with Derry. But Ella detained the brougham so long that, walking in deep thought, he at last forgot that he was listening for the sound of wheels, and even turned into, and climbed the lane without remembering. This was such a lovely night for the thoughtful solitary walk! The stars shone divinely in the wide arch of heaven, and the bare trees were far more beautiful against the grave and tender blue than they could have looked in all their summer loveliness. If Derry's thoughts were new and sweet that evening, Steven's were more deeply so, though less hard to interpret. No doubt disturbed them; no unsettling question. While hers were happy in a vague way which she even did not wish

to analyze, his were, in their gladness, straight and clear, and confident. It was no wonder that with such thoughts as his, the deep, calm beauty of the night crept into Steven's heart and satisfied it. No wonder that in such perfect peace, no restless, selfish thoughts and mean desires could live. And so he crowned this happiest evening which his life had ever known, with this night of perfect, unuttered, and scarce comprehended surrender.

Surely in the lives of most of us there will come one such hour as this, when the craving within us is for something higher than we have ever known; when the hungering impulse is for a noble deed; when thought grows pure and rises high; and when the inevitable pain within us instead of conquering us, is conquered; as Steven slowly trod the familiar way, his eyes among the stars, his thoughts were no desecration of the peace, or of the beauty, or the glory of this most perfect night.

Only the action of opening the gate at the top of the lane roused him to the consciousness of having gone beyond where he meant to await Derry. Instantly he turned to retrace his steps, and as he did so, saw that she was close to the gate. He saw too, that in spite of the calm tranquillity of the night unfolding her, her face was puzzled and disturbed.

"Why have you changed?" he asked, scarce aware of the great earnestness with which he spoke, raising his hat as she passed him through the gate he held. "What anxiety has been forced upon you on your way?"

"None," she answered, in prompt loyalty to her sister. "But the old one is never long forgotten."

"I wish it could be forgotten so long as to be forgotten forever."

"It can not," she said, pausing just within the gate, as if she dreaded stepping into the long heavy shadow of the beacon. "No one will help me, no one wishes me to be helped, and all my days are useless."

As she stood, with the perplexity still within her lovely eyes, Steven looked longingly down upon her, then he lifted his gaze far into the wide deep blue of heaven, understanding now what

new divine emotion stirred him, and—to what.

"You have asked for my help," he gently said, "and I refused it. Since then they have—we have heard of something which seems to make a discovery possible. Do you still wish my help?"

"You know I do," she answered, looking straight into his eyes. And afterward, she remembered how there was not then—as there never had been—the very faintest shadow of suspicion, in spite of all that had been told her of his ill-will toward his dead cousin.

"Then it is yours—for all that I have, or am, is yours," he said, in quite earnestness. Then he continued, as if there could be no answer to this, "But before I strive to discover anything for you—or for myself—let me be quite certain that you wish it."

"I always have," she answered, simply. "You know it."

"I know it," he said, his words all very calm in the calmness of the night. "But I do not understand it. I do not think you even do yourself. Would you try to tell me it is fate? I would like you to consider. Suppose I found that that crime had been committed by one I was fond of, should you not be sorry you had given me that pain?"

"But that is not possible."

"Oh, no. In any case don't look so pained. I was only speaking at random, and I suppose you fancied I was thinking of my cousins. Did you? No, I only put a supposititious case. We will take just one other. Suppose—if you can suppose such a thing—that you loved me" (the little pause he made was scarcely perceptible) "and then learned that I had done it—Ah! you start. That shows me that such a possibility gives you no pleasure. Well, now will you not withdraw your command to me to hunt up this villain?"

"Why, I wish it all the more," she said, frankly smiling as if she had never given that horrified start. "It is because none of these have done it, that the vague, uncleared suspicion is so cruel."

"Would you rather find it had been done by one you hate than one you love?"

"It could not be that last," she answered, simply.

"I will promise you my help," he said, in quite steadfastness, "and now will you, in your turn, make me a promise? Never to let this night quite fade from your memory, and when you remember, to believe that no man you will ever know can give you more than I have given; not from to-night only—do not think so—but from the first time you spoke to me, and on through the happy days that end with this blessed hour. There, I have done wrong to utter even these few words that seem so cold to me, for they have pained you, as I see. You will forgive me? They shall be my last, for there will come a time when you will be grateful to me for silence now."

The hand he laid on hers was firm as ever, and the low, clear tones never faltered; yet when her eyes were drawn to his in that long, yearning, sorrowful gaze, a strange thought flashed across her—that he would look so when he was dying.

"You forgive me," he said again, not as a question now, but with quiet assurance, and lifting the yielding hand that lay in his. He held it against his breast.

Ah! with a quick, indrawn breath; "it is agony to me to hear you sigh."

"Did I sigh?" she asked, and even in the moonlight he could see her grow paler. "How could I sigh when I am happy?"

His face had not been sad, and yet the change that came over it was wonderful to see. Gently he dropped her hand, stood bare-headed for a little space, then turned from her as if afraid to break the spell by another word or glance.

It was more than an hour afterward when he went slowly in, not using his latch-key for his own door, but going thoughtfully round to Mrs. Frayd's entrance, that she might know both her lodgers were within. On the kitchen stairs, in one of her most advanced and torpid sulks, sat Penkus, huddled in a great black shawl, her shrewd little wizen face glowering over it, while Steven stood patiently to hear Mrs. Frayd's lengthened recital of the child's delinquencies. Then he stooped, took

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the little creature in his arms and carried her upstairs.

He was out of sight of Mrs. Frayd, when he put her down at the top, and before he turned away, he took the clean little sullen face in his hands, and, in spite of its baleful expression, kissed it.

"One must," he smiled to his own sad heart, "kiss some one."

PART V.

CHAPTER I.

On the night following the quiet little dinner-party at the Dewring Vicarage, the billiard-room at the Atheling Arms (the cozy old hotel in the centre of the Thawton High Street) had its usual complement of players, and, it being a cold wet night, rather more than its usual complement of idlers. On the bare wall opposite the fire-place a printed bill was nailed, and in a thick, unsteady voice Steven Basset read the first two lines aloud—

MURDER.

£200 Reward.

"Two hundred pounds reward," he repeated. "That would pay a man's losses—" Halting suddenly, he turned half round to a very young man near him, who had been speaking. "Best stroke in the room, are you, Blaker? Let's see. I'm the worst, and I will give you fifty. Are you on?"

"Oh, I'm game; but I've a consideration for you; and I advise you not to venture to-night," Blaker said, in a patronizing tone, which as he had never before ventured to assume it to Steven Basset, struck agreeably on his own ear.

"This is the very night, my son," returned Steven. "After another bottle or two, I'm your man. Something has been the matter with my cue to-night, but I'm all right now. Prudden, if you like, I'll give you the eighty you once offered me, and a hundred to the back that, and yet beat you."

An irrepressible laugh ran round the

room, for Steven Basset was known to be no billiard-player—even in his own conceit—and was challenging (and offering grace to) the crack player of the county.

"Don't be a fool," muttered Prudden, without joining in the laugh.

"Basset's head wasn't moulded for a champagne-cup, eh, Glenmurray?" one of the men near the door asked a gentleman who entered that moment—a middle aged artillery officer of quiet bearing, who paused, looking gravely into the room.

"Do you mean to fell me," he inquired, in a pained, low voice, "that Basset is—has been drinking?"

"Self-evident," laughed the other, "but there's nothing to look so glum about in a fellow getting screwed, however unusual with him."

"This is a hateful sight to me," said Capt. Glenmurray, still gazing incredulously across at Steven, and still hesitating to advance.

"Why, man alive, you've seen plenty of fellows more thoroughly drunk than Basset is!"

"But none so thoroughly changed. As I say, this is a hateful sight to me. What can have possessed him?"

"Varied potations have possessed him, there's no doubt about that. I bet he will have fallen asleep within half an hour. He's nearly asleep now for all his restless swagger."

Before the speech was at an end his listener had passed on.

"Should you have guessed Glenmurray was such a soft old chap?"

"Never. He looks hard enough—the grizzly bear."

Steven Basset was feebly balancing his cue, when Glenmurray came up and spoke to him. As he listened, he waved it in the air, seating himself awkwardly upon the table. "I say, Blaker," he shouted, almost before Glenmurray was silent, "could you wait for our game till I've fought Glenmurray for preaching soberness to me? To me—good Lord!"

"To night," observed Glenmurray, coldly, "I would not even fight you, Basset."

"And to-morrow you may wish you had fought me while you could."

"Possibly."

"Then shall we strike out?"

"I am leaving," said Glenmurray, in a grave and anxious way. "Let me drive you, Basset, as far as my way lies with yours."

"No, thanks. I have a bed here for to-night—when I'm ready for it—but I have to lick all these fellows first."

Though Capt. Glenmurray had said he was leaving, he stayed on as if he could not bear to leave the man he cared for in this unusual state.

"I declare, I never before saw Basset in the slightest degree affected by wine—did you, Glenmurray?" inquired a solemn-looking young fellow, who had been for a long time silently observant. "I always considered him so mentally robust. It won't do to feel sure of any one. Why, he must have been at it half the day, more or less, I should think."

"I say, Basset," said Blaker, his young excited voice filling the room, "I went up to Harrack's this afternoon to see you, and they told me you hadn't been seen since early morning. Where have you been all day?"

"I forget," said Steven, stupidly.

"Touch up your memory, man, we want to hear about this mysterious woman who was seen to enter your cousin's park just before he was murdered. I heard that poor old Mrs. Basset sent to summon you to the Tower and you were not to be found."

"I'll go now," said Steven, coming up to the fire with spasmodic liveliness. Then he leaned against the mantel piece, his drowsy eyes fixed upon the bill opposite.

"That's right. Come along," put in Glenmurray, desirous on any pretext of getting his friend away from there.

"No, I won't go to-night. Let a man rest in peace, Glenmurray—is it Glenmurray, though? Which of you is it? How confoundedly alike you all look to-night! I'll tell you, fellows, what it is. I esteem my great-aunt immensely, but I don't—when I can help it—run the blockade of her keen old eyes. You wouldn't if you knew as much as I know about that night. Why, sometimes I feel as if she looked right through me, and saw that I could explain everything about that murder. She's paying away her money to those idiotic criminal in-

vestigators, as she calls 'em, to find out what there's no man in the world knows about except myself."

"You know?"

Only one man gave voice to the exclamation; but it interpreted every man's astonishment. Steven made a change in his attitude so unsteadily as to reel against the man next him, then he pushed his hands deep into his pockets as if by so doing he could steady himself.

"MURDER. Two hundred pounds reward," he read aloud again from the paper opposite. "Poor old lady! I believe she would positively enjoy paying that two hundred pounds. Well, would any of you like to earn it? Wouldn't it cover your losses at pool, Charsley? Speak the word, and you shall have the opportunity of pocketing it."

"Basset!" said Glenmurray, most earnestly; but Steven seemed to be incapable of listening now.

"Champagne," he ordered in loud, indistinct tones. "Say half a dozen more, as a wind up. Don't look like a martyr, Glenmurray! You can't be sober if you object to that. Have you lost, too? Fie, sonny! Will two hundred pounds pay the piper? You shall have first claim for auld acquaintance' sake. Tomorrow you go and claim the dear old dame's two hundred pounds. I'll wager," his voice was husky, and his words seemed to jostle each other; but they were perfectly intelligible to all in the room, "it will do you as good service as any of the other fellows. Take it. I don't care a rap. I ran the risk with my eyes open, and you may be sure I shall die game. What amuses me is that nobody else's eyes were open. Such fools the detectives sent down here must be, for I'll swear there's no man who hated Miles as I did, and no man but myself could have used his own dagger so skillfully. Couldn't they see that a friend must have done it? That whoever stabbed him must have been by his side and trusted by him? That dagger always lay on his table, and it was a natural thing to take it up, being beside him there, by any one trusted. What fools never to see that the man who did it must have been utterly unsuspected by Miles."

"You sleep here, do you, Basset?" asked Capt. Glenmurray, in a changed voice, laying his hand heavily now on Steven's shoulder.

"I don't go home till morning," shouted Steven. "Now then, Prudden, why don't you open the champagne? As this will be my last night of liberty, I must make the most of it. We don't get fix in prison, do we, Glenmurray? What! Have you drunk it all up, you fiend? He always was a rare old toper, wasn't he, Charsloy? Poor Glenmurray! Poor old chap! When did he go away? He's in a hurry for that two hundred pounds."

Capt. Glenmurray's hand, heavy yet tremulous, was still on Steven's shoulder while he asked this question, and one or two of the men laughed. "Do you stay in this hotel to-night, Steven?" he asked again, the austerity of the question softened a little by the use of the Christian name.

"Yes, Captain Glenmurray," said a by-stander when Steven kept sullen silence, "I know that Mr. Basset has bespoken a room here."

"Come, Basset," said Glenmurray, taking the young man's arm, "I, too, stay here to-night, so we may as well retire."

Steven began to smile round on the assembled company with an amiable stupidity not unusual with inebriated men, but an instant afterward he straightened his features into preternatural solemnity and left the room with an appearance of doing so of his own accord, and not at all of needing the support of his friend's arm.

It was significant of the esteem in which Steven Basset had hitherto been held, that among the men left behind in the billiard-room those who knew him said no word of this terrible revelation of his, and almost immediately dispersed. Among the few who remained one man, in a hard, authoritative way, spoke out his mind: "We should all be criminals too, if we allowed this disclosure to pass unnoticed, or the man to evade the law any longer."

"We shall not assuredly, Denyer," said another, "but for this night he is incapable of action, and to-morrow morning the news will be all over Thawton."

"Still I think the police ought to be told to watch this house."

"Scarcely necessary to-night, as Glenmurray is with Basset. I don't suppose he will to-morrow be aware of what he has divulged to-night, and he will be as safe here as in jail."

"I shall see to that," asserted Denyer, harshly, "if no one else does. Not that I'm snob enough to claim the reward, but I'll see justice done if only for the sake of Miles Basset's old grandmother."

"Or sister, say," was the retort with a laugh that was a sneer.

Capt. Glenmurray was reading his paper in the coffee-room of the Atheling Arms next morning, waiting breakfast for Steven Basset, when a well dressed, middle-aged man entered and ordered breakfast for himself at the adjoining table. Glenmurray did not notice him, being to all appearance engrossed in his newspaper, but any one who had known the officer well, would have detected that even if he read at all, his mind did not follow what he read.

"Shall I send up to Mr. Basset's room, sir?" inquired the waiter, with a meaning glance at the clock, for already the breakfast was an hour and a half behind time.

"Do," said Captain Glenmurray, without looking up from his "Times." It was not many minutes before the man returned to say Mr. Basset's room was empty. The captain looked sharply up with a suspicious, penetrating glance, but his neighbor went on cutting his toast into fingers.

"Some lazy chambermaid has told you that lie. Mr. Basset is not likely to forget an appointment with me."

"Nor usually, sir," the waiter allowed, with strict regard to justice, "But do you consider Mr. Basset to have been quite as usual last night, sir?"

"Folly about his having gone!" reiterated the captain, showing little variety of language in his impatience. "An idiot of a chambermaid has been at the wrong door. Go yourself."

On the man's departure, Captain Glenmurray's neighbor, using his *serviette* slowly, glanced across and saw that the officer was preoccupied and ill at ease; then he looked from the window. Yes, it was all right. A little way up the dull High Street a young man was

lounging on the step of the tailor's shop, his attitude indolent but his eyes alert as he talked with the master tailor himself, who occupied the greater part of every working-day on his own door-step. Lower down the street a laboring-man stood at the bar entrance to a little old-fashioned public house, whistling, with his hands in his pockets. Yes, it was all right; Mr. Basset could not have passed either way unfollowed, even if the older detective within could have been so overacting his part as to have failed to cover his escape.

"It's quite true, sir," affirmed the waiter, returning with a fussy air. "Mr. Basset must have left before any of us were down."

"Then are your doors on the latch all night?"

"No, sir. It's my work to unbolt and unchain the 'all door, but I so often find the master's been before me and done it 'imself, that I take no notice when I don't find it fast, like I did this morning."

"At what time?"

"Just before six. We're always open by six, because gentlemen often drive in for the 6:45 up, and like a cup of coffee or anything, or they'll leave their 'orses 'ere if they're coming back. Yes, we're always open and busy by six."

"Then Mr. Basset must have left before that hour?"

"Not a doubt of it, sir. And one can't tell how long before that hour. He could not have left after without being seen by some of us."

The quiet-mannered man at the second table had risen, and buttoning his coat as he went, nodded to the waiter (for he had a running account at the Atheling Arms) and left the coffee-room.

"Call out my man, and dog-cart," said Captain Glenmurray, "and bring me some coffee—no, tea, and anything you have ready. Don't keep me a minute."

"Captain Glenmurray"—Mr. Beves, the proprietor of the Atheling Arms, had come up the captain's table to address him—"I regret exceedingly that this has occurred here and just at this juncture. Mr. Basset appears to have been in a state of intoxication last night, and to have made a very startling announce-

ment. This extraordinary departure—I may even call it escape—will confirm this into confession."

"Excuse me, Beves, I am in great haste. I've only two minutes to breakfast in, having an appointment. The ravings of a drunken man never *did* have any meaning in my ears."

"But, sir, so many circumstances that were mysterious about this murder seem explained, as it were, by this."

"I really am sick of the very mention of that affair at the Tower. Kindly hurry round my man, will you?"

"That gentleman who breakfasted near you," said Mr. Beves, in a lower key, before he departed, "is from Scotland Yard, Captain Glenmurray, and he has ordered a conveyance for Harrack's Beacon. They tell me, too, that my house has been watched since day-break."

"And I don't suppose you mind a bit about that," rejoined Glenmurray, carelessly. "No murderer would choose your respectable hotel for a hiding-place."

"I believe you're right, captain," said the landlord, with a lively burst of confidence. But he won no further remark.

Captain Glenmurray drove down the High Street at a leisurely pace, but as soon as the little town was left behind, he cut his fresh young thorough-bred, and the high, light dog-cart rolled fleetly along the level road to Dewring. Yet when it turned in to the ascent to Harrack's, the gentleman from Scotland Yard was not a mile behind it. Up the steep, rugged lane, Glenmurray did not spare his horse, but before reaching the gate he stopped.

"I will walk from here, James," he said. "Draw up the cart across the lane, and if any one drives up behind, take as much time as you can in giving him room to pass."

Two minutes later Captain Glenmurray was standing in Steven Basset's sitting room, listening blankly to Mrs. Frayd's announcement that Mr. Basset had slept last night at Harrack's as usual, coming in late with his latch-key. That he had gone out that morning at eight o'clock to bathe as he very often did, though warned by her that February was not a wholesome bathing month, especially this being an extra dull and dark morning, but he was

always fond of it, and very strong, and after all he only took the rapid swim when it was cold. That he had ordered breakfast at half-past nine, and that her only surprise was his not having returned to it now at half-past eleven.

"You are quite certain you are not mistaken?" interrogated Glenmurray, with a suspicious scrutiny of the woman's bland countenance.

"And in what could I be mistaken, sir?" she inquired, fluently aggrieved. "There's his bedroom just as he left it for you to see if you like, and he asked for a bathing-towel, and slung it over his shoulder, and he called Fitz, who always goes with him and watches his things. And he gave me his watch and chain to take care of, as he always does when he bathes, and just as he went whistling off with the towel and the dog, sir, Amos came up—my man, you see, and as useful as two or three younger ones—and seeing the towel, warned Mr. Basset against bathing, as there was a nasty cold nip in the air, and the water would be bad for any one. But he only laughed, and said he should not drown till his time came, which sort of speech, sir, always makes me sick with fear, remembering how my own father, before he was thrown out of his gig and killed, had joked to my step-mother in a similar—"

"That reckless way wasn't like Mr. Basset. I suppose you saw he was not quite as usual?"

"That's just it, sir," with a fresh and lively start, "and I should have known even if he hadn't told me, which he did, being always confident in me, and knowing I don't let things out. 'Mrs. Frayd,' he said, 'I took too much champagne last night—he was away all day—' and when I came home I couldn't sleep, but a swim will put me all right again."

"Where does Mr. Basset generally bathe?" interposed Captain Glenmurray.

"Well, I think, sir, Amos would explain the spot better than I can, though if you'll go straight down to the beach through Katchell's farm, you can't miss the place, and you'll see Amos. It isn't on the flat, but quite a mile further, where the bank's high, and—"

"Can the man you call Amos come with me?" queried the officer, hastily.

"I'm very sorry, sir, but I sent him after Mr. Basset half an hour ago. Really I was so nervous, and his breakfast spoiled. I never before knew him to order a meal for a certain time and not be in two hours after—and more now. And as I said, it is not bathing weather, lest any one might be seeking their death through cramp."

"Through Katchell's farm, you say? I suppose I can not miss. Thanks," cried Glenmurray, and turned abruptly away.

The gentleman whose profession was criminal investigation, reached Harrack's just as Captain Glenmurray left it, but before he followed down to the shore, primed with the same instructions about going through Katchell's, and looking for Amos, his plan was to leave behind him at Harrack's the man who had been with him in the tax-cart.

"May I have your carriage, Mrs. Frayd?" he asked, suavely. "I will put the pony in myself if you will hire it me—quite on your own terms. My horse has fallen lame, and I must leave it here, if you please. But don't you be nervous, for I will leave the man with it."

"Mrs. Frayd," broke in a young voice behind, while a girl who had been coming down the staircase, as the man spoke, paused at the foot, "do not forget that I want the cart to-day. You said your lodgers had always the first claim."

"Indeed, yes, Miss 'Ope," cried the woman, visibly relieved to have this point settled for her, as she hated to send out her pony in Amos's absence. "It is engaged" (addressing the detective) "for the young lady who has my apartments. She's only waiting my man's return as she enjoys his driving, any my pony doesn't care for a strange hand, and always knows, even if you don't let him hear your voice."

The detective turned away with a few vaguely polite remarks, yet angry with the woman for having lost him those few minutes.

"I had seen from my window that his horse was not lame at all," explained Derry, when Mrs. Frayd came to unburden her mind, "and it was the falsehood that roused my suspicion. If he could

not give a truth 'n' reason why he wanted the pony, why should he have it?"

"And, Miss 'Ope," gasped her landlady, "there he goes driving off, and his horse is no more lamethan—you are. And he's left his man prowling here, and us only women!"

"When Amos comes in, of course I must have a drive, so you will let me know," said Derry, and began at once to write a letter so that Mrs. Frayd had no opening for further discourse. Yet the letter must have been very unimportant, for not three lines had been written when, at two o'clock, she had grown so unaccountably nervous, though yet unwilling to acknowledge it even to herself, that she slipped out of the house and went to the mill-gate. From there she could see Mrs. Frayd talking excitedly up to Captain Glenmurray in his dog-cart, and feeling still more uneasy she re-entered her room, and waited until across the mill-yard she caught sight of Amos on his way to the stable. She ran out to him, grateful for the opportunity. "I will have the carriage after dinner, Amos. Never mind it now," she said, relieved even to hear her own voice. "You have been away all morning, so you must want your dinner. Did that man find Mr. Basset?"

"No, miss. Nobody won't ever find Mas'er Basset agin."

"What—do you mean?"

"He wur took with cramp in the water, miss, and drowned."

"You are—who told you that?"

"I ain't no need to depend on what any folk tell me," complained Amos, gloomily. "I know. There was his clo's laid in that holler on the shingle, and Fitz was a sittin' on 'em, gardin' 'em, and awaitin' for his mas'er as'll never come back no more."

"Amos, are you mad?" cried the girl, her tones rising with such agony that the dense old man took it for crossness, and turned sulkily away.

"Then you may ask Mrs. Frayd. She ain't mad."

"Nol no! I won't ask Mrs. Frayd. You tell me. I am sorry I vexed you, Amos, very sorry," the girl said, with generous compunction. "Who was there?"

"Cap'n Glenmurray wur there, and the gent that had that old black cob of

Beeves's, and Mas'er Katchell come down from his farm, but there warn't no bein' onsartin' 'bout it, with his tow'l there, and Fitz a-sittin' on 'his clo's, the very clo's he had on when he went down this mornin', when I towld 'im it ud be his death—and it wur! That theer strange gent he made out as if Mas'er Basset had carried other clo's when he went to bathe, and I said, 'No,' and shouted 'No' at him, but he didn't take no heed, nor seem to keer, till Katchell said as 'ow he' met Mas'er Basset in his lane, a-singin' along to bathe, with his dog and his tow'l, and hadn't carried nothin' else. So then he didn't ask no more."

"And—tell me more. What did they say then?"

"Cap'n Glenmurray he said as 'ow 'twur cramp, and no wonder, ses he, on such a mornin', and that he mun have sunk. Yes—yes—yes, sure."

The old man's wizen face wrinkled suspiciously as he looked sharply into the girl's beautiful eyes.

"I know'd you'd keer. I towld Mrs. Frayd so, as you wur lodgers here together."

"Lodgers here together!" That was all, though the girl's heart was throbbing with a pain almost unbearable.

In positive dread of encountering Mrs. Frayd she took her cloak and hastened out upon the downs, only when the darkness gathered, returning to her room, exhausted by fatigue and hunger. And no one, through all her life, ever knew what those hours had been to her, in the sorrow which had so much of perplexity in it, and the fear which had a vague, intangible hope.

Mrs. Frayd, with red and swollen eyelids, was yet equal to detail and reiteration over relating the story which had now climbed to Harrack's Beacon, but even then, Derry, sitting dry-eyed to listen, felt she could not grasp the full horror of it.

Steven Basset had, while intoxicated in the billiard-room at the Atheling Arms, confessed to having been his cousin's murderer; had in the darkness stolen away from the hotel before the police began to watch it; had returned to Harrack's in the dark, and left it early in the morning to bathe; had been seized with cramp in the water, and must

have been instantly drowned. No doubt was cast on any portion of the story Mrs. Frayd related, but in the truth of what Steven had confessed, Derry never for one moment had the very faintest belief.

Mrs. Frayd had watched Mr. Basset go at eight o'clock, she resumed, and had warned him of the danger of bathing on such a morning. Mr. Katchell had met and spoken to him as he went down to the beach through his farm at a quarter past eight, and at two o'clock, Fitz was still sitting on his master's dry garments in that little nook, while his master had met his death in the sea. So the story went on, until Derry could not even hear.

In the evening Mrs. Frayd came in with further tidings. The detectives had persisted in it that Mr. Basset had never been in the sea at all, and had escaped in other clothes, but a fisherman—Leppard by name—had been up to Harrack's with soles to sell, and had mentioned having rowed past just as Mr. Basset was swimming out, and spoken to him and asked him if he would have the boat, and Leppard was going into Thawton then, to make this known. At night-fall she brought further news. The account of Steven's random confession of having himself stabbed his cousin Miles had been told to old Mrs. Basset early in the day, and had given her a shock from which she had not strength to rally. Before they had ventured to tell her of his death, she died, having uttered only four words—

“And he a Basset”

PART VI.

CHAPTER I.

DAY after day went by, and though a strange unrest possessed Derry, she never went anywhere out of sight of Harrack's. Mrs. Frayd certainly spared no words in urging her young lodger to take a drive, or to call at the Tower or at the Pines, but even many words could not stimulate the girl to her former habits. She was not to be persuaded even to go into the village, following her old habit of dropping in to listen wher-

ever she could make the opportunity; and by the end of the week there had grown a pained, puzzled look on the beautiful, frank face.

Ella saw it when at last she drove up to visit her sister, and it made her try even more persuasive arguments than she had yet used to prevail upon Derry to return to town.

“I'm all right,” said Derry, and never guessed that the smile with which she said it was as unlike her old smile as moonshine is to sunshine.

“It is doing you harm to be here so much alone,” persisted Ella, with real entreaty in the sweet, cold voice. “Do go back to father.”

“Give him time to finish his Sara,” returned Derry, lightly. “Come, Sambo, tell me about yourself. It is so long since I have seen you.”

“I could not help it, dear. You know I always have a difficulty with Aunt Crystal about coming here, and she is even worse than ever since that dreadful confession of Steven's. It has been a great trial to me.”

“You believe it, then?”

“Believe it, dear? What do you mean?”

“I don't know,” said Derry, pushing in the beautiful hair from her forehead as if its weight oppressed her.

“What is the matter?” Ella questioned, gazing at her sister. “Is there any reason for you not believing Steven's own words?”

“Sambo, you must forgive me, though I can not forgive myself. I am mad with myself because I—can not believe it.”

“Not believe what he said himself?”

“No! No! Not a word of it.”

“But, Derry dearest, are you mad?”

“Yes—I think so.”

“Would you say of the dead that he had lied?”

“Yes, I would say that he had lied a thousand times, rather than that he had done that.”

“Then why should he say he had?” inquired Ella, plaintively.

“I don't know. Don't ask me. I can not think now. I believe I have lost the power of thinking. I am trying to get it back; I sit here all day, and try and try and try all night, but—it will not come. Sometimes I think it is because I tried too much when I came here first. Some-

times I think this shock has taken it away. But," with sudden bravery kissing Ella's mournfully drawn lips, "I did not mean to vex you. I am so angry with myself, while—while I only ought to be sorry for you. Oh, Sambo, my darling, I *must* be sorry for I understand. When you lost Miles, was it not—awful?"

"Don't speak of it," sighed Ella. "Do you wonder that my life is wrecked?"

"Is it? I mean, Ella," (Derry's breath came quickly as she stood looking with puzzled wistfulness down into her sister's face), "no one can help believing or disbelieving things, for people can't *make* themselves believe or disbelieve things, can they? I want to feel how different it is. If you really believe what we have heard, you are very noble not to utter a word against him, especially here, for this was, in a way, his home. May I thank you?"

"You mean Steven? I was very, very sorry, Derry. I should have done all in my power to prevent his being imprisoned, if he had not met so sad a fate—for we need not surely credit that he put an end to his own existence. I could have done something surely, for if I do not wish to avenge my lover's death, no one else need."

"I—I am senseless, and miserable, and ill-tempered," cried Derry, suddenly turning away and pacing the room. "I can scarcely follow you. It is like a horrible mist even in this room. Oh, Sambo, I am a wretch to let your kind words chafe me. Try to be patient with me for a little while."

"I will come again," said Ella, with a gentle sigh. "I see it will be better for me to go now, dear."

"What has come to me?" cried Derry, starting back a moment to look dazedly into her sister's sad face. "Am I growing—cruel, Sambo? Have I let you think it is not a delight to me to have you with me? Oh! forgive me, my dear!"

"There's nothing to forgive," said the younger sister. "We all must be a little out of temper occasionally, and you are never cruel—never were, except when you used to talk to me of Miles Derry" (after a thoughtful pause), "you little thought how near you were to the discovery you sought, did you? Even I

never guessed, though I thought—you see" (forbearing other words), "I knew how Steven hated Miles."

"Everybody hated Miles," cried Derry, in a burst of uncontrollable passion. "I'm sure he was a selfish, violent, heartless—Oh, Ella, Ella" (with again the passionate contrition and prompt self-reproach), "don't forgive me this time. Let me suffer. I don't deserve your sweet forbearance. Go away, I am not fit to be with you."

But when Ella, thinking it wisest, turned to leave the room, Derry stood before her, and seizing both her hands in a tight, long clasp, bent and kissed her on the lips, without a word.

Mrs. Frayd had so long listened vainly for any sound from her young lodger's parlor, that when two hours had passed since she watched Miss Hope drive away, she got so uneasy that she would have invented an errand into the room, had not a welcome one just then presented itself. In the dusk of the February evening, she caught sight of Miss Basset, attended by the old butler from the Tower, walking across the slope of the downs, taking the short way from the Tower to the Beacon. With genuine delight, Mrs. Frayd hastened to meet her, and to take her straight into Derry's room. Then, while she entertained the old butler in her own premises with much speaking and plenty of home-brewed ale, she busily prepared a festive tea for the two young ladies, her copious discourse flowing glibly on while she inwardly rejoiced that Miss Basset's visit would enliven Miss Hope. But, to the good woman's surprise, she found, when she took in the tray, that it was Miss Hope who was enlivening Miss Basset.

"Well, it'll do," she muttered to herself, as she closed the door again upon the friends. "You can't pick a person up and stay down yourself at the same time."

"Come for a ramble with me tomorrow, will you, Primrose?" Derry was saying just then. "I believe we should find celandine now in the woods, as well as your namesakes. Why, even here the birds this morning distinctly sang to me that spring had come. You will go with me, Primrose? You have had such a sad, sad time."

"Derry"—Primrose Basset had scarce-

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ly seemed to hear the bravely gladden-
ing words—"what does this mean that
Steven said?"

"You do not believe it?" Derry's
eyes were flashing with a strange de-
light, yet she could not acknowledge her
own disbelief, for fear of throwing Prim-
rose back into an old sorrow.

"No. It is impossible. Steven was
different from most men; a stern, soli-
tary man with odd opinions; but not the
man who could ever—even in a passion—
have done that. Some men could in a
passion, you know, Derry; they could
indeed, and not with the same sin.
Though he is dead, and it may never be
explained, nothing in the world could
make me believe Steven did that deed."

A curious, aching sympathy fell upon
Derry's heart, in spite of these words
being the utterance of her own thoughts;
for she knew that Primrose, thinking
thus, must feel the shadow under which
she had lately lived to be heavier in-
stead of lifted.

"We will think of this later," she
said, bravely, as she put Primrose to
sit beside the little tea-table on the
hearth, and set herself a chair close to
her friend.

And so they sat and talked of other
things until Derry could not make the
meal last any longer, when, seeing Prim-
rose fall into a long thought, she went
to the piano, and began to play, just to
make her friend feel herself unobserved
and at perfect liberty to be silent.

"Oh, thank you, Derry," cried Prim-
rose, impulsively, in the joy of hearing
music once again. And she rose and
stood at the glass-door, looking out into
the gathering darkness.

Half an hour afterward, just as Derry
was going to leave the piano, a sudden
thought occurred to her. "Primrose,"
she began, without looking round, "can
you tell me what this melody is? I
have had it in my head for days, and
yet I don't know what it is. Not that
it is remarkable, because I know so
little about music. I never was like you,
or even Ella. I don't suppose I shall
properly know it, but I will try. Listen,
will you? and tell me if you know it."

As Primrose did not speak when the
tune was over, Derry played it through
a second time, then, turning to ask what
it was, started to find her companion

standing close behind her, her face as
pale as death, her eyes feverishly bright,
while her trembling hands were locked
together

"Where—did you hear that?" she
asked, breathlessly.

"What is it? I do so want to find
out," returned Derry, speaking lightly
to hide her great astonishment, even
her alarm. "Pretty, is it not, though so
sorrowful? You are such a musician,
Primrose, that I felt sure you could tell
me."

"Where did you hear it? Was it—
from Steven?"

"No, no. I am certain," said Derry,
angry with herself that her cheeks
should burn at the question. "Why do
you ask?"

"Was it from—Oliver?"

"Oh, no" (readily enough, yet with
an unconscious haughtiness in the
prompt tones). "If it had been from
your brother Oliver, I should never have
remembered it, as it is so long since I
saw him."

"You are sure? Quite sure?"

"Sure. Quite sure," replied Derry,
with honest warmth. "As sure as ever
a person could— Oh, Primrose, what is
the matter?"

"Nothing," said Primrose, leaning
heavily against the instrument, "only I
could have believed at that moment
that it is possible to die of sudden joy.
Derry, you mean it? That Oliver
never—"

"My dear," interrupted Derry, in deep
earnestness, "I know your brother very
little, and I have never heard him play
or sing a note. Never."

"Oh, Father in Heaven! forgive me
that I ever thought it possible."

"Primrose, why do you want to know
where I heard this air? It is beautiful,
but does not it make you think, just at
first, of a bar or two in one of Schubert's
symphonies? Oh, my dear!" for Prim-
rose Basset, with her head upon the
piano, was crying as if her heart would
break. But Derry seemed to know that
though these were the first tears she
had shed since her brother's murder,
they were not tears of distress, and so
she let them have their way, leading
Primrose to a couch and putting an arm
round her in silence.

"Derry, I have frightened you," said

Primrose, lifting her wan face when the tears were exhausted "but you will tell me how—where you heard that air?"

"I must think. Why do you want to know?"

"Of course I ought to explain," said Primrose, in piteous apology.

Her fingers were locked in her lap, her mournful eyes fixed on Derry's sympathizing face. "I began one night—that one night of my life—to play from memory that haunting phrase of Schubert's Unfinished Symphony which you recognized. But it did not come. My own thoughts came instead, and led me till there came that air. I suppose I composed it, you would say. I played and played it, getting it less imperfect each time, until I had absorbed it. I had never played it before that night. I have never played it since, you know. I have never taken out my violin since, so you understand, Derry? When I began to play that, thinking it out so that it had no being before, I had just left my brother in his room writing; and when I had finished playing it for the last time, I went back and he was dead. Oh, surely you understand me, Derry? Whoever heard that, must have been there—that night, at the exact time, while Miles was—murdered."

"I—I understand. And you know now that—I—have heard it." The voice was utterly unlike Derry's, and startled even the girl herself.

"But where did you hear it?" persisted Primrose, uncomprehending even the possibility of the suspicion to which Derry pointed. "You will tell me. Think what it means to me."

"How can I remember?"

"Oh, you can if you try, and you will try, I know."

"You must give me time," said Derry, unaware that she spoke in a whisper.

"I often forget things."

"I will wait. It was *not* Oliver? Tell me again."

"It was *not* Oliver."

"Thank God!" with a sigh of deepest gratitude. "Derry, you will understand presently. I will tell you more when you have remembered. You will try to let it be soon?"

"I will try to think," said Derry, and fancied she spoke quite hopefully in her

sympathy with Primrose. But when she was left alone again, she knew there was no need of trying. Thought held her—bewildered, miserable thought—until Mrs. Frayd came creeping down, in abnormal wakefulness and a blanket, a long two hours after midnight, to entreat Miss Hope to go to bed. But even Mrs. Frayd's dull eyes saw next morning that the girl could have had no sleep, and gradually saw too a deeper change than this, especially when she found that, though Miss Ella Hope drove up from the Pines in obvious anxiety about her sister's health, Miss Hope had slipped quietly out and could not be found.

Again and again Ella came during the following days, but always Derry was absent if it were possible, and if not possible, was reticent and abstracted, totally unlike the Derry her sister knew.

"You are different in every way, Derry," she one day complained, "but most of all different to me;" and Derry tried to answer gently, and not to show that she shrank under her sister's touch, hating herself for doing so.

"And, Derry," Ella said, another day, "you never call me Sambo, now."

"No."

"Why, Derry?"

"I have outgrown it," said Derry, sadly.

And there never followed any of the old jests or merry little cynicisms or pretty laughter; and yet the moment her sister had left her, Derry despised herself for her own misgivings, and for that passionless, spiritless feeling which was so new to her.

"Something must be done," she cried, in her thoughts one morning as she rose wearily to begin another day. "Surely nothing is so hard to bear as one's own cruel suspicion. This change in me is terrible."

And it chanced to be that very morning that Ella sent Sarah Eales up to Harrack's with a message.

"Sarah," said the girl, plunging at once into what she had determined to say, "sit there and listen to me. Listen with all your memory alive, and tell me whether you have ever heard this before."

Slowly and heavily (at first her fingers refusing to make any notes at all,

and seeming even to the end unwilling) Derry played the air she had played to Primrose Basset.

"Have you ever heard it, Sarah? You used to be a pretty singer and pick up every tune you heard. Do you recall that?"

"Why, Miss Derry?"

"Oh" (almost calmly, as her hands rested in her lap), "because I am curious to know where I have heard it. You have, Sarah?"

"Yes, often."

"Where?"

"At home, of course, Miss Derry. I go nowhere else now, except here."

"Then Mrs. Martin plays it, or one of the servants has sung it. That's it, isn't it, Sarah?"

"No, Miss Ella plays it. No one else. Miss Derry"—rather timidly, after a long silence—"aren't you well?"

"Yes," said Derry, rising slowly. "I forgot you, Sarah. I am very sorry. Go now."

"And have you no message?"

"No."

From that morning there came another change in Derry's manner to her sister. Not only did she no longer shun her, but she sought her everywhere; met her where she could; clung to her, seemed to watch her as a troubled mother watches a sick child; steadfastly protecting, passionately tender, always pitiful and upholding.

And this utter change which Derry shrunk from analyzing had a strange effect on her sister. Ella grew nervous and irritable, chafing under her sister's sad yet tender gaze, until at last Mrs. Martin, seeing tears so often in her pet's pretty eyes, declared she must take her to town, for that her sister's worrying presence, following on her great sorrow, was killing her. Ella had tears again in her eyes when she had reported her aunt's decision to Derry, but Derry read an indescribable relief beneath the plaintive regret.

"No," she said, standing back when Ella proffered a farewell kiss, "you are not going away for days yet. I will not say good-bye till—the last minute."

"I think, Derry," said her sister, kindly, "you, too, look rather ill." (Look rather ill! with the fire burning in her brain, and brightening her eyes

so terribly!) "You should go away, too, dear. Oh, how I wish you were not quite so eccentric!"

CHAPTER II,

"SHE'S been out since early morning, Miss Basset. I warrant she's wandering about the Dewring woods, for nothing else fits her lately. I wish she'd more company. I never in my life saw any one altered like her, never, though she does try dreadful to be cheery with me, like she used, and Amos says the same; and there's that child Penkus forever crying, just because she sees the lady cry, and I never did find the little imp ready to cry for herself, however wrong-doing."

In the first pause of Mrs. Frayd's, Primrose Basset inquired which way Miss Hope generally walked home from the woods, and after receiving voluminous directions, started to meet Derry. She came upon her unexpectedly, just within the little grove of firs above Harrack's where she had stood to talk with Steven on his first day in Dewring.

"I wish you had called for me to go with you," said Primrose, after her greeting, noticing how solitary the girl looked. "I would have loved a morning in the woods with you, and would have brought you home in better time than this."

"I believe that I did hope to find you on my way," returned Derry. "I get so sick of myself. Wasn't it the Duchess of Marlborough who was sick of herself for very selfishness? I'm like her. I came home on purpose past your moat. See, I gathered this little yellow wall-flower there, and stood for long to listen to the rooks. They were not so busily argumentative as when we listened last, Primrose. I suppose they have got all their arrangements about eligible sites and building leases off their minds. I counted ten nests in one elm. There they go home! How punctual they always are."

"Derry, have you had anything to eat since you started?"

"Oh, yes, Mrs. Frayd always makes me take sandwiches."

"Then it is a custom of yours to go

off in this way? How glad I am that Ella is returning."

Miss Basset had been looking into her companion's face and so could not help but see that her words were a surprise to Ella's sister. Instinctively she glanced away now, and spoke with a demonstrative unconcern. "My news, of course, is only second-hand. You will be the first to hear direct."

"Ella has told me nothing," said Derry, heavily.

"Nor me," Primrose hastened to add "I have only my own news, that Oliver will be here to night. I have to say to myself over and over and over, that Oliver is coming, else I should never realize it in time to be prepared to meet him."

"But you said Ella was returning. Has she written to you?"

"Oh, no, Oliver told me."

"How strange!"

"No," said Miss Basset, in a slow way, "for Oliver is—has been accepted by your sister. They are engaged."

"What? Oh, I didn't mean to start you, Primrose. I might have understood," said Derry, looking straight before her with a terrible blankness in her eyes. "I might have guessed, I suppose."

"Even I never did," returned Primrose, in the same diffident way, "and yet I knew they were continually meeting, for Oliver has constantly written to me since—Steven's death, when he first thought of coming home. But if I had even guessed he desired it, I should never have felt he would be able to prevail upon Ella to—forget Miles. I am glad, for Oliver's sake. You will be glad, Derry?" wistfully interrogative. "But

—oh, how ill you look! I wish you would go home. It is plain to me that staying here is not good for you. You miss your father and your work, and everything belonging to the life you love. I can not bear to see you so. To me, no wonder this winter has been so terrible, but for you, it isn't right. You can surely now—"

"Now," said Derry, with a long, indrawn breath, "if it killed me I must stay. Primrose, you asked me yesterday if I would try and feel to you as a sister. If so, I must take your brother for mine. I must," (pausingly) "take

Oliver for my brother. Do you still wish what you said?"

"It would be a delight to me," Miss Basset declared, with shining eyes. "And now, more even than I thought it would be when I asked you, Derry, for then I did not know that my brother, on his return, would have some one dearer to him than I can ever be again."

"Nor I that Ella—How glad I am," with a short, unmirthful laugh, "to see this ugly mill again! Do come in with me, Primrose. I—I suppose I have tired myself more than I thought. Yet really the woods were beautiful. You should have seen how fresh and young the bright wood-sorrel looks among the dry leaves of last year, and I found some violets. I did indeed. Oh, don't go, you must come in and have tea with me."

"Yes," Primrose answered, in her quiet way. "I want to ask you how you like my brother Oliver. I really believe that if you could have helped it you would never even have told me you had met him. Tell me, Derry, did you like him?"

"You will see," Derry said holding open the glass-door; but her companion saw, before passing through, the flash of fire in her eyes, and the deepening of the delicate color in her cheeks. "But please," Derry continued, easily, as she followed, "we will now drop everybody except our own two selves, and have a dear little cozy old maid's tea. I like being an old maid, Primrose. Do you think any destiny in the world is so free from worry as an old maid's?"

* * * * *

Next evening a little note reached Derry, informing her of her sister's arrival at the Pines, but no answer was returned, and after waiting two days in vain for a letter or a visit, Ella, surprised but not anxious, walked up to Harrack's. Derry was standing at the piano with her back to the door when Ella entered the room, and the younger sister paused in silence, as if doubtfully anticipating Derry's start of loving astonishment on turning to discover her. But Derry did not turn, and so Ella had to make her presence felt by going up and kissing her.

"I thought you would be glad to see me," she began, plaintively.

"I thought so, I hoped so," faltered Derry: "but I am afraid of myself—of what I might say."

"Say nothing, dear," advised Ella in her gentle way: "especially if it would be on that old sad topic."

And Derry obeyed her and said nothing, though anguished thoughts were surging to her lips, while Ella told her tale, with the old pathetic cadence in her chill, sweet voice. She spoke of the great loneliness of her life since she had lost Miles; of how, while in London, his brother Oliver had tried to take his place and to cheer her, and was so like her own lover, that she had gradually grown to feel almost that it was he. Of how Oliver was fond of her, and at last had won her promise to be his wife. Of how her aunt Crystal rejoiced, as she had always wished her to reign at the Tower, and how she was quite sure that Derry would rejoice too. When Ella ceased speaking there was an odd silence in the room. More than once Derry tried to break it, but the words would not come, and when Ella, not un-naturally resenting this curious behavior, rose to go, the elder sister rose too, and putting her hands behind her to lean against the arm of the couch from which she had risen, looked into her sister's face, with a look Ella did not even try to understand—so full the gaze was of love, of pity and of horror.

"Ella, is it a dream that you would marry Miles's brother? Oh, how you will fill my heart with thankfulness if you tell me that this is a dream!"

"Why should it be a dream? You have no right to say that sort of thing, Derry, about your—thankfulness."

A sudden fire blazed in Derry's eyes, as she forcibly put away one thought and seized another. Her whole attitude as well as expression seemed changed, though she had not moved. "You can not know Oliver Basset, Ella. He is—he admires every girl—many girls, I mean, and he can not really love—Oh! Ella, you will change. You will not do this?"

"Oliver cares for me. It is nothing against him if he has cared for other girls before. He will not again."

"He cares for your fortune," correct-

ed Derry, every word an effort to her. "Only that. He knows you are Mrs. Martin's heiress. He knows you will be rich. He courts your fortune."

"This is not like you, Derry," observed Ella, in genuine astonishment. "How can you even pretend to know these things?"

"I know Oliver Basset."

"I recollect now that you told me so," rejoined the younger sister, rather pointedly, "though I fancied you must have been mistaken when I found that he himself never mentioned having met you."

"Does not that prove what I say? Would not it have been more honorable to have told?" inquired Derry. Her strange, cold manner would have revealed to some that she was forcing these reasons, but it did not to her sister. "He did me the honor, Ella, to pretend he cared for my favor above that of any other woman in the world."

"Then that explains your odd idea. Jealousy is always unjust. But I can forgive it, Derry, it is so natural. But on which plea" (with a smile) "am I to dismiss Oliver? For his dishonor in not telling me he had flirted with my sister among others? For his general heartlessness in having flirted with a hundred others? Or for his mercenary motives in finally choosing me, not to flirt with, but to woo in earnest?"

"On any, on all," panted Derry, "so that you dismiss him. Oh, Ella, let me implore you to do this!"

"You are cruel," said Ella, tears of real alarm gathering in her eyes. "What right have you to say that Oliver wants only my fortune?"

"May I prove him? May I?" queried Derry, eagerly.

"You may try," with a laugh.

"If I can prove it—if I can show you that he admires another woman more, will you be convinced?" cried Derry, feverishly. "Will you reject him then?"

"I know the feeling girls have when a rich one is engaged," observed Ella, patiently. "They never think it possible that she is loved for herself. Now I must go."

Once more Derry, in piteous earnestness, and now with tender, loving words, entreated her to break off her engage-

ment with Oliver Basset, but even while she pleaded, she knew Ella would not consent. She even knew it was not natural to expect it.

"There is only one way," she cried to herself, wearily, when she was left alone. "There is only one thing I can do."

But apparently she shrunk most of all from this one thing she could do, for again she had sought Ella, and pleaded to her, before that miserable night when she had to give up all hope, and to form that determination from which she had shrunk with such abhorrence. She watched the wakeful night dawn into a fair spring morning, and rose very pale and very sad, but with this new resolve strong and steadfast in her heart. She had promised to go soon and see Primrose Basset, and she would go that very morning.

She made her way so slowly along the green slope of the downs that any one seeing her would have thought that she was idling away the fresh morning hours rather than carrying out a determination so hardly fought over.

"It will seem more friendly to go early," she said to herself, pausing in the fir grove and addressing Steven Basset's *dachshund*, who generally followed her in an indifferent manner, while he constantly seemed to be watching and waiting for his master. "You must not come, Fitz, because you always argue with Jess, and—" but she did not finish that reason even in her thoughts; her new resolution would break down utterly if she permitted herself to remember anything Steven had told her. She must no longer let her thoughts touch him.

The heavy arched door of the Tower stood wide open when she reached it, and she heard voices in the hall before she had seen that her sister and Oliver Basset were there. When she entered with her light, free step, and the sunshine lingering in her lovely hair, they little guessed how painfully her heart was throbbing, or that the delicate blush was born of loathing for herself.

"Mr. Oliver Basset, Derry. My elder sister, Oliver."

Ella went as formally through the introduction as if she had never been told that these two had met before. Oliver

bowed, his features a little stiff, but a suspicious duskiness mounting slowly to his hair, but Derry held out her hand, the pretty, capable hand that he had watched at its busy tasks.

"We are not strangers," she explained. "Mr. Basset has spent many an hour with dad in the studio at home, and has often bestowed on me valuable criticism—and still more valuable baskets of strawberries. We once even managed the cream, didn't we, Mr. Basset?"

"You sent me for it."

Ella glanced from one to the other in almost pathetic surprise. Oliver had never spoken to her of these visits, yet he was looking delighted to hear them spoken of now. Derry had shown a prompt disdain when Oliver's name had been mentioned to her, yet she was recalling his presence in her father's studio as if it had brought happiness to her. And Ella was to be further surprised! Oliver had been lounging against the old oak table, teasing Jess with his whip while they waited for Primrose; now he was alert and brisk, his whole form, as well as his face, seeming full of eager desire.

"Oliver was just going to drive Primrose and me to Arundel and round the park, and then to put up and stroll by the lake," Ella explained; "knowing I should like it, he came early to fetch me."

"Primrose is going, you say?" queried Derry, longing for Miss Basset's advent. "Yes, dear."

"Then," looking straight into Oliver Basset's eyes, which were fixed upon her with undisguised solicitation, "will you take me too?"

It gave Derry no surprise to see her sister blush over this outspoken request, for she knew she should have done so in Ella's place, and how could Ella understand that it had been hard to her when she had seemed to ask it with such ease? Ella scrutinized her lover's face to see how he received this demonstration of her sister's forwardness, and she saw that he must be annoyed, for he at once turned away and went to the door; but then he had heard the wheels. Just then Miss Basset came in ready to start, and her delight at finding she was to have Derry with her (for she naturally

supposed they two would be thrown together) was recompense enough to Derry for the humiliation she had imposed upon herself. It was a small light wagonette which Oliver had elected to drive, and when he had assisted Miss Hope and his sister to their seats within it, Ella made a shy feint of following them.

"Will you not sit in front with me, as yesterday?" he asked, and she blushed a pretty assent.

To Ella's surprise, the party never fell into couples. Primrose had, in her thoughtful way, taken the seat behind Oliver that the sisters might be near each other, and every time Oliver spoke to Ella, he had turned enough to include Derry in all he had to say; he even looked sulky when he found Derry and his sister chatting independently. Sometimes he even turned only to address Derry, or to listen to her, for after the first mile or two the road was new to her, and she had pleasant fresh remarks to make, and had to tell him of her modest little drives with Amo, and how he was invariably seized with alarm when they approached a gate lest she should be too terrified to 'old the horse.

"And I feel quite sure," commented Ella, "you scare him more by pretending to be in a panic."

It was a beautiful day, and a beautiful drive, and when Primrose Basset said the way to Arundel had never seemed so short before, and looked lovingly at Oliver, feeling that it was his restored presence which had made it so for her, she found he had looked away from all his companions, with again the dusky color mounting to his forehead.

Even during their stroll, and during their rest and lunch beside the lake, the party never properly divided as parties do when two of the four are affianced lovers; and when the time came for starting homeward, Oliver suggested to Ella that, as the road on the return journey would be new to her sister, she might possibly wish her to have the front seat.

"Thank you," said Ella, "I was going to propose it."

But the gentle words stung Derry. Hastily she drew back, not only refusing to take the seat beside Oliver, but

even changing with Primrose so that she should be exactly behind him.

"I—I shall have to do things I hate," she said in her miserable thoughts, "but there is time."

And then, as if relieved of a weight which had threatened her, she indulged herself in a silence, as, through all the previous hours, she had dreaded doing. When they reached the Tower, they all went in for tea, loitering over it; then when Derry rose to go, Oliver coolly observed that Ella could have a further rest with Primrose while he saw Miss Hope to Harrack's Beacon, and that they two could walk to the Pines at their leisure, as he was going to dine there. "If Miss Hope will accept my escort," he added, more humbly, Ella thought, than she had ever heard him speak before; but then it seemed less happily too.

"I need no escort," said Derry, briefly. "I could take that short cut across the downs now blindfold."

"Then you do not wish me to come?"

"Oh, I do" (childishly), "are you ready?"

As she knew he must have sent the change in her since the time when he used to plead in vain to accompany her anywhere, she liked him all the better for alluding to it. Indeed, she hoped he despised her for it, as she despised herself.

"You have made me very happy to-day, Miss Hope," he said, as they walked together. "After your coldness to me in town, it is little wonder that in your kindness, to me here I scarcely recognize you."

"I scarcely recognize myself," she answered, coldly, and then was silent, as a picture rose before her of this careless, handsome, self-satisfied young man seated on an old cloth-covered pedestal in the studio, graciously offering her all that he had it in his power to offer; and of how, beneath her chill, unmoved refusal, ran a rather regretful wonder whether it would ever be possible to her to love any man so dearly as she loved her father. Then vividly, strongly, clearly, followed a picture of the old mill in the beauty of the star-crowned night, and—but she forced that memory away, her heart throbbing in its great pain.

"May I—may we call for you when we take another drive?" They were within sight of Harrack's, and she had stood to dismiss her escort. "May I call upon you?" he added, emboldened by her simple thanks, and their contrast to the unvarying refusals of old times. "And Primrose was telling me yesterday," he went on, eagerly, "she wished you would come oftener to the Tower."

"If you like to call when Primrose does," said Derry, with gentle nouchalance. "I will show you a photograph of the little group at which you last saw me working."

"Thank you," he replied, with ingenuous delight, but yet with a surprise he did not attempt to conceal. Then he watched her out of sight, before he turned homeward with a new light in his eyes.

It scarcely astonished Derry to see him at Harrack's next day with his sister, nor to find that they brought an invitation to her to meet Ella at the Tower in the evening—it seemed so natural for them to wish to make the party into a quartet! She went, and as Mrs. Martin's brougham was sent for Ella, it was also natural that Mr. Basset should walk home with the sister for whom no brougham could be sent.

PART VII.

CHAPTER I.

So the weeks went on, until one day Oliver Basset told Derry that the hours he spent with her were the only happy ones he knew, and that as she had given him hope once more, it would be doubly cruel to rob him of it. That if she would now accept the love that had been always hers, he would go at once and honorably tell all to Ella.

"Honorably!" she echoed, with such scorn that he, not understanding that the scorn she felt was for herself, resented what he thought she showed to him.

Hotly he explained that he had tried to be honorable, even in asking Ella to be his wife, because—then his careless

young face paled, and he halted. "Derry," he cried, breaking through all formalities, "you know that but for that awful deed which my cousin Steven acknowledged your sister would have been happy now. Poor Steven!" in his companion's silence. "Poor fellow! But you can never guess what that confession was for me. I was so miserable a man before. I had a fear too terrible to utter even to you—though God knows I fought against it."

"You feared your poor brother had taken his own life, I understand," said Derry, though she did not understand the horrible fear he had. "But you must forgive me if I say nothing seems to me more terrible than suspecting"—she caught her breath quickly. Even her thoughts could not bear the touch of Steven's name, and to utter it was impossible.

"Steve and my brother were not good friends," Oliver went on. "There might be a thousand excuses for Steven. As the poor fellow can never explain to us now, we must give him the benefit of every doubt and every excuse. But Derry," in her inexplicable silence "may I have my answer. I have been trying again and again to say this to you, and you have always evaded me."

"Answer?" she queried, lifting her eyebrows. "You have written me no letter."

"But I have been telling you how dearly I love you. I—"

"If you write to me I shall of course have to answer," she interposed, but as for what you say, how can I remember?"

"Then I will write," he said, his whole face brightening in his great hopefulness. "and you will not keep me long in unbearable suspense, I know."

He had expected a gay answer, but he could not complain that she said no word, when she had given him a smile; for he did not see that the smiling lips this time could not brighten the sorrowful eyes.

On the very next day Oliver's letter was given into Miss Hope's hand. He reminded her how he had loved her long before he had known her sister, loved her first, loved her only, all his life. And then followed his regret for the rash step he had taken since, assuring her that the instant she gave her permission,

he would confess all to Ella, and was quite sure she would only too willingly reject him when she knew his whole heart was given to another.

Oliver would not have relished seeing the disdain on Derry's face while she read his words; but even less would he have relished seeing her in the abandonment of her miserable self-contempt.

In the very hour she received this letter, before allowing herself time for further thought (was not her heart already sick with thought?), she went to the Pines, knowing that Mrs. Martin scarcely ever left her room before noon, and that she could therefore, at that early hour, be alone with Ella. Sarah Eales met her on the stairs, and turned and led the way silently to her young mistress' own sitting-room, then occupied herself noiselessly in the background until Derry said, in her straightforward way:

"Sarah, I want to be alone with my sister, and I have not long to stay. Go away, will you, and don't let us be disturbed."

If any one had been watching the woman, with a ground-work of suspicion, they would have detected that after this frank little command she was more unwilling to leave the girls together than she had been before; but as Ella, by her silence, indorsed the request, she had no excuse to linger.

"You will be weary to death of my importunities, Ella," her sister said, as soon as they were alone; "but I must risk that. You still scarcely can be weary with my terrible weariness. You remember that I said Oliver Basset did not love you as your lover should? As Miles did? Oh, Ella, try to think of Miles only yet! Let Oliver go!"

"Miles is lost to me," quietly pathetic.

"And—forgive me for every word that sounds unkind—but, indeed, indeed it is worse for me to say than for you to hear. Oliver must be lost to you, too. Don't—oh, don't look at me as if I were cruel to you. If you only knew the agony this is to me!"

"Then why say it, dear?"

"Ella," Derry cried, sinking on her knees beside her sister, "if you would promise—without reasons, in your love for me, in your wish to do—what is

right! If you would only promise without my telling!"

"All this is unintelligible to me, Derry. But perhaps"—with a sigh—"it is scarcely worth while for you to try to explain. Is it not better we should drop this subject between us? It is surely time."

"I told you," said Derry, rising and trying to suppress her passionate eagerness, as he met her sister's unanswering gaze, "that I thought—I mean that perhaps Oliver Basset did not love you as you thought he did—as he thought he did. Now will you read this letter?"

"Is it to myself?"

"No, it is to me; but you will read it."

When Ella quietly refolded the paper and handed it back to her sister, every word had been committed to memory.

"You see," queried Derry, trembling in her agitation.

"I see that all men are the same," rejoined Ella. "I suppose they can not help it when a woman leads them. You have done this for some purpose of your own."

"If I have," cried Derry, passionately truthful, "does not it show to you how worthless his love is? You will not accept it, Ella? You will not. You can not. I only did it to show you how little you had to give up. How little you need care. I could not love Oliver Basset. I will never speak to him again, never see him again, if you will promise me to refuse him. Only say that you will not marry him and I will go away from here at once. I will go to-day—now, if you will only give me that promise."

"And if I will not?"

"But you will. Oh, Ella, my dear, you will."

"If I will not?" persisted the younger girl, in her sweet, cold voice.

"Then I—must marry him, and it will kill me."

"Why should you choose to kill yourself? You had better think."

"Think!" cried Derry, pushing the hair from her temples, and locking her hands behind her head, as she stood looking far away with wide and desolate eyes. "I have thought until I have longed for the only rest from thought that we can have—in death,

Ella"—with new, piteous entreaty—"give me that promise—that one promise—and the devotion of my whole life shall repay you."

"No," said Ella, with her pensive smile, "I can not promise not to marry Oliver. We are engaged. His love is mine, and he will be true to me. Your unjustifiable encouragement has enticed that letter from him; but he has not really changed. I am engaged to him."

"Ella, it is not true. It is not indeed. He loved me first, and he loves me still. Such love as he ever had to give he gave to me; and it is I whom he wishes to marry. But I will never marry him. We neither of us will, neither of us. What is there in him for you to love? Oh, my dear," again falling to her knees at her sister's side, and taking the small, steady white hands into her burning clasp, "come away with me. You know how I have loved you. Come to father. We will neither of us ever see this place again. It makes us both wick-d. Oh, Ella, come with me!"

"No, thank you, Derry. You are very excitable, and you pain me. Please try to be different."

The docile, unmoved tones had pierced Derry like a knife. Cold as ice she rose to her feet. "There is now but one thing I can do," she said. "I must accept Oliver. I must save him as well as you."

"I don't understand you," said Ella, plaintively; "are you making a virtue of marrying—or rather of trying to marry (for Oliver is engaged to me)—the man you have been openly encouraging?"

"Ella, the mystery that brought me here has been solved. I know who caused the death of Oliver's brother. Oh, Ella," Derry had spoken first in the same icy tones, with her eyes hidden, but the voice had faltered into its old passionate tenderness, and the beautiful entreating eyes again sought Ella's. "Come with me away from here. Let us both go away. I will be so true to you that you shall miss no care such as Oliver can give you. I mean"—seeing Ella's incredulous smile—"that I will do all I can to prevent your missing him. I will never leave you—all—my life."

"If you know anything," said Ella, as if only the former part of her sister's speech needed answering, "you know that someone came between Miles and me. Be it so, Derry, you must do as you choose."

Do as she chose!

The words stunned her, and she stood quite still, knowing that if she moved yet she must grope her way from Ella's presence like one blind.

CHAPTER II.

"Which day do you leave, Derry?"

"To-morrow."

"So soon? Why is that, dear?"

"I want," said Derry, rather brokenly, "dad—and my work—and home."

"I do not wonder," was the gentle reply. "You know that I have only wondered why you stayed so long. Why you came at all."

"Wondered! I have wondered till I'm sick of wondering, why I came. Why I cared. I think the power that brought me, that kept me, was stronger than my will. I think it was—Fate."

"But, Derry, you stayed for a motive beyond that vain attempt of yours to find out what was afterward voluntarily confessed," said Ella, musingly. "You have stayed to win what you had evidently set your heart upon; and Fate, in this case, may be interpreted into Oliver Basset. But I do not mean to reproach you, for he will return to his old allegiance. I had his letter this morning; so I presume you accepted him after your interview with me. I ought to wish you happiness."

"No, no," pleaded Derry. "Let us be honest if we can, Ella. I told you the truth when I said that if you forced me to this step, it would kill me. Happiness it has killed, indeed."

"To kill yourself is a sin, Derry," said her sister, with a slow smile. "When is the wedding like to be?"

"Never—I mean" (with a change of tone) "there is no haste."

"You feel sure of Oliver?"

"Yes."

"Yet you look as if you meant that never"

"What help is there for it now?"

"We shall see. At any rate, don't leave to-morrow. Stay one day longer to please—Sambo."

"No," with a shudder.

"Then you must give me this afternoon, for we ought to be together the last day. Will you drive with me? I know a view you haven't seen; and though I don't say it is beautiful, it is interesting for our part of the world. You will come?"

"Yes."

"How dully you say it, my dear. I will promise you a brisk drive, for I have not driven my ponies for days, and they will be fresh. I would rather not bring them up to the mill lane. I will take them along the gradual road if you don't mind meeting me somewhere on the north slope. Say you start from here exactly at half past two, and go through the fir grove and on toward a cottage which is close to the road I am speaking of. You will soon see me come."

"I know the cottage. It is old Leppard's; and I will go in and see him, for he is ill. So if you don't see me, you may be sure I'm in there."

"Leppard? Is he the father of that young fisherman who saw Steven Basset drowning?"

"Who saw him in the sea? Yes."

"Poor Derry!" said her sister with a little caress. "You look as if you needed some change. I am glad I thought of that drive. Now I will not let you come a step with me, because you have your packing to do; not that you ever used to make much of that, but you look so tired. Good bye, dear. Be punctual."

And with a wave of her hand, Ella went down the lane to rejoin her aunt in the village, while Derry wished with all her heart she could meet her sister's eyes with the old love in her own. For many minutes she walked up and down in thought before the mill, then seeing that the door of the parlor, which had been Steven Basset's, was wide open, she entered, pausing within the threshold and looking round with pain in every throb of her heart. Once before, since she had been told of his death, she had come in to stand, as she had done on that first morning, looking on Mrs. Frayd's photograph, while the memory of Steven's words about its

being the only woman's likeness ever given him brought hot tears to her eyes. Instinctively now she turned to the same spot, but no photograph was there. This change positively hurt her, for it had been a curious delight to feel that his room was waiting just as he had left it, just as he would have returned to it on any ordinary day.

When she saw Mrs. Frayd next, she at once, in her frank way, spoke of having been in, and mentioned the disappearance of the photograph which had stood in its old place through Mr. Basset's absence.

"Yes, miss, it's gone," Mrs. Frayd acknowledged with a rather lugubrious expression. "I have had word at last where to send Mr. Basset's luggage, and it's all gone. I s'pose," hurrying on, as Derry looked wistfully, questioning, "something thinks himself Mr. Basset's heir. They do say nobody dies without leaving a heir in this world; so I s'pose it's right."

"Who came?"

"Only a man," with hasty negligence, as if the heir ought at least to have had the grace to be of some other sex. And when she had thus delivered herself, Mrs. Frayd did a thing so unusual with her, that Derry sat pondering it until summoned to her early dinner—she voluntarily became silent.

Punctually at the time arranged Derry left Harrack's, idling on her way, utterly unlike the Derry of old days, who had grudged every minute wasted alone, which she might have spent with Ella. It was a pleasant little stroll in the April sunshine, over the "low back of the bushless downs," and on to the cottage near the bridle-road along the slope. As she entered the kitchen a fisherman, who had been standing near the big dinnity-covered chair of the old invalid, moved away, and went out through a door at the back of the room. Derry looked after him almost wistfully, thinking that would be Leppard's son, the young fisherman who had been the last to see Steven Basset. She had often wished that she might chance to see him.

"I am sorry my coming in disturbed your son, Leppard," she said, in her sweet spontaneous way.

"Eh? eh?" quavered the old sailor.

"My son? Oh, him as just went out. He'll do. He's got lots to do. Let him go."

"Yes," said Derry, quaintly. "I have let him go. How are you to-day, Leppard?"

"Jest tired, miss, mortal tired. Jest wonderin' and marvelin' why the Lord A'mighty has kep' me so long tackin' up an' down outside harbor, when I want to go in and take up a 'evenly anchrige. I've jest been askin'—my son as went out theer, didn't yer say twar my son?—and he ses melbbe I'm to ride quarantine afore euterin' a sinless land. Mebbe so, eh, miss?"

"Is your son often here with you?"

"Never, scarce. He's got his livin' to get. There s wheels."

Derry went to the cottage door to show herself, and Ella drew up her ponies as near as she could. The little groom sprung down from behind; and when Derry had seated herself luxuriously beside her sister, he backed from the ponies' heads, touched his corded hat, and turned homeward, briskly walking. "For I mean to have you to myself to-day, dear," Ella explained, as they started slowly along the narrow drive. "The ponies are deliciously fresh, and we will have a proof of their pace presently. You are not nervous?"

"Why, Ella, you remind me of Amos Pickett's unfailing inquiry whether I have courage to 'old the 'orse."

"But Mrs. Frayd's little wooden animal is rather different, isn't it?" inquired Ella, smiling as her critical gaze dwelt on the sleek, restive young animals she drove.

"How was it you did not bring Sarah?" inquired Derry, while she was recalling Steven Basset's criticism on her sister's driving, and endorsing it, for Ella did indeed manage the ponies wonderfully for a young and delicate girl.

"She did ask to come—she actually did even to-day—but I refused her. She is sometimes really too presumptuous. This way is new to you, isn't it, Derry?"

"Yes. I have never before been beyond Leppard's cottage in this direction."

"Do you like it?"

"Leppard's cottage?"

"Don't be absurd, Derry. Do you like this drive?"

"I will tell you presently. It is rather a derogatory route for your stylish equipage. What will it be further on?"

"Of course we descend into the level road again; but in the meantime we shall turn one corner, where the view will strike you, I think. People call it worth looking at; so mind you are ready. It is rather a sharp turn—at least you may think so—but you know that my ponies and I thoroughly understand each other."

They were going quite slowly still along the bridle-road that cut the incline. On Ella's side the ascent was gradual to the crest of the downs, a soft grassy slope. On Derry's side the descent was more abrupt; and she was looking dreamingly down it when her sister called her attention to a small object in advance. "What little lunatic is it," she asked.

Racing on at the side of the road in front of them was a tiny stunted figure which was familiar to Derry. The child had nothing over her pinafore, and her scanty black locks were blown every way by the wind, as she sped on, her head never turning, her whole attention evidently on something before her, not behind; something to which she was flying at the top of her small speed; un-looking, unlistening for anything to follow.

"Do stop, Ella, and take up that little elf," pleaded Derry. "It is my poor little aged child from Harrack's."

"She wants to be run over," observed Ella, tightening her reins; "at least she does not seem to care whether she is or not, scampering in that headlong fashion."

"Just take her as far as she is racing to, will you?" entreated Derry, without a smile. "I will hold her by me. It can not be far that the poor little mortal wishes to go. May we?"

"You are very much in earnest, Derry. How could I refuse you?" was the gentle answer; and guiding her ponies aside as far as she could, Ella overtook the hurrying figure and drew up.

"Penkus," said Derry, turning to face her, "come here."

The command, though sudden, was so pleasant and kind that it might have stopped a child who had been running away from the sisters. Penkus paused a moment, panting as she stared into Derry's face. "I sawr 'im! I sawr 'im! she gasped, and was about to career on again when Derry held her. The child had been going to shake herself free from the detaining touch, but after a furtive glance into Derry's amused eyes she stood motionless, muttering with a frown on her wizen little face, "I sawr 'im. I want to be quick."

"You would tumble down in another minute, and never sawr 'im aguin," said Derry, in that friendly way of hers that was irresistible, though she was smileless. "We are going very, very, very quick, and you'll sawr 'im again in a minute. Get your breath now. I have you safe, stand still."

"Are you really going to hold your arm around that little object?" inquired Ella.

"You don't mind, Ella, do you? I suppose her father is in front, just round that bend, most probably; and we can put her down the moment she reaches him. She is utterly exhausted."

"Little silly for racing so," observed Ella, with still a kind smile for the child. "I would put her down if I were you, Derry; but if you will not, why, you will not! Just at the turn there the descent on your side has been quarried, I think."

"But what difference will that make?" asked Derry, in simple surprise. "The child will be quite still. She can not frighten the ponies, and they are like lambs in your hands."

"You have hampered yourself of your own accord."

"Ella, what can you mean?" asked Derry, turning anxiously to look into her sister's face.

"That infant was safe enough running by herself; but now, if anything happens—"

"But what can happen? Do you" (in a low unfamiliar voice) "expect anything to happen?"

"Things happen to other people, why not to us? Never mind. You did it to rest the puny little mortal and help her on. You generally find time to think of other people, Derry, as I have noticed.

Many haven't time. I was thinking only yesterday of the difference between Aunt Crystal and you; she says so many kind things and means so little. You think so many kind things and says so little. We are close to the turn now, and the quarries. There's no man in sight, so I expect that child was pretending to be following her father. Would you like to put her out—here on my side? This slope is gradual, and the grass pleasant for her to run on, but on your side it would scarcely be safe for her, even if the quarried parts were not close in front. Will you?"

"No, please, for I believe she could not stand. I have hard work to hold up as it is, poor little maid. She has expended the short supply of strength she had."

"Then, now we have had enough of this snail's pace," said Ella, gathering the whole loop of the reins into the grasp of her left hand, and with her long driving whip giving two sharp cuts over the ears of her spirited ponies. From her left hand then she tossed the reins forward on their necks, and from her right flung the whip after them, and as the maddened ponies dashed away, she sprung from the low carriage to the sunny slope on her right.

There was a wild consciousness in Derry's mind now that she known this was going to happen; had even been expecting it. Looking straight before her she held little Penkus close to her, firm and secure; longing to save the child, and never guessing that by so doing she would make the child her savior too.

"I sawr 'im," Penkus whispered, as if she had at last found breath to utter her one all-important announcement; then with a wild shriek she struggled to get away from Derry's encircling arm.

With their heads down, and the reins entangling their rushing feet, the unguided ponies tore along the narrow, irregular bridle-road on the hill-side, the light carriage reeling, and the quarries now in sight. Derry saw them, as she saw the whole scene, blurred and indistinct, while she sat motionless, her protecting clasp about the terrified child. The turn in the narrow drive had come, when one wheel slipped to

the foot of the sloping turf above the cutting, and the carriage tottered. But it was at that moment that the turn had brought them in sight of a man who had been walking in advance. At a glance he understood the danger, and (coolly, to all seeming) crossed to the margin of the turf above the quarried descent, and in that moment of their greatest peril, mastered the runaway ponies. Derry saw all this dimly, confusedly, as in a dream; perfectly conscious of only one thing, her determined hold of the struggling child. When the rescuing figure that had been so blurred and indistinct to her, gathered the reins and led the ponies quietly on until the road was safe, and thoroughly quieted them there, she thought it was the fisherman who had left Leppard's cottage when she entered it, and she met him with earnest words of thanks upon her lips, and in her eyes a lovely light of gratitude of which she was not conscious.

"Give me the child," he said, speaking gruffly as it seemed, with his face turned away from her. But she had no need to give Penkus, for he took her himself and put her down upon the grass. And he had not turned back to Derry, when, her heart filled now only with anxiety for Ella's safety, she had left the carriage and ran back upon the way the ponies had galloped round that shoulder of the hill. She knew it was not far to the spot where Ella had sprung out upon the grass, and she felt sure she should recognize it instantly; but before she reached it she stopped, staggering backward. For Ella lay there still. With her hand upon her eyes, Derry fell to her knees beside the unmoved figure, and lifted the still face tenderly in her arms.

"Did she not save—herself?"

The man who had saved Derry had followed her to the spot, and stood looking down as he asked this question. But his voice, though stern, had not now that unnatural gruffness, and Derry looked up at the one whom she had thought a fisherman. Then all was darkness to her. The sudden sight of Steven Basset there and thus, took from her the consciousness that her peril had not been able to drive away. Still, even now it was only momentarily.

"Steven," she said, her dazed eyes fastened upon his, "is Ella hurt?"

"She has found—what she meant for you."

"Steven!"

It was only the fierce look upon his face, not any meaning she had attached to his words, which brought that cry from her lips.

"I mean," he said, his whole expression changing at that cry, and he knelt bare-headed beside the girl he loved, and looked down upon the face at which she gazed so piteously, for he had read the truth and knew she had not—"that for whatever hard thoughts I have had of her, I beg forgiveness of the sister who loved her." And as he spoke, he took with reverence the living hand, and the dead one that it clasped, and lifted both to his lips.

"She has fainted. How could she have been hurt?" Derry asked, watching so anxiously the still, pale face and the mute lips.

"I think," he answered very quietly, "that she could not measure distance while the ponies started, and that she fell with her head against a stone. But perhaps it was not even that. Perhaps it is natural that in such an instant her heart—I must get help. There is a man with the ponies, and I told the child to wait there, too."

"But you," she said, looking at the unfamiliar dress, "do not wish to be seen. You had better come this way because nobody seems to be here—and I do not wonder! Could not the little girl go? You do not wish to be known; and I—I can not leave Ella. She must not wake to consciousness and I not be near her."

"I don't care who sees me," he said, rising to his feet, but still looking down upon her. "I shall be quickest—unless you don't like to be left. Do not think of my safety."

"You could not be really unsafe," she said; and while she spoke—the grave, sad woman, looking up into the face of the grave, worn man—one of those strange flashes of memory recalled their jesting each other like boy and girl under the old beacon. And was the time between to be counted only by weeks? "You know that no discovery of the truth could ever hurt you."

"Then you know?" His voice was stirred by deep emotion, yet very quiet. "That was what I have feared."

"You know?"

"Yes."

"You knew before you—"

"Yes."

"Oh, Steven, that was what I have feared."

He smiled as if her words had not been serious, and then he was gone; and she had only to sit and stroke her sister's hair and whisper loving unanswered words, in the solemn loneliness of the hill-side.

Presently the little child, white and sick with terror, crept to her side and tried to put one little bonny hand between the fingers that clasped Ella's.

"I said I saw 'im," she whispered, "and I did saw 'im, didn't I?"

Derry answered only by a kind touch upon the thin fingers, for though she tried, she could not smile; and then strickenly she bent again to kiss the face against her breast. Though she thought it a long hour, it was in reality not many minutes before two men came running up with a light hurdle and a mattress. They arranged the carriage-rug upon it, then Steven himself laid their burden there, and Derry, unstrapping Ella's light water-proof from the carriage, wrapped it round her and stood with the unresponding hand in hers, ready to walk beside her sister home.

"No! Let the men go alone, and ever so slowly, will you?" entreated Steven. "It will be far better that you should be at home first, for there is much that you can do before they come. I luckily found Corfe's groom, and I can trust him to take you, if you will let him drive the ponies home. I have sent for Mrs. Martin's doctor to go at once to the Pines. Oh, my—if I might but help you myself!"

"You have," she answered, simply. "Do not look so sad, Steven. Ella often has fainted; and no harm was done to the horses, or the child, or me, or anything. Steven" (looking again at the unsuitable dress), "was it you in Leppard's cottage?"

"Yes; I only recognized you just in time to get out of sight."

"I spoke of you to the old man as his son. Oh, Steven, you surely—"

"Have not been there ever since? Oh, no. I only came down here to-day about my things from home, and because, like a fool, I longed for one glimpse of you."

"It was Leppard's son who told us of—seeing you in the sea."

"It was Leppard's son who brought his boat and a suit of his own clothes and took me up and off. I arranged it all the day before. I knew I could trust him, for he is a faithful fellow. Once, just at first I was tempted to really do what I seemed to have done, but I thank God I had not fallen quite so low as that. I lived"—she did not seem to know, but she remembered afterward how tightly her hand was held in his while he spoke—"and if my whole life had been a misery to me, I have to-day been recompensed."

"Even yet," said Derry, her lovely desolate eyes still on his, "I have never thanked you."

"Spare me that. Oliver can thank me," he whispered, his harsh tone showing what the news of her engagement had been to him. "Do you remember"—he was making a brave attempt to speak lightly, seeing the pain in her face—"how little you appreciated the beautiful hue of my green coat on your first morning at Harrack's? I positively thought then that I would rather appear ignominiously attired before almost anybody than you, yet here you see me!"

"Is it always to be trifling between you and me?" she asked, in passionate quietness. "Where shall you be? When shall you—"

"Never! Nowhere!" he answered, rapidly. "I am going out of your life now, not to trouble it again. Is not it strange that only this very afternoon—when now I know that your wheels must have been close behind me—I was thinking what a short time it is, after all?"

"Why strange?" she asked, wistfully, "that it should be just then you thought of death? I often do."

"Oh, I don't know" (avoiding a glance at the quiescent form borne from them), "any more than I know why you should, as you say you do, often think of death, in your perfect health, and with your

future happily shaped before you—and to be happily shared. It is not for you. No, only for me" (speaking in a quiet, passionate despair, while her hand lay still in his close parting clasp, and the eyes she used to think so fierce as well as melancholy, held hers), "to feel how true it is that 'All of life's a cry, just of weariness and woe, love.'"

And with that last word uttered lingeringly, but not sorrowfully, he turned away.

PART VIII.

CHAPTER I.

"No, Mrs. Eales, I don't believe you can see her, and what's more, I don't think it's natural you should expect it. Her sister lying dead there, down at the Pines, and that cruel and bad-tasted Mrs. Martin not letting her stop there, though I'd never have abased myself to ask it if I'd been her. I hope she won't see *anybody* out of those ungrateful walls, that's what I do. It's as unnatural as—as a two-headed calf or—anything—I'm sick with crying now, and Amos, too, and if *we* are, why, what she'd be herself I am just afraid to think. And always kind and cheery to everybody, and saving that good-for-nothing little imp just to lose her own sister. No, I declare I won't go and ask her to see you, not likely, with your long face, and when she wouldn't be persuaded down to see Mr. Oliver Basset that worships the ground that's under her, nor Miss Primrose that was always thoughtful of her when your painted missis—Oh, don't look at me! You haven't cried, I'll warrant, till you don't know what you say."

"No," said Sarah, quietly; "I haven't cried—yet. Where shall I find Miss Hope?"

"Find her? Nowhere. She wouldn't be upstairs sitting in the dark if she wanted folk to find her. I don't s'pose she'd have had me refuse her to Mr. Basset and his sister, and Mr. Corfe and everybody if she meant to see you; and—"

But Sarah Eales had not stopped to hear even so far. She knew which was Miss Hope's bedroom, and did not even wait for an answer to her quiet rap upon the door, before she opened it and went in, closing it behind her, and turning the key.

"Miss Derry," she said then, in her quiet way, but without the old monotonous, "I'm come."

"Yes."

Derry was sitting at her unshaded window, looking out, and she did not turn. It was one of those soft gray nights when the moon, yet a week from its full age, seems to allow no shadows.

"Miss Derry, just this once I want to speak to you about it. It shall not be again. There is no need of secrecy now. I have no one now to screen. Do you—*know*, Miss Derry? Don't look at me in that way. I'm not cruel to her—I don't think any one could ever have said or thought that of me. I'm not even cruel to you. I asked you if you knew, but you needn't answer even that, for I'm sure you know. I have seen it in your face. Was it long ago you found it out? Or was it that day you played to me? I feared you might have known on that morning when Miss Ella's parrot came to you—for safety. When I walked here in search of it, she came too after me. She found it—and killed it. Don't, please. Sit still, and look out of the window as you were when I came in. I must tell you. It is a sort of justice, and it will be over soon. I have no one to shield now. Oh, my poor, poor child! She tried once to kill Fitz. You surely saw how the dog shunned her, yet I've seen her often and often kind to him, and coaxing and feeding him. She tried to kill him, because Mr. Miles loved him. Every one Miss Ella loved was to love her only—as I did; as Mrs. Martin did. Then it was all well. It was only if any one came between—it is so hard to understand, only I suppose jealousy always is. Jealousy never can be understood. But, Miss Derry, it was more than that in her. It was so strange, because but for that she was good, and kind, and patient, wasn't she?"—eagerly, but without waiting for a reply. "And it came so seldom. It was from her childhood—her motherless childhood; and

no one ever understood; no one ever saw it but me. I always wanted a doctor asked, but how could I get it done when I could not tell any one? I thought a clever doctor might have known perhaps whether her brain was different, and he might have helped her—or us, but I never could propose it, because it would have been so dreadful to let her father have such tears as I have always had. So I could only stay with her—always with her, when I could. You told me once I was never fond of you as I was of Miss Ella, and I said if fond was the right word, I'd no need to be. You couldn't understand, of course. Even as children you were so different. She never—Miss Derry, I feel as sure as of my own life, that she never thought she committed any awful sin. It was no more to her than a blow is to many a person. I read once of some awful torpor people have—very, very few, thank Heaven!—and—the instinct to kill, a sort of madness, and I think she had it. Yet, except for that, she hated to give, or even to see pain. She has nursed Mrs. Martin kindly, untiringly, and me. But then we loved her best. And so did Mr. Miles, for a time. Then some one—not here, no one Miss Ella knew, or even saw—came between them.

"At first she seemed gentle and forbearing over it; but—I feared. And then there came—that night. He was to have been at the Pines in the afternoon, and he was not, and—at night she went. I followed her—fearing. I overtook her on purpose, and begged her to go back with me, but she would not. She was quite gentle and kind with me, regretting I had come out in the dark—at least, it was dark but for a little moonlight—but she firmly ordered me to go back, while she went on, and so I could not force myself upon her further. But I would not go back. I waited just within the park, and it was me the man saw who came from Ireland to tell. I knew what he had to say, and I should have been tried if Mr. Steven Basset hadn't—Oh, Miss Derry! I never, never shall understand his saying that.

"No one saw her. She was so light, and fleet, and—always clever. As she came from the Tower I joined her, and she said, just in her old way, kind and

yet cold: 'Oh, you waited, then, Sarah?' and I felt at ease.

"But afterward, when I knew what had been done at the Tower with that dagger Mr. Miles used as a paper knife, I took care to be the first to tell her, and I said: 'He just sat as usual, Miss Ella, so it must have been some one he never suspected.' 'Yes,' she said, quietly. 'I know. Some one came between us. No one can come between us now. Don't speak of it any more, Sarah.'"

"I found in her pocket, crushed up, a half-written letter from Mr. Miles to—some lady. I burned it, and from that day I tried not to leave her. When you came, I was terribly afraid at first that you had a suspicion. I found you hadn't, and after that I was afraid you would find out. Lately, Miss Derry, I've known what you suffered. I knew why you rescued her from that marriage, but then I feared still more, because you had come between her and Mr. Oliver. I knew your only motive, and, Miss Derry, I just want to tell you there was one reparation I could make, and I have made it. Long ago I wrote all this down. I was afraid death might prevent me. I wrote it all, and it has been hidden ever since. Now, I have sent it to Mr. Oliver, and I have told him why you accepted him, for I didn't know, I guessed, that nothing else would have made you, for I saw by your face you were miserable—as he might have seen. It was bare justice to do that, and—and there's no need to keep my secret now. She's at rest. She's—who knows, Miss Derry? I have heard her pray. Oh! I have heard her pray often and often, though never *private*. I used to think it odd, but perhaps it wasn't. Perhaps it was that one awful emptiness in the brain that she could not help. We don't understand, do we? She looks at rest. When I look at her now I cannot believe it all, but then often and often I could not before. I only came to tell you this, Miss Derry. No; don't try to speak to me, especially if you feel kind. I can't bear a kind word to-night. I'll see you again. No, please, Miss Derry. Oh, I'm all right. I shall stay with Mrs. Martin."

The light of the shaded lamp at the old oak Tower fell on Oliver Basset's

bing head as he sat writing. His sister, sitting opposite, had just dropped into her lap a sheet of paper closely covered, and was now looking across at her brother, with a real pride as well as tenderness in her eyes.

"You have read it, Primrose?" he asked, glancing up as if he had become conscious of her gaze. "It is a pitiful narrative, is it not?"

"Oliver"—his sister had come up to him, and fallen to her knees, looking up with swimming eyes—"Oliver, I must tell you. I shall hate myself till I also confess. I have had—sometimes—such a terrible, terrible fear, intangible when I tried to dissect it, yet there; making me most miserable. Dear, do you remember that night? Do you remember that I saw you—out in the park, just after his—death? Do you remember"—seizing his hand, and laying it against her lips and cheek—"that you and Miles had quarreled, and yet that you told me to forget it from that night? and that he must take his turn to suffer? Oliver, to tell you this is a bitter punishment for the wrong I did you—"

"My dear," said Oliver, bending to kiss her, "tell me no more. It is not unnatural, for it was most strange that I should have been there just then. I had been with Steve. Let us forget it all, for afterward—when I knew what had been done and yet all was in mystery—I remember with such a fearful pain, how you said—What on earth was I going to tell you?" the young man cried, breaking off suddenly, for the words stung him as he uttered them to her, and suspicion could not take form in her gentle presence.

"Was it," she asked, anxiously, "anything I could have told you about poor Steven? Oh! if he had only not died! But his name will be cleared, won't it, Oliver? That paper will go to some one in authority, won't it? Oh, poor Derry!"

"Primrose, go back, dear, now. I'm writing to her. I must tell her that I know her motive for that change which always puzzled me. For her acceptance of my hand after her rejection of it. I must release her now."

"You will tell her you will wait?"

whispered Primrose, as proud of him as she was distressed for him.

"Yes; I will give her her own time. I will not trouble her—yet. Now, you and I must do something," he added, kindly, (for it would not do to sound the depths of his own disappointment just yet, and in his sister's watchful presence). "Should you like to go abroad together? Long ago you used to say one of your dreams was to travel with me."

"Oh, what happiness!" she sighed.

And that night, for the first time since that January evening when Miles was murdered, she took her violin from its case. Not that she played a note, but she held it in her loving hands, and once again touched it with her loving lips.

CHAPTER II.

IN her own especial corner of the long studio, Derry Hope was plying her chisel diligently, the October sunshine falling upon her, while her father's end of the room was in shadow. Yet, though his windows were shaded, and he was hard at work, he glanced constantly and anxiously across at his daughter, and every now and then had to force back from his lips the questions which rose from his tender heart. What could it be, he wondered in his silence, which had changed her, and yet left her in so many ways unchanged? He had known all about the motive which had taken her to Dewring in the opening of the year, and which had kept her there but that mystery could not vex her now, for did not the Home Secretary hold the confession of the unknown murderer—he himself having died soon after the crime had been laid to one of the Bassets, who, in a fit of intoxication, had acted as if he were guilty? Had not the Bassets expressed themselves satisfied with the unpublished confession, and had not the family name been cleared of all suspicion? No; it could not be any memory of that murder which had left on his daughter's face such deep gravity. He looked across at her again. In her sunny corner she worked engrossedly, pale, but not really sad; thoughtful, but never really abstracted (her father

felt) either from her work or from him. At that moment she glanced at him and smiled.

"Whatever grief she has, she tries to defy," he murmured, bending his dreamy face to his work again.

Could she be repenting that she refused her uncle Joseph's offer to make her his heiress if she would give up her profession? or his proposal to pay both their expenses if her father would bring her out to America to visit him, on the understanding that she would consider this? If it were that, why, it was not too late, perhaps, to change her mind, and he would undertake to make all smooth with Joseph. True, he was very much occupied just then, and unusually anxious to work now while he might, as who could tell whether this threatening of his sight were not more serious than he was permitted to believe? Still everything must give way for Derry's sake. But then, what would she imagine if he reverted now to Joseph's offer, merely to urge its acceptance, after his unconcealed delight in her rejection of it? It might even make her think perhaps that he detected she was not perfectly happy! As she knew how how terribly he should miss her, how was he to make her quite sure he wished her to go to Uncle Joseph? She could read him like a book, and knew that the studio would be desolate to him without her. How could he hide all this?

"You've no right to indulge such long thoughts, Pat, in my presence. It is not polite."

"Never mind my thoughts, Derry," said her father, almost cheerily, accepting a kiss on his bald forehead. "You have plenty of your own to attend to. But if you must know—"

"Ah, yes! it always has to pop out under my glittering eye," interpolated Derry.

"I was thinking how nice it would be if you could take a holiday for a time. If Joseph would come over and fetch you."

"I will go nowhere without you."

"My dear, I ought to stick to my work now, for fear that my eyes— Bless the child!" stopping abruptly with a lame attempt at having meant something totally different from what she had been about to imagine—"I have so

much in hand that I could not be spared yet. I mean—not just yet. But you've don't too much lately. Why, bless me, I never saw any one advance as you do, my dear. You deserve a holiday."

"And you don't," said the girl, tenderly. "You have such need to improve, haven't you? You don't deserve a holiday, do you? And you haven't already done a very creditable life's work, have you, Pat?"

"I suppose"—after a pause—"it is nothing you could tell me, dear?"

For an instant the girl's eyes fell, as she pondered. If her father shared her knowledge— No; then he must share her trouble, too, and he had his own to bear, especially the pitiful dimness of his eyes. He would share her longing, too, and a constant, undying longing was very hard to bear. She looked up again, smiling bravely.

"I have lots of things to tell you, Pat, when we are less busy."

"My dear, I can not help seeing something I can not understand. Why did you go down to Harrack's Beacon more than once this summer, when you must needs so hate the place, and when you only had an hour or two there? And it is a little odd to see you searching every magazine, always apparently to be disappointed. And you have a strange way of looking about among the faces wherever we are, and—and you start at every sound."

"If I start," said Derry, sadly, "do you wonder, dad?"

"No, my darling," relieved instantly, for here was the grip of tangible motive. "I do *not* wonder, since the terrible shock of Ella's death. My poor little girl! Derry, do you remember how prettily she used to watch us at work, and amuse us by telling us what she would do if she were rich, and what splendid presents she would give us? She was not one for poverty, was she? While you were always—"

"Easy as an old shoe, you used to say. Don't forget the ancient metaphors, if you please. Yes, I remember."

He had gone to his work cheerfully, while she idled near him; so she waited, softly discussing it, or watching in a sympathetic silence the skilful hands which never blundered like the tender heart; not returning to her own tasks

until one of her father's patrons entered, and the two were engrossed with their conversation. Then she slipped back to her corner, and tried to make up for lost time, until a letter was brought her. Seeing it was from Harrack's Beacon, she opened it with trembling haste, for only there was it known that Steven Basset lived, and that she longed for news of him. Unlike her discourses. Mrs. Frayd's letters were limited, and the sheet Derry opened was not half covered. Yet how much it seemed to contain:

"DEAR MISS,—a cousin of my dear departed frayd's" (the mistress of Harrack's had become Mrs. Pickett now, but Derry never thought of her but as Mrs. Frayd) "is home from america and was here this morning one day in new york her mistress took her to carry some soup and things to a sick dressmaker at the top of a tall house and left her outside on the landing and as the next door was open she looked in and saw my fotograf upon the chimney and i know it is mr basset's I had only that one frame done so handsome as she saw it of coarse dear miss it might have been left there or he might have given it away or it might be he is there the worst is my late dear husband's cousin dont know the house a bit but you might get to know her mistress is mrs omeara living in cork house 9 avenuamos desires duty penkus is kept in every day your respectful amelia pickett late frayd."

Derry looked down the studio with darkened, shining eyes. Her father was alone now, making a feint of not having observed that she was engrossed by a letter.

"Dad"—she was at his side before she had allowed herself time to shape any thought distinctly—"will you take me to America?"

"My—dear!"

The sentence was rather short to need to be broken by a gasp.

"There is somebody—I think there's somebody there."

"I have no doubt of it Several people," with a spurious jocularity.

"A friend to whom I owe a great, great debt, father."

Only in moments of supreme earnestness did Derry ever say *father*, and Pat-

rick Hope's whole bearing changed at the word."

"I can not pay it unless I go. I can not find this friend, except by going myself. No one else—scarcely—knows he is alive."

"He?"

The sculptor pushed up his preservers, and stared at his daughter's lovely excited face, but she was too deep in her one hope to notice this pathetic peep of alarm.

"He did so much for me. And, father," in a whisper, "so much for Ella I never, never can forget."

"For Ella? For my little Ella?"

"Ah! for her sake you will take me?"

"No," he answered, sturdily, "for yours, my darling. Yet if I were not so busy—"

"Oh, I'll work so hard afterward, dad. I'll make it up. And you will more than make it up yourself directly, for you will be like a giant refreshed, and will do such wonders. You know they say that an enforced idleness would do you good, and prevent your imagining, dear, that your eyes are anything more than tired."

"Well," Mr. Hope mused, "I should like to see Joseph, and America; but he won't pay, you know, unless you promise to drop what he calls your unsuitable work. But"—with one of his rare carresses—"I will think it over, my dear."

"Don't you think, dad," in coaxing tones, "it would do to think it over after you have promised?"

"What, decide in a moment? Why, there are hundreds of things. For instance—searching about for them—"you would want piles of new clothes."

"Not a single one. I could be ready within half an hour."

"I see that I must go away, if I'm to think it over to any purpose. You had better think it over, too, my dear, before I come back, for I don't believe you have done so yet."

Smiling, he went away, leaving his own letters unnoticed, and bent only on escaping what he hated to resist—his daughter's pleading. At least at first bent only on that.

It was quite two hours before he returned, and then there was such d-lighted mystery in his face that Derry came up to him breathlessly from the work

in which she had so conscientiously engrossed herself during his absence.

"You've thought it over, Pat, I see."

"No, my dear, I have not. I have been too big a fool." (He had been going to enjoy lengthening her uncertainty, but the question in her eyes was too much for him.) "I have done even worse—I have taken passages for both of us in the Cunarder sailing to-morrow. Oh, what a fool your poor, dear father is!"

"Oh, dad!" She had been a little girl the last time he had seen her cry like this; and he—well, he supposed being an older man now, he could not stand it so well.

"Why, Pat!" she exclaimed, frightened when she saw the slow tears gathering in his failing eyes. "Why, Pat," and then she laughed suddenly, as if it had been laughing she had intended all along; and then she kissed each dim, wet eye, and the gray hairs, and laughed again, and then caught herself up just in the act of going to cry.

And so it was by very slow degrees they both grew quiet, and clung together in the fading light, thinking with actual joy of starting together on the morrow, and not even recollecting that any preparations would be necessary. But when the lamp was brought in, it seemed to remind Derry, and she went away to see about her father's packing first, singing softly in her new-born gladness.

She had not got very far in her task when her father called her, and she ran back to the studio. He sat close to the shaded lamp, reading his letters, and she thought she had been mistaken; but when she came up to him, he rose and threw the letters behind him, to put both his hands on his daughter's shoulders.

"Derry, my dear, poor Mrs. Martin has died—suddenly. She was standing before her glass, Sarah Eales tell me, the evening before last, just going to—never mind what—and she turned sharply round, and said, 'Sarah, how awfully ill I look,' and—fell dead."

"How terrible!"

"And, Derry, I have heard from her lawyer, too. She has made no will since Ella's death—you know she had left all to Ella—so that you are her heir."

"It is impossible! Oh, dad, impossible! For you know she disliked me so."

"Yes, and loved Ella; but if she has really left no later will, you are her nearest relative."

"Stop, dad, please. It—bewilders me!"

"No wonder, my dear. To think of your being rich! Well, we can lend Rogers that other £50 now, and"—with a sigh that was meant for a smile—"we can afford to go to America, eh?"

"If it is true," said Derry, gravely, "we will make Sarah independent. She shall have everything she wants."

"Yes; she deserves a house of her own for her devotion to my little girl."

"She shall be rich," declared Derry, fervently, "if she will give me that favor."

Then very slowly and thoughtfully she went again to her packing, singing no more for all the fortune that had come to her.

CHAPTER III.

IN a room in New York, so high that it was on a level with many of the city chimneys, Steven Basset sat with a pen in his hand, and a half-filled page before him, as he had sat for hours. There was a pained bewilderment on his worn face, for he had had a long, hard chase after thought—which would not come at his command. This painful experience was growing sadly familiar to him now, and utter hopelessness was following in its train. Yet, from the first, he had said he would not fail if any possible effort, any trying ever so wearily, would prevent it. But the effort had grown to be a very despairing effort now. It had been growing ever more so, since it had first been brought home to him that his old power had left him.

He supposed he had had power once, as editors in the old country had told him so, and that had gone first. Then went all his old ease and audacity, and that he often thought had served him best of all. Some critics had been used to speak of the charm his unflinching geniality always gave to his light and cynical vein but sorrow had changed all that.

Everything he did now, he—perhaps best of all his judges—knew to be heavy and forced.

"I myself," he said, in sadly honest self-contempt, "would never care to read, much less to buy, the gray stuff which is all I can write now."

Then he leaned back, and his quill still between them, held the thin, nervous fingers before his eyes.

"It is no use. Yet what man can bear to do nothing? To seek help from Oliver—even if he knew I was alive to need it—is impossible, for I'm a Basset still though I shall never own to it. Not that I have need to be proud of that name, though. In its best days it never had any value in my eyes, and now that I have forfeited my identity would I, after making myself conspicuous, come again to life to be the cynosure— But something must be done. I could get manual labor, perhaps, and willingly would; but there's not strength enough left in me now. I don't know why, for I'm not ill, only growing bony, and—old in the head sometimes. Sleepy. The consequence" (with a cynical little smile) "of being delivered over to luxury is idleness."

Steven was lying back in his chair, and the room was very silent, so no wonder the heavy lids fell over his eyes, and the lined face (which held its look of power through all its physical weakness) fell upon his clasped hands. Beyond a doubt he was falling asleep, at this hour, when most busy men turn out to lunch. He was indeed so far on his way to sleep, that he was only half aware of a knock on his door, and that after a pause it was opened noiselessly. Presently his eyes unclosed, and he saw someone, dressed in black, standing before the mantel-piece, and gazing at the photograph of Mrs. Frayd in its ornate frame. How could he know that this was Derry's excuse for not at first looking in his direction? How could he know it was not a dream? As he looked, she turned and quietly came toward him, uttering his name almost in a whisper.

Stunned as it seemed, he rose to his feet, then had to lean for actual support against his chair, while his hollow eyes devoured the tender face before him.

"Steven."

Once again Derry pronounced his name, not in a whisper this time, but with a thrill of joy, and she took up his chin, unsteady hand and held it between her own, stroking it and laying it at last against her cheek.

"Steven, I have come." Then she stood trembling in alarm, for she had never before in all her life heard a man sob.

Holding his hand still in both of hers, she waited silently, with smiling lips, but most pathetic eyes, until the strong restless sobbing ceased.

"Yes, Steven," then she said, and almost cheerfully, "I have come—I mean we, Pat and me. Pat is my father. Perhaps you do not know. We have come for you—I mean," readily, in his silence of great repression, "we came to do dad's eyes good because he had tried them too much, and a holiday was recommended. And Uncle Joseph lives here, and he wanted to see us, and"—still not the interruption which she longed for, no help in telling, only this strong self-control—"and we wanted to see Uncle Joseph awfully. So we thought of a trip in a Cunarder to— to find you, Steven."

The truth had burst through all her touching childish disguise, even without his encouragement. "Oh, Steven, we want to—only" (with a gulp) "we want to tell you what we owe you—dad and I, and Uncle Joseph"—who had never heard Steven's name!

Still that touching silence of restraint, still his hungry eyes devouring her, "What do we *not* owe you, Steven? This"—with a sudden change of tone—"is like your room at Harrack's. I mean not at all like our parlors there, is it? There are no admirals dying in a crowd on deck, in shirt-frills starched, are there? And no brown pipes under it—under them. Oh, how that pipe covered me with confusion that first morning! I remember so well, I shall never forget it. Shall you? Of course you will. It—it was nothing to remember, only you sneaked away—is that a right word?—so very demonstratively, Steven. It was written so plainly across the back of your head that you had seen it all, and wanted to get away before I caught sight of you, and that you were very sorry for my imbecility, and pledg-

ed yourself not to tell. Oh, it was all as plain as print! Steven, I am rich now. I have everything now—but you. I mean *we* have everything, for we *have* you. Steven, don't tremble so. Oh, how longingly I have waited for you!"

"No, no!"

He spoke at last, hoarsely in his intense agitation, but his longing eyes still told her what no words could.

"I have waited for you," she gently persisted. "I shall go on waiting."

"No, my—it would be a sin in me."

"I shall wait," she said, in quiet earnestness, "if it be forever. Steven, you once said, at least I thought you *meant* it, if you did not—that, though I had many faults—so true that is!—in your soul I bided. Was not it that? Unless you have put me out of your soul I shall wait for you forever. Oh, Steven," she cried, with actual pain, for the unspeakable gladness that her words had brought into his lined face was at that moment more than she could bear. That words of hers should change him

so, told all that he would not—for her sake—confess.

"Oh, Steven," she cried, in actual pain; and then could say no more, until a new thought and a new courage came. To all seeming she spoke quite easily, looking across the room, away from him. "I declare, Steven, I have not yet properly renewed my admiring friendship with that dear, ingenious grin of Mrs. Frayd's. Do you recollect how you despised me for not appreciating the orange-tinted gold of the frame? You did. I don't forget that, as it was that picture which guided me to you, Steven, and as—without it—I might been for years, or all my life, and not found you, I must—kiss it!"

Her lips had been always beautiful to him, but he thought only now of the warm, brave, tender heart that stirred them.

"Yes," he said, still holding fast his self-control in all his overmastering love and gratitude, "yes—afterward."

THE END.



