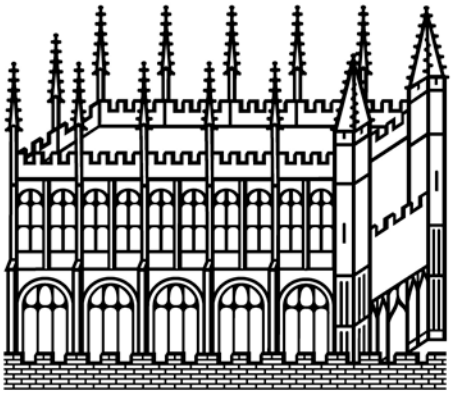

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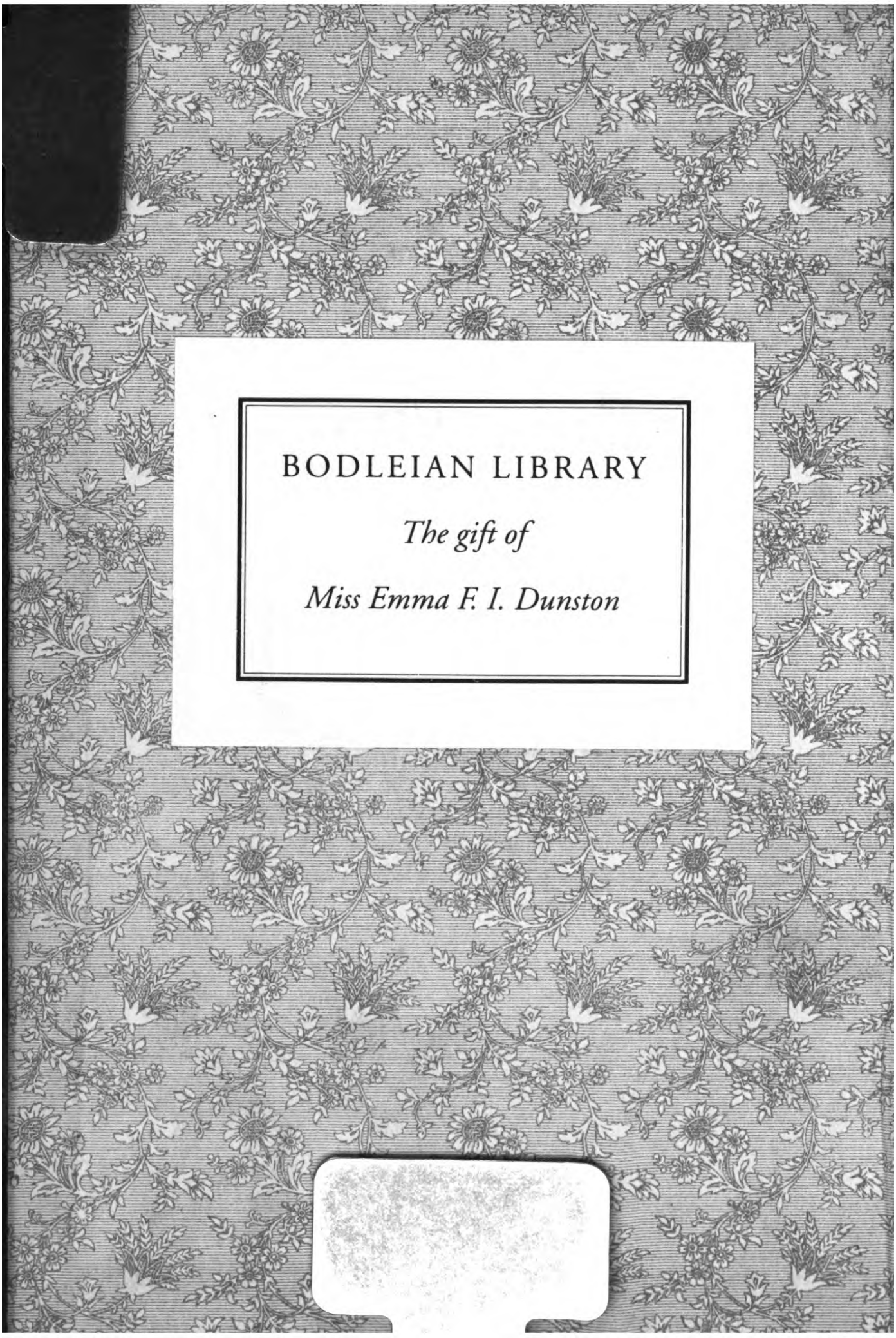
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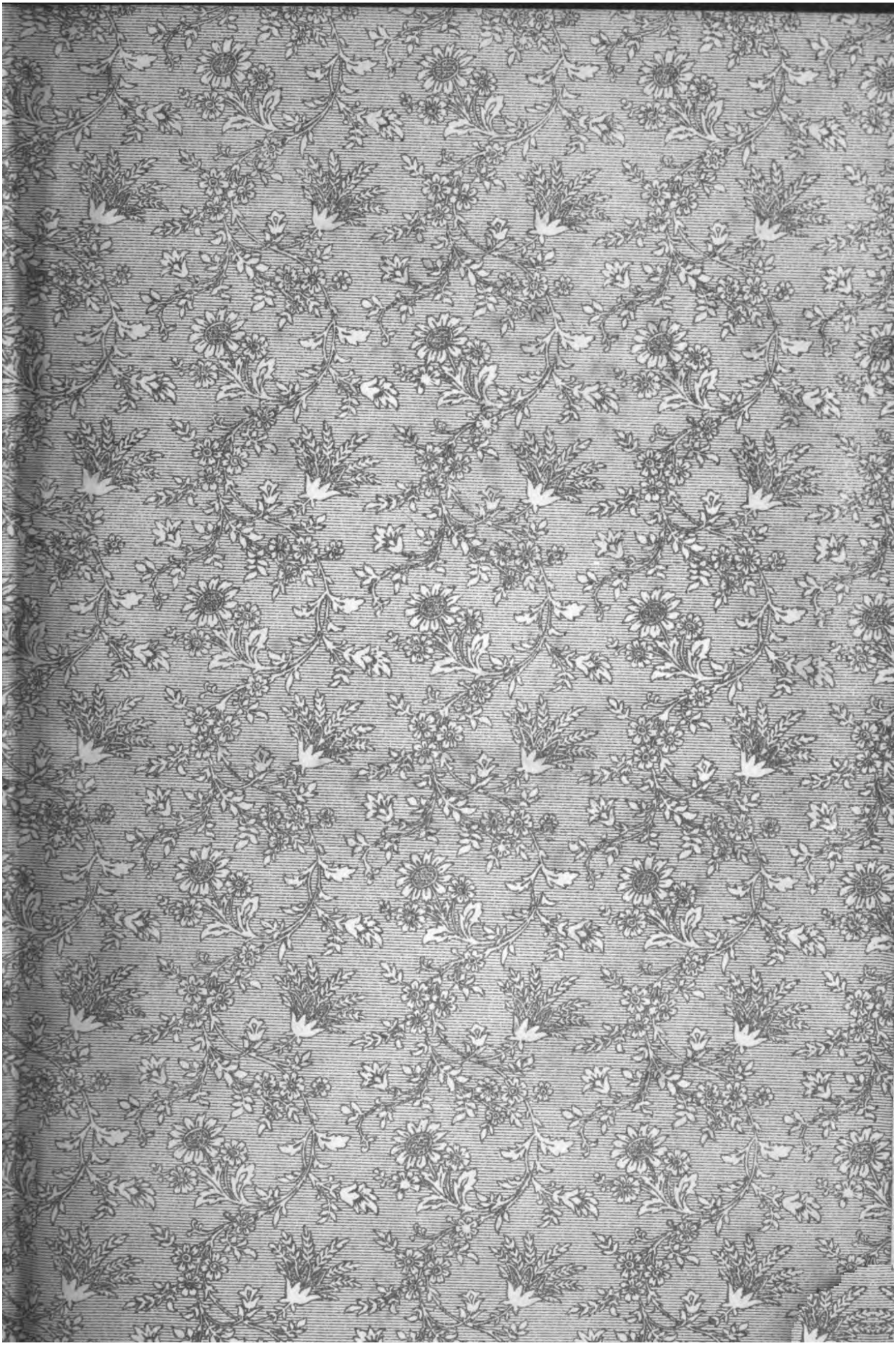

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DANIEL DERONDA

BOOK II.

MEETING STREAMS

BIBLIOTHECA

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MEETING STREAMS.

CHAPTER XI.

The beginning of an acquaintance whether with persons or things is to get a definite outline for our ignorance.

Mr Grandcourt's wish to be introduced had no suddenness for Gwendolen; but when Lord Brackenshaw moved aside a little for the prefigured stranger to come forward and she felt herself face to face with the real man, there was a little shock which flushed her cheeks and vexatiously deepened with her consciousness of it. The shock came from the reversal of her expectations: Grandcourt could hardly have been more unlike all her imaginary portraits of him. He was slightly taller than herself, and their eyes seemed

to be on a level; there was not the faintest smile on his face as he looked at her, not a trace of self-consciousness or anxiety in his bearing; when he raised his hat he showed an extensive baldness surrounded with a mere fringe of reddish blond hair, but he also showed a perfect hand; the line of feature from brow to chin undisguised by beard was decidedly handsome, with only moderate departures from the perpendicular, and the slight whisker too was perpendicular. It was not possible for a human aspect to be freer from grimace or solicitous wrigglings; also it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man wide awake to look less animated. The correct Englishman, drawing himself up from his bow into rigidity, assenting severely, and seeming to be in a state of internal drill, suggests a suppressed vivacity, and may be suspected of letting go with some violence when he is released from parade; but Grandcourt's bearing had no rigidity, it inclined rather to the flaccid. His complexion had a faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red; his long narrow grey eyes expressed nothing but indifference. Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his

appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognise the alphabet; we are not sure of the language. I am only mentioning the points that Gwendolen saw by the light of a prepared contrast in the first minutes of her meeting with Grandcourt: they were summed up in the words, "He is not ridiculous." But forthwith Lord Brackenshaw was gone, and what is called conversation had begun, the first and constant element in it being that Grandcourt looked at Gwendolen persistently with a slightly exploring gaze, but without change of expression, while she only occasionally looked at him with a flash of observation a little softened by coquetry. Also, after her answers there was a longer or shorter pause before he spoke again.

"I used to think archery was a great bore," Grandcourt began. He spoke with a fine accent, but with a certain broken drawl, as of a distinguished personage with a distinguished cold on his chest.

"Are you converted to-day?" said Gwendolen.

(Pause, during which she imagined various degrees and modes of opinion about herself that might be entertained by Grandcourt.)

"Yes, since I saw you shooting. In things of

this sort one generally sees people missing and simpering."

"I suppose you are a first-rate shot with a rifle."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen, having taken a rapid observation of Grandcourt, made a brief graphic description of him to an indefinite hearer.)

"I have left off shooting."

"Oh, then, you are a formidable person. People who have done things once and left them off make one feel very contemptible, as if one were using cast-off fashions. I hope you have not left off all follies, because I practise a great many."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen made several interpretations of her own speech.)

"What do you call follies?"

"Well, in general, I think whatever is agreeable is called a folly. But you have not left off hunting, I hear."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen recalled what she had heard about Grandcourt's position, and decided that he was the most aristocratic-looking man she had ever seen.)

"One must do something."

"And do you care about the turf?—or is that among the things you have left off?"

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be

less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)

"I run a horse now and then; but I don't go in for the thing as some men do. Are you fond of horses?"

"Yes, indeed: I never like my life so well as when I am on horseback, having a great gallop. I think of nothing. I only feel myself strong and happy."

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen wondered whether Grandcourt would like what she said, but assured herself that she was not going to disguise her tastes.)

"Do you like danger?"

"I don't know. When I am on horseback I never think of danger. It seems to me that if I broke my bones I should not feel it. I should go at anything that came in my way."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen had run through a whole hunting season with two chosen hunters to ride at will.)

"You would perhaps like tiger-hunting or pig-sticking. I saw some of that for a season or two in the East. Everything here is poor stuff after that."

"*You* are fond of danger, then?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen speculated on the

probability that the men of coldest manners were the most adventurous, and felt the strength of her own insight, supposing the question had to be decided.)

"One must have something or other. But one gets used to it."

"I begin to think I am very fortunate, because everything is new to me: it is only that I can't get enough of it. I am not used to anything except being dull, which I should like to leave off as you have left off shooting."

(Pause, during which it occurred to Gwendolen that a man of cold and distinguished manners might possibly be a dull companion; but on the other hand she thought that most persons were dull, that she had not observed husbands to be companions—and that after all she was not going to accept Grandcourt.)

"Why are you dull?"

"This is a dreadful neighbourhood. There is nothing to be done in it. That is why I practised my archery."

(Pause, during which Gwendolen reflected that the life of an unmarried woman who could not go about and had no command of anything must necessarily be dull through all the degrees of comparison as time went on.)

"You have made yourself queen of it. I imagine you will carry the first prize."

"I don't know that. I have great rivals. Did you not observe how well Miss Arrowpoint shot?"

(Pause, wherein Gwendolen was thinking that men had been known to choose some one else than the woman they most admired, and recalled several experiences of that kind in novels.)

"Miss Arrowpoint? No—that is, yes."

"Shall we go now and hear what the scoring says? Every one is going to the other end now —shall we join them? I think my uncle is looking towards me. He perhaps wants me."

Gwendolen found a relief for herself by thus changing the situation: not that the *tête-à-tête* was quite disagreeable to her; but while it lasted she apparently could not get rid of the unwonted flush in her cheeks and the sense of surprise which made her feel less mistress of herself than usual. And this Mr Grandcourt, who seemed to feel his own importance more than he did hers—a sort of unreasonableness few of us can tolerate—must not take for granted that he was of great moment to her, or that because others speculated on him as a desirable match she held herself altogether at his beck. How Grand-

court had filled up the pauses will be more evident hereafter.

"You have just missed the gold arrow, Gwendolen," said Mr Gascoigne. "Miss Juliet Fenn scores eight above you."

"I am very glad to hear it. I should have felt that I was making myself too disagreeable—taking the best of everything," said Gwendolen, quite easily.

It was impossible to be jealous of Juliet Fenn, a girl as middling as mid-day market in everything but her archery and her plainness, in which last she was noticeably like her father: underhung and with receding brow resembling that of the more intelligent fishes. (Surely, considering the importance which is given to such an accident in female offspring, marriageable men, or what the new English calls "intending bridegrooms," should look at themselves dispassionately in the glass, since their natural selection of a mate prettier than themselves is not certain to bar the effect of their own ugliness.)

There was now a lively movement in the mingling groups, which carried the talk along with it. Every one spoke to every one else by turns, and Gwendolen, who chose to see what was going on around her now, observed that Grandcourt was

having Klesmer presented to him by some one unknown to her—a middle-aged man with dark full face and fat hands, who seemed to be on the easiest terms with both, and presently led the way in joining the Arrowpoints, whose acquaintance had already been made by both him and Grandcourt. Who this stranger was she did not care much to know; but she wished to observe what was Grandcourt's manner towards others than herself. Precisely the same; except that he did not look much at Miss Arrowpoint, but rather at Klesmer, who was speaking with animation — now stretching out his long fingers horizontally, now pointing downwards with his fore-finger, now folding his arms and tossing his mane, while he addressed himself first to one and then the other, including Grandcourt, who listened with an impassive face and narrow eyes, his left fore-finger in his waistcoat-pocket, and his right slightly touching his thin whisker.

"I wonder which style Miss Arrowpoint admires most," was a thought that glanced through Gwendolen's mind while her eyes and lips gathered rather a mocking expression. But she would not indulge her sense of amusement by watching as if she were curious, and she gave all her animation to those immediately around her,

determined not to care whether Mr Grandcourt came near her again or not.

He did come, however, and at a moment when he could propose to conduct Mrs Davilow to her carriage. "Shall we meet again in the ball-room?" she said, as he raised his hat at parting. The "yes" in reply had the usual slight drawl and perfect gravity.

"You were wrong for once, Gwendolen," said Mrs Davilow during their few minutes' drive to the castle.

"In what, mamma?"

"About Mr Grandcourt's appearance and manners. You can't find anything ridiculous in him."

"I suppose I could if I tried, but I don't want to do it," said Gwendolen, rather pettishly; and her mamma was afraid to say more.

It was the rule on these occasions for the ladies and gentlemen to dine apart, so that the dinner might make a time of comparative ease and rest for both. Indeed the gentlemen had a set of archery stories about the epicurism of the ladies, who had somehow been reported to show a revoltingly masculine judgment in venison, even asking for the fat—a proof of the frightful rate at which corruption might go on in women, but for severe social restraint. And every year the amiable

Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a *gourmet*, mentioned Byron's opinion that a woman should never be seen eating,—introducing it with a confidential—"The fact is"—as if he were for the first time admitting his concurrence in that sentiment of the refined poet.

In the ladies' dining-room it was evident that Gwendolen was not a general favourite with her own sex; there were no beginnings of intimacy between her and other girls, and in conversation they rather noticed what she said than spoke to her in free exchange. Perhaps it was that she was not much interested in them, and when left alone in their company had a sense of empty benches. Mrs Vulcany once remarked that Miss Harleth was too fond of the gentlemen; but we know that she was not in the least fond of them—she was only fond of their homage—and women did not give her homage. The exception to this willing aloofness from her was Miss Arrowpoint, who often managed unostentatiously to be by her side, and talked to her with quiet friendliness.

"She knows, as I do, that our friends are ready to quarrel over a husband for us," thought Gwendolen, "and she is determined not to enter into the quarrel."

"I think Miss Arrowpoint has the best manners I ever saw," said Mrs Davilow, when she and Gwendolen were in a dressing-room with Mrs Gascoigne and Anna, but at a distance where they could have their talk apart.

"I wish I were like her," said Gwendolen.

"Why? Are you getting discontented with yourself, Gwen?"

"No; but I am discontented with things. She seems contented."

"I am sure you ought to be satisfied to-day. You must have enjoyed the shooting. I saw you did."

"Oh, that is over now, and I don't know what will come next," said Gwendolen, stretching herself with a sort of moan and throwing up her arms. They were bare now: it was the fashion to dance in the archery dress, throwing off the jacket; and the simplicity of her white cashmere with its border of pale green set off her form to the utmost. A thin line of gold round her neck, and the gold star on her breast, were her only ornaments. Her smooth soft hair piled up into a grand crown made a clear line about her brow. Sir Joshua would have been glad to take her portrait; and he would have had an easier task than the historian at least in this, that he would not have had to represent

the truth of change—only to give stability to one beautiful moment.

"The dancing will come next," said Mrs Davilow. "You are sure to enjoy that."

"I shall only dance in the quadrille. I told Mr Clintock so. I shall not waltz or polk with any one."

"Why in the world do you say that all on a sudden?"

"I can't bear having ugly people so near me."

"Whom do you mean by ugly people?"

"Oh, plenty."

"Mr Clintock, for example, is not ugly." Mrs Davilow dared not mention Grandcourt.

"Well, I hate woollen cloth touching me."

"Fancy!" said Mrs Davilow to her sister who now came up from the other end of the room. "Gwendolen says she will not waltz or polk."

"She is rather given to whims, I think," said Mrs Gascoigne, gravely. "It would be more becoming in her to behave as other young ladies do on such an occasion as this; especially when she has had the advantage of first-rate dancing lessons."

"Why should I waltz if I don't like it, aunt? It is not in the Catechism."

"My *dear!*" said Mrs Gascoigne, in a tone of severe check, and Anna looked frightened at

Gwendolen's daring. But they all passed on without saying more.

Apparently something had changed Gwendolen's mood since the hour of exulting enjoyment in the archery-ground. But she did not look the worse under the chandeliers in the ball-room, where the soft splendour of the scene and the pleasant odours from the conservatory could not but be soothing to the temper, when accompanied with the consciousness of being pre-eminently sought for. Hardly a dancing man but was anxious to have her for a partner, and each whom she accepted was in a state of melancholy remonstrance that she would not waltz or polk.

"Are you under a vow, Miss Harleth?"—"Why are you so cruel to us all?"—"You waltzed with me in February."—"And you who waltz so perfectly!"—were exclamations not without piquancy for her. The ladies who waltzed, naturally thought that Miss Harleth only wanted to make herself particular; but her uncle when he overheard her refusal supported her by saying—

"Gwendolen has usually good reasons." He thought she was certainly more distinguished in not waltzing, and he wished her to be distinguished. The archery ball was intended to be kept at the subdued pitch that suited all dignities clerical

and secular: it was not an escapement for youthful high spirits, and he himself was of opinion that the fashionable dances were too much of a romp.

Among the remonstrant dancing men, however, Mr Grandcourt was not numbered. After standing up for a quadrille with Miss Arrowpoint, it seemed that he meant to ask for no other partner. Gwendolen observed him frequently with the Arrowpoints, but he never took an opportunity of approaching her. Mr Gascoigne was sometimes speaking to him; but Mr Gascoigne was everywhere. It was in her mind now that she would probably after all not have the least trouble about him: perhaps he had looked at her without any particular admiration, and was too much used to everything in the world to think of her as more than one of the girls who were invited in that part of the country. Of course! It was ridiculous of elders to entertain notions about what a man would do, without having seen him even through a telescope. Probably he meant to marry Miss Arrowpoint. Whatever might come, she, Gwendolen, was not going to be disappointed: the affair was a joke whichever way it turned, for she had never committed herself even by a silent confidence in anything Mr Grandcourt would do.

Still, she noticed that he did sometimes quietly and gradually change his position according to hers, so that he could see her whenever she was dancing, and if he did not admire her—so much the worse for him.

This movement for the sake of being in sight of her was more direct than usual rather late in the evening, when Gwendolen had accepted Klesmer as a partner; and that wide-glancing personage, who saw everything and nothing by turns, said to her when they were walking, "Mr Grandcourt is a man of taste. He likes to see you dancing."

"Perhaps he likes to look at what is against his taste," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh: she was quite courageous with Klesmer now. "He may be so tired of admiring that he likes disgust for a variety."

"Those words are not suitable to your lips," said Klesmer, quickly, with one of his grand frowns, while he shook his hand as if to banish the discordant sounds.

"Are you as critical of words as of music?"

"Certainly I am. I should require your words to be what your face and form are—always among the meanings of a noble music."

"That is a compliment as well as a correction. I am obliged for both. But do you know I am

bold enough to wish to correct *you*, and require you to understand a joke?"

"One may understand jokes without liking them," said the terrible Klesmer. "I have had opera books sent me full of jokes; it was just because I understood them that I did not like them. The comic people are ready to challenge a man because he looks grave. 'You don't see the witticism, sir?' 'No, sir, but I see what you meant.' Then I am what we call ticketed as a fellow without *esprit*. But in fact," said Klesmer, suddenly dropping from his quick narrative to a reflective tone, with an impressive frown, "I am very sensible to wit and humour."

"I am glad you tell me that," said Gwendolen, not without some wickedness of intention. But Klesmer's thoughts had flown off on the wings of his own statement, as their habit was, and she had the wickedness all to herself. "Pray, who is that standing near the card-room door?" she went on, seeing there the same stranger with whom Klesmer had been in animated talk on the archery-ground. "He is a friend of yours, I think."

"No, no; an amateur I have seen in town: Lush, a Mr Lush—too fond of Meyerbeer and Scribe—too fond of the mechanical-dramatic."

"Thanks. I wanted to know whether you

thought his face and form required that his words should be among the meanings of noble music?" Klesmer was conquered, and flashed at her a delightful smile which made them quite friendly until she begged to be deposited by the side of her mamma.

Three minutes afterwards her preparation for Grandcourt's indifference were all cancelled. Turning her head after some remark to her mother, she found that he had made his way up to her.

"May I ask if you are tired of dancing, Miss Harleth?" he began, looking down with his former unperturbed expression.

"Not in the least."

"Will you do me the honour—the next—or another quadrille?"

"I should have been very happy," said Gwendolen, looking at her card, "but I am engaged for the next to Mr Clintock—and indeed I perceive that I am doomed for every quadrille: I have not one to dispose of." She was not sorry to punish Mr Grandcourt's tardiness, yet at the same time she would have liked to dance with him. She gave him a charming smile as she looked up to deliver her answer, and he stood still looking down at her with no smile at all.

"I am unfortunate in being too late," he said, after a moment's pause.

"It seemed to me that you did not care for dancing," said Gwendolen. "I thought it might be one of the things you had left off."

"Yes, but I have not begun to dance with you," said Grandcourt. Always there was the same pause before he took up his cue. "You make dancing a new thing—as you make archery."

"Is novelty always agreeable?"

"No, no—not always."

"Then I don't know whether to feel flattered or not. When you had once danced with me there would be no more novelty in it."

"On the contrary. There would probably be much more."

"That is deep. I don't understand."

"Is it difficult to make Miss Harleth understand her power?" Here Grandcourt had turned to Mrs Davilow, who, smiling gently at her daughter, said—

"I think she does not generally strike people as slow to understand."

"Mamma," said Gwendolen, in a deprecating tone, "I am adorably stupid, and want everything explained to me—when the meaning is pleasant."

"If you are stupid, I admit that stupidity is

adorable," returned Grandcourt, after the usual pause, and without change of tone. But clearly he knew what to say.

"I begin to think that my cavalier has forgotten me," Gwendolen observed after a little while. "I see the quadrille is being formed."

"He deserves to be renounced," said Grandcourt.

"I think he is very pardonable," said Gwendolen.

"There must have been some misunderstanding," said Mrs Davilow. "Mr Clintock was too anxious about the engagement to have forgotten it."

But now Lady Brackenshaw came up and said, "Miss Harleth, Mr Clintock has charged me to express to you his deep regret that he was obliged to leave without having the pleasure of dancing with you again. An express came from his father the archdeacon: something important: he was obliged to go. He was *au désespoir*."

"Oh, he was very good to remember the engagement under the circumstances," said Gwendolen. "I am sorry he was called away." It was easy to be politely sorrowful on so felicitous an occasion.

"Then I can profit by Mr Clintock's misfortune?" said Grandcourt. "May I hope that you will let me take his place?"

"I shall be very happy to dance the next quadrille with you."

The appropriateness of the event seemed an augury, and as Gwendolen stood up for the quadrille with Grandcourt, there was a revival in her of the exultation—the sense of carrying everything before her, which she had felt earlier in the day. No man could have walked through the quadrille with more irreproachable ease than Grandcourt; and the absence of all eagerness in his attention to her suited his partner's taste. She was now convinced that he meant to distinguish her, to mark his admiration of her in a noticeable way; and it began to appear probable that she would have it in her power to reject him, whence there was a pleasure in reckoning up the advantages which would make her rejection splendid, and in giving Mr Grandcourt his utmost value. It was also agreeable to divine that his exclusive selection of her to dance with, from among all the unmarried ladies present, would attract observation; though she studiously avoided seeing this, and at the end of the quadrille walked away on Grandcourt's arm as if she had been one of the shortest sighted instead of the longest and widest sighted of mortals. They encountered Miss Arrowpoint, who was standing with Lady Bracken-

shaw and a group of gentlemen. The heiress looked at Gwendolen invitingly and said, "I hope you will vote with us, Miss Harleth, and Mr Grandcourt too, though he is not an archer." Gwendolen and Grandcourt paused to join the group, and found that the voting turned on the project of a picnic archery meeting to be held in Cardell Chase, where the evening entertainment would be more poetic than a ball under chandeliers —a feast of sunset lights along the glades and through the branches and over the solemn tree-tops.

Gwendolen thought the scheme delightful — equal to playing Robin Hood and Maid Marian; and Mr Grandcourt, when appealed to a second time, said it was a thing to be done; whereupon Mr Lush, who stood behind Lady Brackenshaw's elbow, drew Gwendolen's notice by saying, with a familiar look and tone, to Grandcourt, "Diplow would be a good place for the meeting, and more convenient: there's a fine bit between the oaks towards the north gate."

Impossible to look more unconscious of being addressed than Grandcourt; but Gwendolen took a new survey of the speaker, deciding, first, that he must be on terms of intimacy with the tenant of Diplow, and, secondly, that she would never, if she

could help it, let him come within a yard of her. She was subject to physical antipathies, and Mr Lush's prominent eyes, fat though not clumsy figure, and strong black grey-besprinkled hair of frizzy thickness, which, with the rest of his prosperous person, was enviable to many, created one of the strongest of her antipathies. To be safe from his looking at her, she murmured to Grandcourt, "I should like to continue walking."

He obeyed immediately; but when they were thus away from any audience, he spoke no word for several minutes, and she, out of a half-amused, half-serious inclination for experiment, would not speak first. They turned into the large conservatory, beautifully lit up with Chinese lamps. The other couples there were at a distance which would not have interfered with any dialogue, but still they walked in silence until they had reached the farther end where there was a flush of pink light, and the second wide opening into the ball-room. Grandcourt, when they had half turned round, paused and said languidly—

"Do you like this kind of thing?"

If the situation had been described to Gwendolen half an hour before, she would have laughed heartily at it, and could only have imagined herself returning a playful, satirical answer. But for

some mysterious reason—it was a mystery of which she had a faint wondering consciousness—she dared not be satirical: she had begun to feel a wand over her that made her afraid of offending Grandcourt.

"Yes," she said, quietly, without considering what "kind of thing" was meant—whether the flowers, the scents, the ball in general, or this episode of walking with Mr Grandcourt in particular. And they returned along the conservatory without farther interpretation. She then proposed to go and sit down in her old place, and they walked among scattered couples preparing for the waltz to the spot where Mrs Davilow had been seated all the evening. As they approached it her seat was vacant, but she was coming towards it again, and, to Gwendolen's shuddering annoyance, with Mr Lush at her elbow. There was no avoiding the confrontation: her mamma came close to her before they had reached the seats, and, after a quiet greeting smile, said innocently, "Gwendolen, dear, let me present Mr Lush to you." Having just made the acquaintance of this personage, as an intimate and constant companion of Mr Grandcourt's, Mrs Davilow imagined it altogether desirable that her daughter also should make the acquaintance.

It was hardly a bow that Gwendolen gave—rather, it was the slightest forward sweep of the head away from the physiognomy that inclined itself towards her, and she immediately moved towards her seat, saying, "I want to put on my burnous." No sooner had she reached it, than Mr Lush was there, and had the burnous in his hand: to annoy this supercilious young lady, he would incur the offence of forestalling Grandcourt; and, holding up the garment close to Gwendolen, he said, "Pray, permit me?" But she, wheeling away from him as if he had been a muddy hound, glided on to the ottoman, saying, "No, thank you."

A man who forgave this would have much Christian feeling, supposing he had intended to be agreeable to the young lady; but before he seized the burnous Mr Lush had ceased to have that intention. Grandcourt quietly took the drapery from him, and Mr Lush, with a slight bow, moved away.

"You had perhaps better put it on," said Mr Grandcourt, looking down on her without change of expression.

"Thanks; perhaps it would be wise," said Gwendolen, rising, and submitting very gracefully to take the burnous on her shoulders.

After that, Mr Grandcourt exchanged a few polite speeches with Mrs Davilow, and, in taking leave, asked permission to call at Offendene the next day. He was evidently not offended by the insult directed towards his friend. Certainly, Gwendolen's refusal of the burnous from Mr Lush was open to the interpretation that she wished to receive it from Mr Grandcourt. But she, poor child, had had no design in this action, and was simply following her antipathy and inclination, confiding in them as she did in the more reflective judgments into which they entered as sap into leafage. Gwendolen had no sense that these men were dark enigmas to her, or that she needed any help in drawing conclusions about them — Mr Grandcourt at least. The chief question was, how far his character and ways might answer her wishes; and unless she were satisfied about that, she had said to herself that she would not accept his offer.

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? —in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigour making armies of themselves, and the uni-

versal kinship was declaring itself fiercely: when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient: a time when the soul of man was waking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unheard, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

What in the midst of that mighty drama are girls and their blind visions? They are the Yea or Nay of that good for which men are enduring and fighting. In these delicate vessels is borne onward through the ages the treasure of human affections.

CHAPTER XII.

"O gentlemen, the time of life is short;
To spend that shortness basely were too long,
If life did ride upon a dial's point,
Still ending at the arrival of an hour."
—SHAKESPEARE: *Henry IV.*

ON the second day after the Archery Meeting, Mr Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt was at his breakfast-table with Mr Lush. Everything around them was agreeable: the summer air through the open windows, at which the dogs could walk in from the old green turf on the lawn; the soft, purplish colouring of the park beyond, stretching towards a mass of bordering wood; the still life in the room, which seemed the stiller for its sober antiquated elegance, as if it kept a conscious, well-bred silence, unlike the restlessness of vulgar furniture.

Whether the gentlemen were agreeable to each other was less evident. Mr Grandcourt had drawn his chair aside so as to face the lawn, and, with his left leg over another chair, and his

right elbow on the table, was smoking a large cigar, while his companion was still eating. The dogs—half-a-dozen of various kinds were moving lazily in and out, or taking attitudes of brief attention—gave a vacillating preference first to one gentleman, then to the other; being dogs in such good circumstances that they could play at hunger, and liked to be served with delicacies which they declined to put into their mouths; all except Fetch, the beautiful liver-coloured water-spaniel, which sat with its fore-paws firmly planted and its expressive brown face turned upward, watching Grandcourt with unshaken constancy. He held in his lap a tiny Maltese dog with a tiny silver collar and bell, and when he had a hand unused by cigar or coffee-cup, it rested on this small parcel of animal warmth. I fear that Fetch was jealous, and wounded that her master gave her no word or look; at last it seemed that she could bear this neglect no longer, and she gently put her large silky paw on her master's leg. Grandcourt looked at her with unchanged face for half a minute, and then took the trouble to lay down his cigar while he lifted the unimpassioned Fluff close to his chin and gave it caressing pats, all the while gravely watching Fetch, who, poor thing, whimpered interrupt-

edly, as if trying to repress that sign of discontent, and at last rested her head beside the appealing paw, looking up with piteous beseeching. So, at least, a lover of dogs must have interpreted Fetch, and Grandcourt kept so many dogs that he was reputed to love them; at any rate, his impulse to act just in this way started from such an interpretation. But when the amusing anguish burst forth in a howling bark, Grandcourt pushed Fetch down without speaking, and, depositing Fluff carelessly on the table (where his black nose predominated over a salt-cellar), began to look to his cigar, and found, with some annoyance against Fetch as the cause, that the brute of a cigar required relighting. Fetch, having begun to wail, found, like others of her sex, that it was not easy to leave off; indeed, the second howl was a louder one, and the third was like unto it.

"Turn out that brute, will you?" said Grandcourt to Lush, without raising his voice or looking at him—as if he counted on attention to the smallest sign.

And Lush immediately rose, lifted Fetch, though she was rather heavy and he was not fond of stooping, and carried her out, disposing of her in some way that took him a couple of minutes before he returned. He then lit a cigar, placed

himself at an angle where he could see Grandcourt's face without turning, and presently said—

"Shall you ride or drive to Quetcham to-day?"

"I am not going to Quetcham."

"You did not go yesterday."

Grandcourt smoked in silence for half a minute and then said—

"I suppose you sent my card and inquiries."

"I went myself at four, and said you were sure to be there shortly. They would suppose some accident prevented you from fulfilling the intention. Especially if you go to-day."

Silence for a couple of minutes. Then Grandcourt said, "What men are invited here with their wives?"

Lush drew out a note-book. "The Captain and Mrs Torrington come next week. Then there are Mr Hollis, and Lady Flora, and the Cushats, and the Gogoffs."

"Rather a ragged lot," remarked Grandcourt after a while. "Why did you ask the Gogoffs? When you write invitations in my name, be good enough to give me a list, instead of bringing down a giantess on me without my knowledge. She spoils the look of the room."

"You invited the Gogoffs yourself, when you met them in Paris."

"What has my meeting them in Paris to do with it? I told you to give me a list."

Grandcourt, like many others, had two remarkably different voices. Hitherto we have heard him speaking in a superficial interrupted drawl suggestive chiefly of languor and *ennui*. But this last brief speech was uttered in subdued, inward, yet distinct tones, which Lush had long been used to recognise as the expression of a peremptory will.

"Are there any other couples you would like to invite?"

"Yes; think of some decent people, with a daughter or two. And one of your damned musicians. But not a comic fellow."

"I wonder if Klesmer would consent to come to us when he leaves Quetcham. Nothing but first-rate music will go down with Miss Arrowpoint."

Lush spoke carelessly, but he was really seizing an opportunity and fixing an observant look on Grandcourt, who now for the first time turned his eyes towards his companion, but slowly, and without speaking until he had given two long luxurious puffs, when he said, perhaps in a lower tone than ever, but with a perceptible edge of contempt—

"What in the name of nonsense have I to do with Miss Arrowpoint and her music?"

"Well, something," said Lush, jocosely. "You need not give yourself much trouble, perhaps. But some forms must be gone through before a man can marry a million."

"Very likely. But I am not going to marry a million."

"That's a pity—to fling away an opportunity of this sort, and knock down your own plans."

"*Your* plans, I suppose you mean."

"You have some debts, you know, and things may turn out inconveniently after all. The heirship is not *absolutely* certain."

Grandcourt did not answer and Lush went on.

"It really is a fine opportunity. The father and mother ask for nothing better, I can see, and the daughter's looks and manners require no allowances, any more than if she hadn't a sixpence. She is not beautiful; but equal to carrying any rank. And she is not likely to refuse such prospects as you can offer her."

"Perhaps not."

"The father and mother would let you do anything you liked with them."

"But I should not like to do anything with them."

Here it was Lush who made a little pause before speaking again, and then he said in a deep voice of remonstrance, "Good God, Grandcourt! after your experience, will you let a whim interfere with your comfortable settlement in life?"

"Spare your oratory. I know what I am going to do."

"What?" Lush put down his cigar and thrust his hands into his side pockets, as if he had to face something exasperating, but meant to keep his temper.

"I am going to marry the other girl."

"Have you fallen in love?" This question carried a strong sneer.

"I am going to marry her."

"You have made her an offer already, then?"

"No."

"She is a young lady with a will of her own, I fancy. Extremely well fitted to make a rumpus. She would know what she liked."

"She doesn't like you," said Grandcourt, with the ghost of a smile.

"Perfectly true," said Lush, adding again in a markedly sneering tone, "However, if you and she are devoted to each other, that will be enough."

Grandcourt took no notice of this speech, but

sipped his coffee, rose, and strolled out on the lawn, all the dogs following him.

Lush glanced after him a moment, then resumed his cigar and lit it, but smoked slowly, consulting his beard with inspecting eyes and fingers, till he finally stroked it with an air of having arrived at some conclusion, and said, in a subdued voice—

"Check, old boy!"

Lush, being a man of some ability, had not known Grandcourt for fifteen years without learning what sort of measures were useless with him, though what sort might be useful remained often dubious. In the beginning of his career he held a fellowship, and was near taking orders for the sake of a college living, but not being fond of that prospect accepted instead the office of travelling companion to a marquess, and afterwards to young Grandcourt, who had lost his father early, and who found Lush so convenient that he had allowed him to become prime minister in all his more personal affairs. The habit of fifteen years had made Grandcourt more and more in need of Lush's handiness, and Lush more and more in need of the lazy luxury to which his transactions on behalf of Grandcourt made no interruption worth reckoning. I cannot say that the same lengthened habit had intensified Grandcourt's

want of respect for his companion since that want had been absolute from the beginning, but it had confirmed his sense that he might kick Lush if he chose—only he never did choose to kick any animal, because the act of kicking is a compromising attitude, and a gentleman's dogs should be kicked for him. He only said things which might have exposed himself to be kicked if his confidant had been a man of independent spirit. But what son of a vicar who has stinted his wife and daughters of calico in order to send his male offspring to Oxford, can keep an independent spirit when he is bent on dining with high discrimination, riding good horses, living generally in the most luxuriant honey-blossomed clover—and all without working? Mr Lush had passed for a scholar once, and had still a sense of scholarship when he was not trying to remember much of it; but the bachelors' and other arts which soften manners are a time-honoured preparation for sinecures; and Lush's present comfortable provision was as good as a sinecure in not requiring more than the odour of departed learning. He was not unconscious of being held kickable, but he preferred counting that estimate among the peculiarities of Grandcourt's character, which made one of his incalculable moods or judgments

as good as another. Since in his own opinion he had never done a bad action, it did not seem necessary to consider whether he should be likely to commit one if his love of ease required it. Lush's love of ease was well satisfied at present, and if his puddings were rolled towards him in the dust, he took the inside bits and found them relishing.

This morning, for example, though he had encountered more annoyance than usual, he went to his private sitting-room and played a good hour on the violoncello.

CHAPTER XIII.

"Philistia, be thou glad of me!"

GRANDCOURT having made up his mind to marry Miss Harleth showed a power of adapting means to ends. During the next fortnight there was hardly a day on which by some arrangement or other he did not see her, or prove by emphatic attentions that she occupied his thoughts. His cousin Mrs Torrington was now doing the honours of his house, so that Mrs Davilow and Gwendolen could be invited to a large party at Diplow in which there were many witnesses how the host distinguished the dowerless beauty, and showed no solicitude about the heiress. The world—I mean Mr Gascoigne and all the families worth speaking of within visiting distance of Pennicote —felt an assurance on the subject which in the Rector's mind converted itself into a resolution to do his duty by his niece and see that the settle-

ments were adequate. Indeed, the wonder to him and Mrs Davilow was that the offer for which so many suitable occasions presented themselves had not been already made; and in this wonder Grandcourt himself was not without a share. When he had told his resolution to Lush he had thought that the affair would be concluded more quickly, and to his own surprise he had repeatedly promised himself in a morning that he would to-day give Gwendolen the opportunity of accepting him, and had found in the evening that the necessary formality was still unaccomplished. This remarkable fact served to heighten his determination on another day. He had never admitted to himself that Gwendolen might refuse him, but—heaven help us all!—we are often unable to act on our certainties; our objection to a contrary issue (were it possible) is so strong that it rises like a spectral illusion between us and our certainty: we are rationally sure that the blind-worm cannot bite us mortally, but it would be so intolerable to be bitten, and the creature has a biting look — we decline to handle it.

He had asked leave to have a beautiful horse of his brought for Gwendolen to ride. Mrs Davilow was to accompany her in the carriage, and they were to go to Diplow to lunch, Grandcourt con-

ducting them. It was a fine mid-harvest time, not too warm for a noon-day ride of five miles to be delightful: the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, there was enough breeze to move gently like a social spirit among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow of a cloud across the soft grey downs; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble, but everywhere the green pastures made a broader setting for the corn-fields, and the cattle took their rest under wide branches. The road lay through a bit of country where the dairy-farms looked much as they did in the days of our forefathers —where peace and permanence seemed to find a home away from the busy change that sent the railway train flying in the distance.

But the spirit of peace and permanence did not penetrate poor Mrs Davilow's mind so as to overcome her habit of uneasy foreboding. Gwendolen and Grandcourt cantering in front of her, and then slackening their pace to a conversational walk till the carriage came up with them again, made a gratifying sight; but it served chiefly to keep up the conflict of hopes and fears about her daughter's lot. Here was an irresistible opportunity for a lover to speak and put an end to all

uncertainties, and Mrs Davilow could only hope with trembling that Gwendolen's decision would be favourable. Certainly if Rex's love had been repugnant to her, Mr Grandcourt had the advantage of being in complete contrast with Rex; and that he had produced some quite novel impression on her seemed evident in her marked abstinence from satirical observations, nay, her total silence about his characteristics, a silence which Mrs Davilow did not dare to break. "Is he a man she would be happy with?"—was a question that inevitably arose in the mother's mind. "Well, perhaps as happy as she would be with any one else—or as most other women are"—was the answer with which she tried to quiet herself; for she could not imagine Gwendolen under the influence of any feeling which would make her satisfied in what we traditionally call "mean circumstances."

Grandcourt's own thought was looking in the same direction: he wanted to have done with the uncertainty that belonged to his not having spoken. As to any further uncertainty—well, it was something without any reasonable basis, some quality in the air which acted as an irritant to his wishes.

Gwendolen enjoyed the riding, but her pleasure

did not break forth in girlish unpremeditated chat and laughter as it did on that morning with Rex. She spoke a little, and even laughed, but with a lightness as of a far-off echo: for her too there was some peculiar quality in the air—not, she was sure, any subjugation of her will by Mr Grandcourt, and the splendid prospects he meant to offer her; for Gwendolen desired every one, that dignified gentleman himself included, to understand that she was going to do just as she liked, and that they had better not calculate on her pleasing them. If she chose to take this husband, she would have him know that she was not going to renounce her freedom, or according to her favourite formula, "not going to do as other women did."

Grandcourt's speeches this morning were, as usual, all of that brief sort which never fails to make a conversational figure when the speaker is held important in his circle. Stopping so soon, they give signs of a suppressed and formidable ability to say more, and have also the meritorious quality of allowing lengthiness to others.

"How do you like Criterion's paces?" he said, after they had entered the park and were slackening from a canter to a walk.

"He is delightful to ride. I should like to have a leap with him, if it would not frighten

mamma. There was a good wide channel we passed five minutes ago. I should like to have a gallop back and take it."

"Pray do. We can take it together."

"No, thanks. Mamma is so timid—if she saw me it might make her ill."

"Let me go and explain. Criterion would take it without fail."

"No—indeed—you are very kind—but it would alarm her too much. I dare take any leap when she is not by; but I do it, and don't tell her about it."

"We can let the carriage pass, and then set off."

"No, no, pray don't think of it any more; I spoke quite randomly," said Gwendolen; she began to feel a new objection to carrying out her own proposition.

"But Mrs Davilow knows I shall take care of you."

"Yes, but she would think of you as having to take care of my broken neck."

There was a considerable pause before Grandcourt said, looking towards her, "I should like to have the right always to take care of you."

Gwendolen did not turn her eyes on him: it seemed to her a long while that she was first

blushing, and then turning pale, but to Grandcourt's rate of judgment she answered soon enough, with the lightest flute-tone and a careless movement of the head, "Oh, I am not sure that I want to be taken care of: if I chose to risk breaking my neck, I should like to be at liberty to do it."

She checked her horse as she spoke, and turned in her saddle, looking towards the advancing carriage. Her eyes swept across Grandcourt as she made this movement, but there was no language in them to correct the carelessness of her reply. At that very moment she was aware that she was risking something — not her neck, but the possibility of finally checking Grandcourt's advances, and she did not feel contented with the possibility.

"Damn her!" thought Grandcourt, as he too checked his horse. He was not a wordy thinker, and this explosive phrase stood for mixed impressions which eloquent interpreters might have expanded into some sentences full of an irritated sense that he was being mystified, and a determination that this girl should not make a fool of him. Did she want him to throw himself at her feet and declare that he was dying for her? It was not by that gate that she would enter on the privileges he could give her. Or did she expect him to write

his proposals? Equally a delusion. He would not make his offer in any way that could place him definitely in the position of being rejected. But as to her accepting him, she had done it already in accepting his marked attentions; and anything which happened to break them off would be understood to her disadvantage. She was merely coquetting, then?

However, the carriage came up, and no further *tête-à-tête* could well occur before their arrival at the house, where there was abundant company, to whom Gwendolen, clad in riding-dress, with her hat laid aside, clad also in the repute of being chosen by Mr Grandcourt, was naturally a centre of observation; and since the objectionable Mr Lush was not there to look at her, this stimulus of admiring attention heightened her spirits, and dispersed, for the time, the uneasy consciousness of divided impulses which threatened her with repentance of her own acts. Whether Grandcourt had been offended or not there was no judging: his manners were unchanged, but Gwendolen's acuteness had not gone deeper than to discern that his manners were no clue for her, and because these were unchanged she was not the less afraid of him.

She had not been at Diplow before except to

dine; and since certain points of view from the windows and the garden were worth showing, Lady Flora Hollis proposed after luncheon, when some of the guests had dispersed, and the sun was sloping towards four o'clock, that the remaining party should make a little exploration. Here came frequent opportunities when Grandcourt might have retained Gwendolen apart and have spoken to her unheard. But no! He indeed spoke to no one else, but what he said was nothing more eager or intimate than it had been in their first interview. He looked at her not less than usual; and some of her defiant spirit having come back, she looked full at him in return, not caring—rather preferring—that his eyes had no expression in them.

But at last it seemed as if he entertained some contrivance. After they had nearly made the tour of the grounds, the whole party paused by the pool to be amused with Fetch's accomplishment of bringing a water-lily to the bank like Cowper's spaniel Beau, and having been disappointed in his first attempt insisted on his trying again.

Here Grandcourt, who stood with Gwendolen outside the group, turned deliberately, and fixing his eyes on a knoll planted with American

shrubs, and having a winding path up it, said languidly—

"This is a bore. Shall we go up there?"

"Oh, certainly—since we are exploring," said Gwendolen. She was rather pleased, and yet afraid.

The path was too narrow for him to offer his arm, and they walked up in silence. When they were on the bit of platform at the summit Grandcourt said—

"There is nothing to be seen here: the thing was not worth climbing."

How was it that Gwendolen did not laugh? She was perfectly silent, holding up the folds of her robe like a statue, and giving a harder grasp to the handle of her whip, which she had snatched up automatically with her hat when they had first set off.

"What sort of place do you like?" said Grandcourt.

"Different places are agreeable in their way. On the whole, I think, I prefer places that are open and cheerful. I am not fond of anything sombre."

"Your place at Offendene is too sombre."

"It is, rather."

"You will not remain there long, I hope."

"Oh yes, I think so. Mamma likes to be near her sister."

Silence for a short space.

"It is not to be supposed that *you* will always live there, though Mrs Davilow may."

"I don't know. We women can't go in search of adventures—to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants: they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of them have got poisonous. What do you think?" Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her.

"I quite agree. Most things are bores," said Grandcourt, his mind having been pushed into an easy current, away from its intended track. But after a moment's pause he continued in his broken, refined drawl—

"But a woman can be married."

"Some women can."

"You certainly, unless you are obstinately cruel."

"I am not sure that I am not both cruel and

obstinate." Here Gwendolen suddenly turned her head and looked full at Grandcourt, whose eyes she had felt to be upon her throughout their conversation. She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself rather than on him.

He stood perfectly still, half a yard or more away from her; and it flashed through her thought that a sort of lotos-eater's stupor had begun in him and was taking possession of her. Then he said—

"Are you as uncertain about yourself as you make others about you?"

"I am quite uncertain about myself; I don't know how uncertain others may be."

"And you wish them to understand that you don't care?" said Grandcourt, with a touch of new hardness in his tone.

"I did not say that," Gwendolen replied, hesitatingly, and turning her eyes away whipped the rhododendron bush again. She wished she were on horseback that she might set off on a canter. It was impossible to set off running down the knoll.

"You do care, then," said Grandcourt, not more quickly, but with a softened drawl.

"Ha! my whip!" said Gwendolen, in a little scream of distress. She had let it go — what

could be more natural in a slight agitation?—and —but this seemed less natural in a gold-handled whip which had been left altogether to itself—it had gone with some force over the immediate shrubs, and had lodged itself in the branches of an azalea half-way down the knoll. She could run down now, laughing prettily, and Grandcourt was obliged to follow; but she was beforehand with him in rescuing the whip, and continued on her way to the level ground, when she paused and looked at Grandcourt with an exasperating brightness in her glance and a heightened colour, as if she had carried a triumph, and these indications were still noticeable to Mrs Davilow when Gwendolen and Grandcourt joined the rest of the party.

"It is all coquetting," thought Grandcourt; "the next time I beckon she will come down."

It seemed to him likely that this final beckoning might happen the very next day, when there was to be a picnic archery meeting in Cardell Chase, according to the plan projected on the evening of the ball.

Even in Gwendolen's mind that result was one of two likelihoods that presented themselves alternately, one of two decisions towards which she was being precipitated, as if they were two

sides of a boundary-line, and she did not know on which she should fall. This subjection to a possible self, a self not to be absolutely predicted about, caused her some astonishment and terror: her favourite key of life—doing as she liked—seemed to fail her, and she could not foresee what at a given moment she might like to do. The prospect of marrying Grandcourt really seemed more attractive to her than she had believed beforehand that any marriage could be: the dignities, the luxuries, the power of doing a great deal of what she liked to do, which had now come close to her, and within her choice to secure or to lose, took hold of her nature as if it had been the strong odour of what she had only imagined and longed for before. And Grandcourt himself? He seemed as little of a flaw in his fortunes as a lover and husband could possibly be. Gwendolen wished to mount the chariot and drive the plunging horses herself, with a spouse by her side who would fold his arms and give her his countenance without looking ridiculous. Certainly, with all her perspicacity, and all the reading which seemed to her mamma dangerously instructive, her judgment was consciously a little at fault before Grandcourt. He was adorably quiet and free from absurdities—he could be a husband *en suite*

with the best appearance a woman could make. But what else was he? He had been everywhere, and seen everything. *That* was desirable, and especially gratifying as a preamble to his supreme preference for Gwendolen Harleth. He did not appear to enjoy anything much. That was not necessary: and the less he had of particular tastes or desires, the more freedom his wife was likely to have in following hers. Gwendolen conceived that after marriage she would most probably be able to manage him thoroughly.

How was it that he caused her unusual constraint now?—that she was less daring and playful in her talk with him than with any other admirer she had known? That absence of demonstrativeness which she was glad of, acted as a charm in more senses than one, and was slightly benumbing. Grandcourt after all was formidable—a handsome lizard of a hitherto unknown species, not of the lively, darting kind. But Gwendolen knew hardly anything about lizards, and ignorance gives one a large range of probabilities. This splendid specimen was probably gentle, suitable as a boudoir pet: what may not a lizard be, if you know nothing to the contrary? Her acquaintance with Grandcourt was such that no accomplishment suddenly revealed in him would

have surprised her. And he was so little suggestive of drama, that it hardly occurred to her to think with any detail how his life of thirty-six years had been passed: in general, she imagined him always cold and dignified, not likely ever to have committed himself. He had hunted the tiger—had he ever been in love, or made love? The one experience and the other seemed alike remote in Gwendolen's fancy from the Mr Grandcourt who had come to Diplow in order apparently to make a chief epoch in her destiny—perhaps by introducing her to that state of marriage which she had resolved to make a state of greater freedom than her girlhood. And on the whole she wished to marry him; he suited her purpose; her prevailing, deliberate intention was, to accept him.

But was she going to fulfil her deliberate intention? She began to be afraid of herself, and to find out a certain difficulty in doing as she liked. Already her assertion of independence in evading his advances had been carried farther than was necessary, and she was thinking with some anxiety what she might do on the next occasion.

Seated according to her habit with her back to the horses on their drive homewards, she was completely under the observation of her mamma,

who took the excitement and changefulness in the expression of her eyes, her unwonted absence of mind and total silence, as unmistakable signs that something unprecedented had occurred between her and Grandcourt. Mrs Davilow's uneasiness determined her to risk some speech on the subject: the Gascoignes were to dine at Offendene, and in what had occurred this morning there might be some reason for consulting the Rector; not that she expected him any more than herself to influence Gwendolen, but that her anxious mind wanted to be disburthened.

"Something has happened, dear?" she began, in a tender tone of question.

Gwendolen looked round, and seeming to be roused to the consciousness of her physical self, took off her gloves and then her hat, that the soft breeze might blow on her head. They were in a retired bit of the road, where the long afternoon shadows from the bordering trees fell across it, and no observers were within sight. Her eyes continued to meet her mother's, but she did not speak.

"Mr Grandcourt has been saying something? —Tell me, dear." The last words were uttered beseechingly.

"What am I to tell you, mamma?" was the perverse answer.

"I am sure something has agitated you. You ought to confide in me, Gwen. You ought not to leave me in doubt and anxiety." Mrs Davilow's eyes filled with tears.

"Mamma, dear, please don't be miserable," said Gwendolen, with pettish remonstrance. "It only makes me more so. I am in doubt myself."

"About Mr Grandcourt's intentions?" said Mrs Davilow, gathering determination from her alarms.

"No; not at all," said Gwendolen, with some curtness, and a pretty little toss of the head as she put on her hat again.

"About whether you will accept him, then?"

"Precisely."

"Have you given him a doubtful answer?"

"I have given him no answer at all."

"He *has* spoken so that you could not misunderstand him?"

"As far as I would let him speak."

"You expect him to persevere?" Mrs Davilow put this question rather anxiously, and receiving no answer, asked another. "You don't consider that you have discouraged him?"

"I daresay not."

"I thought you liked him, dear," said Mrs Davilow, timidly.

"So I do, mamma, as liking goes. There is less to dislike about him than about most men. He is quiet and *distingué*." Gwendolen so far spoke with a pouting sort of gravity; but suddenly she recovered some of her mischievousness, and her face broke into a smile as she added—"Indeed he has all the qualities that would make a husband tolerable — battlement, veranda, stables, &c., no grins and no glass in his eye."

"Do be serious with me for a moment, dear. Am I to understand that you mean to accept him?"

"Oh pray, mamma, leave me to myself," said Gwendolen, with a pettish distress in her voice.

And Mrs Davilow said no more.

When they got home Gwendolen declared that she would not dine. She was tired, and would come down in the evening after she had taken some rest. The probability that her uncle would hear what had passed did not trouble her. She was convinced that whatever he might say would be on the side of her accepting Grandcourt, and she wished to accept him if she could. At this moment she would willingly have had weights hung on her own caprice.

Mr Gascoigne did hear — not Gwendolen's answers repeated verbatim, but a softened general-

ised account of them. The mother conveyed as vaguely as the keen Rector's questions would let her the impression that Gwendolen was in some uncertainty about her own mind, but inclined on the whole to acceptance. The result was that the uncle felt himself called on to interfere: he did not conceive that he should do his duty in withholding direction from his niece in a momentous crisis of this kind. Mrs Davilow ventured a hesitating opinion that perhaps it would be safer to say nothing—Gwendolen was so sensitive (she did not like to say wilful). But the Rector's was a firm mind, grasping its first judgments tenaciously and acting on them promptly, whence counter-judgments were no more for him than shadows fleeting across the solid ground to which he adjusted himself.

This match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the Establishment. To the Rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standard of moral judgments. Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the probable peer, was to be ranged with pub-

lic personages, and was a match to be accepted on broad general grounds national and ecclesiastical. Such public personages, it is true, are often in the nature of giants which an ancient community may have felt pride and safety in possessing, though, regarded privately, these born eminences must often have been inconvenient and even noisome. But of the future husband personally Mr Gascoigne was disposed to think the best. Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it: it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker. But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

It was no surprise to Gwendolen on coming down to tea to be told that her uncle wished to see her in the dining-room. He threw aside the

paper as she entered and greeted her with his usual kindness. As his wife had remarked, he always "made much" of Gwendolen, and her importance had risen of late. "My dear," he said, in a fatherly way, moving a chair for her as he held her hand, "I want to speak to you on a subject which is more momentous than any other with regard to your welfare. You will guess what I mean. But I shall speak to you with perfect directness: in such matters I consider myself bound to act as your father. You have no objection, I hope?"

"Oh dear no, uncle. You have always been very kind to me," said Gwendolen, frankly. This evening she was willing, if it were possible, to be a little fortified against her troublesome self, and her resistant temper was in abeyance. The Rector's mode of speech always conveyed a thrill of authority, as of a word of command: it seemed to take for granted that there could be no wavering in the audience, and that every one was going to be rationally obedient.

"It is naturally a satisfaction to me that the prospect of a marriage for you—advantageous in the highest degree—has presented itself so early. I do not know exactly what has passed between you and Mr Grandcourt, but I presume there can

be little doubt, from the way in which he has distinguished you, that he desires to make you his wife."

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, and her uncle said with more emphasis—

"Have you any doubt of that yourself, my dear?"

"I suppose that is what he has been thinking of. But he may have changed his mind to-morrow," said Gwendolen.

"Why to-morrow? Has he made advances which you have discouraged?"

"I think he meant—he began to make advances —but I did not encourage them. I turned the conversation."

"Will you confide in me so far as to tell me your reasons?"

"I am not sure that I had any reasons, uncle." Gwendolen laughed rather artificially.

"You are quite capable of reflecting, Gwendolen. You are aware that this is not a trivial occasion, and it concerns your establishment for life under circumstances which may not occur again. You have a duty here both to yourself and your family. I wish to understand whether you have any ground for hesitating as to your acceptance of Mr Grandcourt."

"I suppose I hesitate without grounds." Gwendolen spoke rather poutingly, and her uncle grew suspicious.

"Is he disagreeable to you personally?"

"No."

"Have you heard anything of him which has affected you disagreeably?" The Rector thought it impossible that Gwendolen could have heard the gossip he had heard, but in any case he must endeavour to put all things in the right light for her.

"I have heard nothing about him except that he is a great match," said Gwendolen, with some sauciness; "and that affects me very agreeably."

"Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands—a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances—a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty. If Providence offers you power and position—especially when unclogged by any conditions that are repugnant to you—your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled—these things are matters of individual

disposition. But the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that in case Mr Grandcourt were repelled without your having refused him—without your having intended ultimately to refuse him, your situation would be a humiliating and painful one. I, for my part, should regard you with severe disapprobation, as the victim of nothing else than your own coquetry and folly."

Gwendolen became pallid as she listened to this admonitory speech. The ideas it raised had the force of sensations. Her resistant courage would not help her here, because her uncle was not urging her against her own resolve; he was pressing upon her the motives of dread which she already felt; he was making her more conscious of the risks that lay within herself. She was silent, and the Rector observed that he had produced some strong effect.

"I mean this in kindness, my dear." His tone had softened.

"I am aware of that, uncle," said Gwendolen, rising and shaking her head back, as if to rouse herself out of painful passivity. "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time—before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr Grandcourt. I

mean to accept him, if possible." She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the Rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman, although he may not consider them always appropriate to be put forward. He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title—everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical—to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

"My dear Gwendolen," he said, rising also, and speaking with benignant gravity, "I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have probably an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance. You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could

hardly be looked forward to as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that you will grace it not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life."

"I hope mamma will be the happier," said Gwendolen, in a more cheerful way, lifting her hands backward to her neck and moving towards the door. She wanted to waive those higher considerations.

Mr Gascoigne felt that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with his niece, and had furthered her happy settlement in life by furthering her engagement to Grandcourt. Meanwhile there was another person to whom the contemplation of that issue had been a motive for some activity, and who believed that he too on this particular day had done something towards bringing about a favourable decision in *his* sense—which happened to be the reverse of the Rector's.

Mr Lush's absence from Diplow during Gwendolen's visit had been due not to any fear on his part of meeting that supercilious young lady, or of being abashed by her frank dislike, but to an engagement from which he expected important consequences. He was gone in fact to the Wancester Station to meet a lady accompanied by a maid and two children, whom he put into a fly,

and afterwards followed to the hotel of the Golden Keys in that town. An impressive woman, whom many would turn to look at again in passing; her figure was slim and sufficiently tall, her face rather emaciated, so that its sculpturesque beauty was the more pronounced, her crisp hair perfectly black, and her large anxious eyes also what we call black. Her dress was soberly correct, her age perhaps physically more advanced than the number of years would imply, but hardly less than seven-and-thirty. An uneasy-looking woman: her glance seemed to presuppose that people and things were going to be unfavourable to her, while she was nevertheless ready to meet them with resolution. The children were lovely — a dark-haired girl of six or more, a fairer boy of five. When Lush incautiously expressed some surprise at her having brought the children, she said with a sharp-edged intonation—

"Did you suppose I should come wandering about here by myself? Why should I not bring all four if I liked?"

"Oh certainly," said Lush, with his usual fluent *nonchalance.*

He stayed an hour or so in conference with her, and rode back to Diplow in a state of mind that was at once hopeful and busily anxious as to the

execution of the little plan on which his hopefulness was based. Grandcourt's marriage to Gwendolen Harleth would not, he believed, be much of a good to either of them, and it would plainly be fraught with disagreeables to himself. But now he felt confident enough to say inwardly, "I will take odds that the marriage will never happen."

CHAPTER XIV.

I will not clothe myself in wreck—wear gems
Sawed from cramped finger-bones of women drowned;
Feel chilly vaporous hands of ireful ghosts
Clutching my necklace; trick my maiden breast
With orphans' heritage. Let your dead love
Marry its dead.

GWENDOLEN looked lovely and vigorous as a tall, newly-opened lily the next morning: there was a reaction of young energy in her, and yesterday's self-distrust seemed no more than the transient shiver on the surface of a full stream. The roving archery match in Cardell Chase was a delightful prospect for the sport's sake: she felt herself beforehand moving about like a wood-nymph under the beeches (in appreciative company), and the imagined scene lent a charm to further advances on the part of Grandcourt—not an impassioned lyrical Daphnis for the wood-nymph, certainly: but so much the better. To-day Gwendolen foresaw him making slow conversational approaches to a declaration, and foresaw herself

awaiting and encouraging it according to the rational conclusion which she had expressed to her uncle.

When she came down to breakfast (after every one had left the table except Mrs Davilow) there were letters on her plate. One of them she read with a gathering smile, and then handed it to her mamma, who, on returning it, smiled also, finding new cheerfulness in the good spirits her daughter had shown ever since waking, and said—

"You don't feel inclined to go a thousand miles away?"

"Not exactly so far."

"It was a sad omission not to have written again before this. Can't you write now—before we set out this morning?"

"It is not so pressing. To-morrow will do. You see they leave town to-day. I must write to Dover. They will be there till Monday."

"Shall I write for you, dear—if it teases you?"

Gwendolen did not speak immediately, but after sipping her coffee answered brusquely, "Oh no, let it be; I will write to-morrow." Then feeling a touch of compunction, she looked up and said with playful tenderness, "Dear, old, beautiful mamma!"

"Old, child, truly."

"Please don't, mamma! I meant old for darling. You are hardly twenty-five years older than I am. When you talk in that way my life shrivels up before me."

"One can have a great deal of happiness in twenty-five years, my dear."

"I must lose no time in beginning," said Gwendolen, merrily. "The sooner I get my palaces and coaches, the better."

"And a good husband who adores you, Gwen," said Mrs Davilow, encouragingly.

Gwendolen put out her lips saucily and said nothing.

It was a slight drawback on her pleasure in starting that the Rector was detained by magistrate's business and would probably not be able to get to Cardell Chase at all that day. She cared little that Mrs Gascoigne and Anna chose not to go without him, but her uncle's presence would have seemed to make it a matter of course that the decision taken would be acted on. For decision in itself began to be formidable. Having come close to accepting Grandcourt, Gwendolen felt this lot of unhoped-for fulness rounding itself too definitely: when we take to wishing a great deal for ourselves, whatever we get soon turns into mere limitation and exclusion. Still there

was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom.

The place of meeting was a grassy spot called Green Arbour, where a bit of hanging wood made a sheltering amphitheatre. It was here that the coachful of servants with provisions had to prepare the picnic meal; and a warden of the Chase was to guide the roving archers so as to keep them within the due distance from this centre, and hinder them from wandering beyond the limit which had been fixed on—a curve that might be drawn through certain well-known points, such as the Double Oak, the Whispering Stones, and the High Cross. The plan was, to take only a preliminary stroll before luncheon, keeping the main roving expedition for the more exquisite lights of the afternoon. The muster was rapid enough to save every one from dull moments of waiting, and when the groups began to scatter themselves through the light and shadow made here by closely neighbouring beeches and there by rarer oaks, one may suppose that a painter would have been glad to look on. This roving archery was far prettier than the stationary game, but success in shooting at variable marks was less favoured by practice, and the hits were distributed among the volunteer archers otherwise than they would have been

in target-shooting. From this cause perhaps, as well as from the twofold distraction of being preoccupied and wishing not to betray her preoccupation, Gwendolen did not greatly distinguish herself in these first experiments, unless it were by the lively grace with which she took her comparative failure. She was in her white and green as on the day of the former archery meeting, when it made an epoch for her that she was introduced to Grandcourt; he was continually by her side now, yet it would have been hard to tell from mere looks and manners that their relation to each other had at all changed since their first conversation. Still there were other grounds that made most persons conclude them to be, if not engaged already, on the eve of being so. And she believed this herself. As they were all returning towards Green Arbour in divergent groups, not thinking at all of taking aim but merely chatting, words passed which seemed really the beginning of that end—the beginning of her acceptance. Grandcourt said, "Do you know how long it is since I first saw you in this dress?"

"The archery meeting was on the 25th, and this is the 13th," said Gwendolen, laughingly. "I am not good at calculating, but I will venture to say that it must be nearly three weeks."

A little pause, and then he said, "That is a great loss of time."

"That your knowing me has caused you? Pray don't be uncomplimentary: I don't like it."

Pause again. "It is because of the gain, that I feel the loss."

Here Gwendolen herself left a pause. She was thinking, "He is really very ingenious. He never speaks stupidly." Her silence was so unusual, that it seemed the strongest of favourable answers, and he continued—

"The gain of knowing you makes me feel the time I lose in uncertainty. Do *you* like uncertainty?"

"I think I do, rather," said Gwendolen, suddenly beaming on him with a playful smile. "There is more in it."

Grandcourt met her laughing eyes with a slow, steady look right into them, which seemed like vision in the abstract, and said, "Do you mean more torment for me?"

There was something so strange to Gwendolen in this moment that she was quite shaken out of her usual self-consciousness. Blushing and turning away her eyes, she said, "No, that would make me sorry."

Grandcourt would have followed up this answer,

which the change in her manner made apparently decisive of her favourable intention; but he was not in any way overcome so as to be unaware that they were now, within sight of everybody, descending the slope into Green Arbour, and descending it at an ill-chosen point where it began to be inconveniently steep. This was a reason for offering his hand in the literal sense to help her; she took it, and they came down in silence, much observed by those already on the level—among others by Mrs Arrowpoint, who happened to be standing with Mrs Davilow. That lady had now made up her mind that Grandcourt's merits were not such as would have induced Catherine to accept him, Catherine having so high a standard as to have refused Lord Slogan. Hence she looked at the tenant of Diplow with dispassionate eyes.

"Mr Grandcourt is not equal as a man to his uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger—too languid. To be sure, Mr Grandcourt is a much younger man, but I shouldn't wonder if Sir Hugo were to outlive him, notwithstanding the difference of years. It is ill calculating on successions," concluded Mrs Arrowpoint, rather too loudly.

"It is indeed," said Mrs Davilow, able to assent with quiet cheerfulness, for she was so well satisfied with the actual situation of affairs that her

habitual melancholy in their general unsatisfactoriness was altogether in abeyance.

I am not concerned to tell of the food that was eaten in that green refectory, or even to dwell on the glories of the forest scenery that spread themselves out beyond the level front of the hollow; being just now bound to tell a story of life at a stage when the blissful beauty of earth and sky entered only by narrow and oblique inlets into the consciousness, which was busy with a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show. It will be understood that the food and champagne were of the best—the talk and laughter too, in the sense of belonging to the best society, where no one makes an invidious display of anything in particular, and the advantages of the world are taken with that high-bred depreciation which follows from being accustomed to them. Some of the gentlemen strolled a little and indulged in a cigar, there being a sufficient interval before four o'clock—the time for beginning to rove again. Among these, strange to say, was Grandcourt; but not Mr Lush, who seemed to be taking his pleasure quite generously to-day by making himself particularly serviceable, ordering everything for everybody, and by this activity becoming more

than ever a blot on the scene to Gwendolen, though he kept himself amiably aloof from her, and never even looked at her obviously. When there was a general move to prepare for starting, it appeared that the bows had all been put under the charge of Lord Brackenshaw's valet, and Mr Lush was concerned to save ladies the trouble of fetching theirs from the carriage where they were propped. He did not intend to bring Gwendolen's, but she, fearful lest he should do so, hurried to fetch it herself. The valet seeing her approach met her with it, and in giving it into her hand gave also a letter addressed to her. She asked no question about it, perceived at a glance that the address was in a lady's handwriting (of the delicate kind which used to be esteemed feminine before the present uncial period), and moving away with her bow in her hand, saw Mr Lush coming to fetch other bows. To avoid meeting him she turned aside and walked with her back towards the stand of carriages, opening the letter. It contained these words—

"*If Miss Harleth is in doubt whether she should accept Mr Grandcourt, let her break from her party after they have passed the Whispering Stones and return to that spot. She will then hear something to decide her, but she can only hear it by keeping this*

letter a strict secret from every one. If she does not act according to this letter, she will repent, as the woman who writes it has repented. The secrecy Miss Harleth will feel herself bound in honour to guard."

Gwendolen felt an inward shock, but her immediate thought was, "It is come in time." It lay in her youthfulness that she was absorbed by the idea of the revelation to be made, and had not even a momentary suspicion of contrivance that could justify her in showing the letter. Her mind gathered itself up at once into the resolution that she would manage to go unobserved to the Whispering Stones; and thrusting the letter into her pocket she turned back to rejoin the company, with that sense of having something to conceal which to her nature had a bracing quality and helped her to be mistress of herself.

It was a surprise to every one that Grandcourt was not, like the other smokers, on the spot in time to set out roving with the rest. "We shall alight on him by-and-by," said Lord Brackenshaw; "he can't be gone far." At any rate, no man could be waited for. This apparent forgetfulness might be taken for the distraction of a lover so absorbed in thinking of the beloved object as to

forget an appointment which would bring him into her actual presence. And the good-natured Earl gave Gwendolen a distant jocose hint to that effect, which she took with suitable quietude. But the thought in her own mind was, "Can he too be starting away from a decision?" It was not exactly a pleasant thought to her; but it was near the truth. "Starting away," however, was not the right expression for the languor of intention that came over Grandcourt, like a fit of diseased numbness, when an end seemed within easy reach: to desist then, when all expectation was to the contrary, became another gratification of mere will, sublimely independent of definite motive. At that moment he had begun a second large cigar in a vague, hazy obstinacy which, if Lush or any other mortal who might be insulted with impunity had interrupted by overtaking him with a request for his return, would have expressed itself by a slow removal of his cigar to say, in an under-tone, "You'll be kind enough to go to the devil, will you?"

But he was not interrupted, and the rovers set off without any visible depression of spirits, leaving behind only a few of the less vigorous ladies, including Mrs Davilow, who preferred a quiet stroll free from obligation to keep up with others.

The enjoyment of the day was soon at its highest pitch, the archery getting more spirited and the changing scenes of the forest from roofed grove to open glade growing lovelier with the lengthening shadows, and the deeply felt but undefinable gradations of the mellowing afternoon. It was agreed that they were playing an extemporised "As you like it;" and when a pretty compliment had been turned to Gwendolen about her having the part of Rosalind, she felt the more compelled to be surpassing in liveliness. This was not very difficult to her, for the effect of what had happened to-day was an excitement which needed a vent, a sense of adventure rather than alarm, and a straining towards the management of her retreat so as not to be impeded.

The roving had been lasting nearly an hour before the arrival at the Whispering Stones, two tall conical blocks that leaned towards each other like gigantic grey-mantled figures. They were soon surveyed and passed by with the remark that they would be good ghosts on a starlit night. But a soft sunlight was on them now, and Gwendolen felt daring. The stones were near a fine grove of beeches where the archers found plenty of marks.

"How far are we from Green Arbour now?"

said Gwendolen, having got in front by the side of the warden.

"Oh, not more than half a mile, taking along the avenue we're going to cross up there: but I shall take round a couple of miles, by the High Cross."

She was falling back among the rest, when suddenly they seemed all to be hurrying obliquely forward under the guidance of Mr Lush, and lingering a little where she was, she perceived her opportunity of slipping away. Soon she was out of sight, and without running she seemed to herself to fly along the ground and count the moments nothing till she found herself back again at the Whispering Stones. They turned their blank grey sides to her: what was there on the other side? If there were nothing after all? That was her only dread now—to have to turn back again in mystification; and walking round the right-hand stone without pause, she found herself in front of some one whose large dark eyes met hers at a foot's distance. In spite of expectation she was startled and shrank back, but in doing so she could take in the whole figure of this stranger and perceive that she was unmistakably a lady, and one who must once have been exceedingly handsome. She perceived, also, that a few yards from her were two children seated on the grass.

"Miss Harleth?" said the lady.

"Yes." All Gwendolen's consciousness was wonder.

"Have you accepted Mr Grandcourt?"

"No."

"I have promised to tell you something. And you will promise to keep my secret. However you may decide, you will not tell Mr Grandcourt, or any one else, that you have seen me?"

"I promise."

"My name is Lydia Glasher. Mr Grandcourt ought not to marry any one but me. I left my husband and child for him nine years ago. Those two children are his, and we have two others—girls—who are older. My husband is dead now, and Mr Grandcourt ought to marry me. He ought to make that boy his heir."

She looked towards the boy as she spoke, and Gwendolen's eyes followed hers. The handsome little fellow was puffing out his cheeks in trying to blow a tiny trumpet which remained dumb. His hat hung backward by a string, and his brown curls caught the sun-rays. He was a cherub.

The two women's eyes met again, and Gwendolen said proudly, "I will not interfere with your wishes." She looked as if she were shivering, and her lips were pale.

"You are very attractive, Miss Harleth. But when he first knew me, I too was young. Since then my life has been broken up and embittered. It is not fair that he should be happy and I miserable, and my boy thrust out of sight for another."

These words were uttered with a biting accent, but with a determined abstinence from anything violent in tone or manner. Gwendolen, watching Mrs Glasher's face while she spoke, felt a sort of terror: it was as if some ghastly vision had come to her in a dream and said, "I am a woman's life."

"Have you anything more to say to me?" she asked in a low tone, but still proudly and coldly. The revulsion within her was not tending to soften her. Every one seemed hateful.

"Nothing. You know what I wished you to know. You can inquire about me if you like. My husband was Colonel Glasher."

"Then I will go," said Gwendolen, moving away with a ceremonious inclination, which was returned with equal grace.

In a few minutes Gwendolen was in the beech grove again, but her party had gone out of sight and apparently had not sent in search of her, for all was solitude till she had reached the avenue pointed out by the warden. She determined to

take this way back to Green Arbour, which she reached quickly; rapid movements seeming to her just now a means of suspending the thoughts which might prevent her from behaving with due calm. She had already made up her mind what step she would take.

Mrs Davilow was of course astonished to see Gwendolen returning alone, and was not without some uneasiness which the presence of other ladies hindered her from showing. In answer to her words of surprise Gwendolen said—

"Oh, I have been rather silly. I lingered behind to look at the Whispering Stones, and the rest hurried on after something, so I lost sight of them. I thought it best to come home by the short way —the avenue that the warden had told me of. I'm not sorry after all. I had had enough walking."

"Your party did not meet Mr Grandcourt, I presume," said Mrs Arrowpoint, not without intention.

"No," said Gwendolen, with a little flash of defiance and a light laugh. "And we didn't see any carvings on the trees either. Where can he be? I should think he has fallen into the pool or had an apoplectic fit."

With all Gwendolen's resolve not to betray any agitation, she could not help it that her tone was

unusually high and hard, and her mother felt sure that something unpropitious had happened.

Mrs Arrowpoint thought that the self-confident young lady was much piqued, and that Mr Grandcourt was probably seeing reason to change his mind.

"If you have no objection, mamma, I will order the carriage," said Gwendolen. "I am tired. And every one will be going soon."

Mrs Davilow assented; but by the time the carriage was announced as ready—the horses having to be fetched from the stables on the warden's premises—the roving party reappeared, and with them Mr Grandcourt.

"Ah, there you are!" said Lord Brackenshaw, going up to Gwendolen, who was arranging her mamma's shawl for the drive. "We thought at first you had alighted on Grandcourt and he had taken you home. Lush said so. But after that we met Grandcourt. However, we didn't suppose you could be in any danger. The warden said he had told you a near way back."

"You are going?" said Grandcourt, coming up with his usual air, as if he did not conceive that there had been any omission on his part. Lord Brackenshaw gave place to him and moved away.

"Yes, we are going," said Gwendolen, looking

busily at her scarf which she was arranging across her shoulders Scotch fashion.

"May I call at Offendene to-morrow?"

"Oh yes, if you like," said Gwendolen, sweeping him from a distance with her eyelashes. Her voice was light and sharp as the first touch of frost.

Mrs Davilow accepted his arm to lead her to the carriage; but while that was happening, Gwendolen with incredible swiftness had got in advance of them and had sprung into the carriage.

"I got in, mamma, because I wished to be on this side," she said, apologetically. But she had avoided Grandcourt's touch: he only lifted his hat and walked away—with the not unsatisfactory impression that she meant to show herself offended by his neglect.

The mother and daughter drove for five minutes in silence. Then Gwendolen said, "I intend to join the Langens at Dover, mamma. I shall pack up immediately on getting home, and set off by the early train. I shall be at Dover almost as soon as they are; we can let them know by telegraph."

"Good heavens, child! what can be your reason for saying so?"

"My reason for saying it, mamma, is that I mean to do it."

"But why do you mean to do it?"

"I wish to go away."

"Is it because you are offended with Mr Grandcourt's odd behaviour in walking off to-day?"

"It is useless to enter into such questions. I am not going in any case to marry Mr Grandcourt. Don't interest yourself further about him."

"What can I say to your uncle, Gwendolen? Consider the position you place me in. You led him to believe only last night that you had made up your mind in favour of Mr Grandcourt."

"I am very sorry to cause you annoyance, mamma dear, but I can't help it," said Gwendolen, with still harder resistance in her tone. "Whatever you or my uncle may think or do, I shall not alter my resolve, and I shall not tell my reason. I don't care what comes of it. I don't care if I never marry any one. There is nothing worth caring for. I believe all men are bad, and I hate them."

"But need you set off in this way, Gwendolen?" said Mrs Davilow, miserable and helpless.

"Now, mamma, don't interfere with me. If you have ever had any trouble in your own life, remember it, and don't interfere with me. If I am to be miserable, let it be by my own choice."

The mother was reduced to trembling silence.

She began to see that the difficulty would be lessened if Gwendolen went away.

And she did go. The packing was all carefully done that evening, and not long after dawn the next day Mrs Davilow accompanied her daughter to the railway station. The sweet dews of morning, the cows and horses looking over the hedges without any particular reason, the early travellers on foot with their bundles, seemed all very melancholy and purposeless to them both. The dingy torpor of the railway station, before the ticket could be taken, was still worse. Gwendolen had certainly hardened in the last twenty-four hours: her mother's trouble evidently counted for little in her present state of mind, which did not essentially differ from the mood that makes men take to worse conduct when their belief in persons or things is upset. Gwendolen's uncontrolled reading, though consisting chiefly in what are called pictures of life, had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality. Is that surprising? It is to be believed that attendance at the *opéra bouffe* in the present day would not leave men's minds entirely without shock, if the manners observed there with some applause were suddenly to start up in their own families. Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What

horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimest art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented in our personal experience.

Mrs Davilow felt Gwendolen's new phase of indifference keenly, and as she drove back alone, the brightening morning was sadder to her than before.

Mr Grandcourt called that day at Offendene, but nobody was at home.

CHAPTER XV.

"*Festina lente*—celerity should be contempered with cunctation."—SIR THOMAS BROWNE.

GWENDOLEN, we have seen, passed her time abroad in the new excitement of gambling, and in imagining herself an empress of luck, having brought from her late experience a vague impression that in this confused world it signified nothing what any one did, so that they amused themselves. We have seen, too, that certain persons, mysteriously symbolised as Grapnell and Co., having also thought of reigning in the realm of luck, and being also bent on amusing themselves, no matter how, had brought about a painful change in her family circumstances; whence she had returned home—carrying with her, against her inclination, a necklace which she had pawned and some one else had redeemed.

While she was going back to England, Grandcourt was coming to find her; coming, that is,

after his own manner—not in haste by express straight from Diplow to Leubronn, where she was understood to be; but so entirely without hurry that he was induced by the presence of some Russian acquaintances to linger at Baden-Baden and make various appointments with them, which, however, his desire to be at Leubronn ultimately caused him to break. Grandcourt's passions were of the intermittent, flickering kind: never flaming out strongly. But a great deal of life goes on without strong passion: myriads of cravats are carefully tied, dinners attended, even speeches made proposing the health of august personages, without the zest arising from a strong desire. And a man may make a good appearance in high social positions —may be supposed to know the classics, to have his reserves on science, a strong though repressed opinion on politics, and all the sentiments of the English gentleman, at a small expense of vital energy. Also, he may be obstinate or persistent at the same low rate, and may even show sudden impulses which have a false air of dæmonic strength because they seem inexplicable, though perhaps their secret lies merely in the want of regulated channels for the soul to move in—good and sufficient ducts of habit, without which our nature easily turns to mere ooze and mud, and

at any pressure yields nothing but a spurt or a puddle.

Grandcourt had not been altogether displeased by Gwendolen's running away from the splendid chance he was holding out to her. The act had some piquancy for him. He liked to think that it was due to resentment of his careless behaviour in Cardell Chase, which, when he came to consider it, did appear rather cool. To have brought her so near a tender admission, and then to have walked headlong away from further opportunities of winning the consent which he had made her understand him to be asking for, was enough to provoke a girl of spirit; and to be worth his mastering it was proper that she should have some spirit. Doubtless she meant him to follow her, and it was what he meant too. But for a whole week he took no measures towards starting, and did not even inquire where Miss Harleth was gone. Mr Lush felt a triumph that was mingled with much distrust; for Grandcourt had said no word to him about her, and looked as neutral as an alligator: there was no telling what might turn up in the slowly-churning chances of his mind. Still, to have put off a decision was to have made room for the waste of Grandcourt's energy.

The guests at Diplow felt more curiosity than

their host. How was it that nothing more was heard of Miss Harleth? Was it credible that she had refused Mr Grandcourt? Lady Flora Hollis, a lively middle-aged woman, well endowed with curiosity, felt a sudden interest in making a round of calls with Mrs Torrington, including the Rectory, Offendene, and Quetcham, and thus not only got twice over, but also discussed with the Arrowpoints, the information that Miss Harleth was gone to Leubronn with some old friends, the Baron and Baroness von Langen; for the immediate agitation and disappointment of Mrs Davilow and the Gascoignes had resolved itself into a wish that Gwendolen's disappearance should not be interpreted as anything eccentric or needful to be kept secret. The Rector's mind, indeed, entertained the possibility that the marriage was only a little deferred, for Mrs Davilow had not dared to tell him of the bitter determination with which Gwendolen had spoken. And in spite of his practical ability, some of his experience had petrified into maxims and quotations. Amaryllis fleeing desired that her hiding-place should be known; and that love will find out the way "over the mountain and over the wave" may be said without hyperbole in this age of steam. Gwendolen, he conceived, was an Amaryllis of excellent sense but coquettish dar-

ing; the question was, whether she had dared too much.

Lady Flora, coming back charged with news about Miss Harleth, saw no good reason why she should not try whether she could electrify Mr Grandcourt by mentioning it to him at table; and in doing so shot a few hints of a notion having got abroad that he was a disappointed adorer. Grandcourt heard with quietude, but with attention; and the next day he ordered Lush to bring about a decent reason for breaking up the party at Diplow by the end of another week, as he meant to go yachting to the Baltic or somewhere—it being impossible to stay at Diplow as if he were a prisoner on parole, with a set of people whom he had never wanted. Lush needed no clearer announcement that Grandcourt was going to Leubronn; but he might go after the manner of a creeping billiard-ball and stick on the way. What Mr Lush intended was to make himself indispensable so that he might go too, and he succeeded; Gwendolen's repulsion for him being a fact that only amused his patron, and made him none the less willing to have Lush always at hand.

This was how it happened that Grandcourt arrived at the *Czarina* on the fifth day after

Gwendolen had left Leubronn, and found there his uncle, Sir Hugo Mallinger, with his family, including Deronda. It is not necessarily a pleasure either to the reigning power or the heir presumptive when their separate affairs—a touch of gout, say, in the one, and a touch of wilfulness in the other—happen to bring them to the same spot. Sir Hugo was an easy-tempered man, tolerant both of differences and defects; but a point of view different from his own concerning the settlement of the family estates fretted him rather more than if it had concerned Church discipline or the ballot, and faults were the less venial for belonging to a person whose existence was inconvenient to him. In no case could Grandcourt have been a nephew after his own heart; but as the presumptive heir to the Mallinger estates he was the sign and embodiment of a chief grievance in the baronet's life—the want of a son to inherit the lands, in no portion of which had he himself more than a life-interest. For in the ill-advised settlement which his father, Sir Francis, had chosen to make by will, even Diplow with its modicum of land had been left under the same conditions as the ancient and wide inheritance of the two Toppings—Diplow, where Sir Hugo had lived and hunted through many a season in his

younger years, and where his wife and daughters ought to have been able to retire after his death.

This grievance had naturally gathered emphasis as the years advanced, and Lady Mallinger, after having had three daughters in quick succession, had remained for eight years till now that she was over forty without producing so much as another girl; while Sir Hugo, almost twenty years older, was at a time of life when, notwithstanding the fashionable retardation of most things from dinners to marriages, a man's hopefulness is apt to show signs of wear, until restored by second childhood.

In fact, he had begun to despair of a son, and this confirmation of Grandcourt's interest in the estates certainly tended to make his image and presence the more unwelcome; but, on the other hand, it carried circumstances which disposed Sir Hugo to take care that the relation between them should be kept as friendly as possible. It led him to dwell on a plan which had grown up side by side with his disappointment of an heir; namely, to try and secure Diplow as a future residence for Lady Mallinger and her daughters, and keep this pretty bit of the family inheritance for his own offspring in spite of that disappointment. Such knowledge as he had of his nephew's

disposition and affairs encouraged the belief that Grandcourt might consent to a transaction by which he would get a good sum of ready money, as an equivalent for his prospective interest in the domain of Diplow and the moderate amount of land attached to it. If, after all, the unhoped-for son should be born, the money would have been thrown away, and Grandcourt would have been paid for giving up interests that had turned out good for nothing; but Sir Hugo set down this risk as *nil*, and of late years he had husbanded his fortune so well by the working of mines and the sale of leases that he was prepared for an outlay.

Here was an object that made him careful to avoid any quarrel with Grandcourt. Some years before, when he was making improvements at the Abbey, and needed Grandcourt's concurrence in his felling an obstructive mass of timber on the demesne, he had congratulated himself on finding that there was no active spite against him in his nephew's peculiar mind; and nothing had since occurred to make them hate each other more than was compatible with perfect politeness, or with any accommodation that could be strictly mutual.

Grandcourt, on his side, thought his uncle a superfluity and a bore, and felt that the list of

things in general would be improved whenever Sir Hugo came to be expunged. But he had been made aware through Lush, always a useful medium, of the baronet's inclinations concerning Diplow, and he was gratified to have the alternative of the money in his mind: even if he had not thought it in the least likely that he would choose to accept it, his sense of power would have been flattered by his being able to refuse what Sir Hugo desired. The hinted transaction had told for something among the motives which had made him ask for a year's tenancy of Diplow, which it had rather annoyed Sir Hugo to grant, because the excellent hunting in the neighbourhood might decide Grandcourt not to part with his chance of future possession;—a man who has two places, in one of which the hunting is less good, naturally desiring a third where it is better. Also, Lush had thrown out to Sir Hugo the probability that Grandcourt would woo and win Miss Arrowpoint, and in that case ready money might be less of a temptation to him. Hence, on this unexpected meeting at Leubronn, the baronet felt much curiosity to know how things had been going on at Diplow, was bent on being as civil as possible to his nephew, and looked forward to some private chat with Lush.

Between Deronda and Grandcourt there was a more faintly marked but peculiar relation, depending on circumstances which have yet to be made known. But on no side was there any sign of suppressed chagrin on the first meeting at the *table d'hôte*, an hour after Grandcourt's arrival; and when the quartette of gentlemen afterwards met on the terrace, without Lady Mallinger, they moved off together to saunter through the rooms, Sir Hugo saying as they entered the large *saal*—

"Did you play much at Baden, Grandcourt?"

"No; I looked on and betted a little with some Russians there."

"Had you luck?"

"What did I win, Lush?"

"You brought away about two hundred," said Lush.

"You are not here for the sake of the play, then?" said Sir Hugo.

"No; I don't care about play now. It's a confounded strain," said Grandcourt, whose diamond ring and demeanour, as he moved along playing slightly with his whisker, were being a good deal stared at by rouged foreigners interested in a new milord.

"The fact is, somebody should invent a mill to do amusements for you, my dear fellow," said Sir

Hugo, "as the Tartars get their praying done. But I agree with you; I never cared for play. It's monotonous — knits the brain up into meshes. And it knocks me up to watch it now. I suppose one gets poisoned with the bad air. I never stay here more than ten minutes. But where's your gambling beauty, Deronda? Have you seen her lately?"

"She's gone," said Deronda, curtly.

"An uncommonly fine girl, a perfect Diana," said Sir Hugo, turning to Grandcourt again. "Really worth a little straining to look at her. I saw her winning, and she took it as coolly as if she had known it all beforehand. The same day Deronda happened to see her losing like wildfire, and she bore it with immense pluck. I suppose she was cleaned out, or was wise enough to stop in time. How do you know she's gone?"

"Oh, by the Visitor-list," said Deronda, with a scarcely perceptible shrug. "Vandernoodt told me her name was Harleth, and she was with the Baron and Baroness von Langen. I saw by the list that Miss Harleth was no longer there."

This held no further information for Lush than that Gwendolen had been gambling. He had already looked at the list, and ascertained that Gwendolen had gone, but he had no intention

of thrusting this knowledge on Grandcourt before he asked for it; and he had not asked, finding it enough to believe that the object of search would turn up somewhere or other.

But now Grandcourt had heard what was rather piquant, and not a word about Miss Harleth had been missed by him. After a moment's pause he said to Deronda—

"Do you know those people—the Langens?"

"I have talked with them a little since Miss Harleth went away. I knew nothing of them before."

"Where is she gone—do you know?"

"She is gone home," said Deronda, coldly, as if he wished to say no more. But then, from a fresh impulse, he turned to look markedly at Grandcourt, and added, "But it is possible you know her. Her home is not far from Diplow: Offendene, near Wancester."

Deronda, turning to look straight at Grandcourt who was on his left hand, might have been a subject for those old painters who liked contrasts of temperament. There was a calm intensity of life and richness of tint in his face that on a sudden gaze from him was rather startling, and often made him seem to have spoken, so that servants and officials asked him automatically, "what did

you say, sir?" when he had been quite silent. Grandcourt himself felt an irritation, which he did not show except by a slight movement of the eyelids, at Deronda's turning round on him when he was not asked to do more than speak. But he answered, with his usual drawl, "Yes, I know her," and paused with his shoulder towards Deronda, to look at the gambling.

"What of her, eh?" asked Sir Hugo of Lush, as the three moved on a little way. "She must be a new-comer at Offendene. Old Blenny lived there after the dowager died."

"A little too much of her," said Lush, in a low, significant tone; not sorry to let Sir Hugo know the state of affairs.

"Why? how?" said the baronet. They all moved out of the *salon* into a more airy promenade.

"He has been on the brink of marrying her," Lush went on. "But I hope it's off now. She's a niece of the clergyman—Gascoigne—at Pennicote. Her mother is a widow with a brood of daughters. This girl will have nothing, and is as dangerous as gunpowder. It would be a foolish marriage. But she has taken a freak against him, for she ran off here without notice, when he had agreed to call the next day. The fact is, he's here after her; but he was in no great hurry, and between

his caprice and hers they are likely enough not to get together again. But of course he has lost his chance with the heiress."

Grandcourt joining them said, "What a beastly den this is!—a worse hole than Baden. I shall go back to the hotel."

When Sir Hugo and Deronda were alone, the baronet began—

"Rather a pretty story. That girl has some drama in her. She must be worth running after—has *de l'imprévu*. I think her appearance on the scene has bettered my chance of getting Diplow, whether the marriage comes off or not."

"I should hope a marriage like that would not come off," said Deronda, in a tone of disgust.

"What! are you a little touched with the sublime lash?" said Sir Hugo, putting up his glasses to help his short sight in looking at his companion. "Are you inclined to run after her?"

"On the contrary," said Deronda, "I should rather be inclined to run away from her."

"Why, you would easily cut out Grandcourt. A girl with her spirit would think you the finer match of the two," said Sir Hugo, who often tried Deronda's patience by finding a joke in impossible advice. (A difference of taste in jokes is a great strain on the affections.)

"I suppose pedigree and land belong to a fine match," said Deronda, coldly.

"The best horse will win in spite of pedigree, my boy. You remember Napoleon's *mot—Je suis ancêtre;*" said Sir Hugo, who habitually undervalued birth, as men after dining well often agree that the good of life is distributed with wonderful equality.

"I am not sure that I want to be an ancestor," said Deronda. "It doesn't seem to me the rarest sort of origination."

"You won't run after the pretty gambler, then?" said Sir Hugo, putting down his glasses.

"Decidedly not."

This answer was perfectly truthful; nevertheless it had passed through Deronda's mind that under other circumstances he should have given way to the interest this girl had raised in him, and tried to know more of her. But his history had given him a stronger bias in another direction. He felt himself in no sense free.

CHAPTER XVI.

Men, like planets, have both a visible and an invisible history. The astronomer threads the darkness with strict deduction, accounting so for every visible arc in the wanderer's orbit; and the narrator of human actions, if he did his work with the same completeness, would have to thread the hidden pathways of feeling and thought which lead up to every moment of action, and to those moments of intense suffering which take the quality of action—like the cry of Prometheus, whose chained anguish seems a greater energy than the sea and sky he invokes and the deity he defies.

DERONDA'S circumstances, indeed, had been exceptional. One moment had been burnt into his life as its chief epoch—a moment full of July sunshine and large pink roses shedding their last petals on a grassy court enclosed on three sides by a Gothic cloister. Imagine him in such a scene: a boy of thirteen, stretched prone on the grass where it was in shadow, his curly head propped on his arms over a book, while his tutor, also reading, sat on a camp-stool under shelter. Deronda's book was Sismondi's History of the Italian Republics:—the lad had a passion for history, eager to know how time had been filled up since the Flood, and how things were carried

on in the dull periods. Suddenly he let down his left arm and looked at his tutor, saying in purest boyish tones—

"Mr Fraser, how was it that the popes and cardinals always had so many nephews?"

The tutor, an able young Scotchman who acted as Sir Hugo Mallinger's secretary, roused rather unwillingly from his political economy, answered with the clear-cut, emphatic chant which makes a truth doubly telling in Scotch utterance—

"Their own children were called nephews."

"Why?" said Deronda.

"It was just for the propriety of the thing; because, as you know very well, priests don't marry, and the children were illegitimate."

Mr Fraser, thrusting out his lower lip and making his chant of the last word the more emphatic for a little impatience at being interrupted, had already turned his eyes on his book again, while Deronda, as if something had stung him, started up in a sitting attitude with his back to the tutor.

He had always called Sir Hugo Mallinger his uncle, and when it once occurred to him to ask about his father and mother, the baronet had answered, "You lost your father and mother when you were quite a little one; that is why I take care of you." Daniel then straining to discern some-

thing in that early twilight, had a dim sense of having been kissed very much, and surrounded by thin, cloudy, scented drapery, till his fingers caught in something hard, which hurt him, and he began to cry. Every other memory he had was of the little world in which he still lived. And at that time he did not mind about learning more, for he was too fond of Sir Hugo to be sorry for the loss of unknown parents. Life was very delightful to the lad, with an uncle who was always indulgent and cheerful—a fine man in the bright noon of life, whom Daniel thought absolutely perfect, and whose place was one of the finest in England, at once historical, romantic, and homelike: a picturesque architectural outgrowth from an abbey, which had still remnants of the old monastic trunk. Diplow lay in another county, and was a comparatively landless place which had come into the family from a rich lawyer on the female side, who wore the perruque of the Restoration; whereas the Mallingers had the grant of Monk's Topping under Henry the Eighth, and ages before had held the neighbouring lands of King's Topping, tracing indeed their origin to a certain Hugues le Malingre, who came in with the Conqueror, —and also apparently with a sickly complexion, which had been happily corrected in his descend-

ants. Two rows of these descendants, direct and collateral, females of the male line, and males of the female, looked down in the gallery over the cloisters on the nephew Daniel as he walked there: men in armour with pointed beards and arched eyebrows, pinched ladies in hoops and ruffs with no face to speak of; grave-looking men in black velvet and stuffed hips, and fair, frightened women holding little boys by the hand; smiling politicians in magnificent perruques, and ladies of the prize-animal kind, with rosebud mouths and full eyelids, according to Lely; then a generation whose faces were revised and embellished in the taste of Kneller; and so on through refined editions of the family types in the time of Reynolds and Romney, till the line ended with Sir Hugo and his younger brother Henleigh. This last had married Miss Grandcourt, and taken her name along with her estates, thus making a junction between two equally old families, impaling the three Saracens' heads proper and three bezants of the one with the tower and falcons *argent* of the other, and, as it happened, uniting their highest advantages in the prospects of that Henleigh Mallinger Grandcourt who is at present more of an acquaintance to us than either Sir Hugo or his nephew Daniel Deronda.

In Sir Hugo's youthful portrait with rolled collar and high cravat, Sir Thomas Lawrence had done justice to the agreeable alacrity of expression and sanguine temperament still to be seen in the original, but had done something more than justice in slightly lengthening the nose, which was in reality shorter than might have been expected in a Mallinger. Happily the appropriate nose of the family reappeared in his younger brother, and was to be seen in all its refined regularity in his nephew Mallinger Grandcourt. But in the nephew Daniel Deronda the family faces of various types, seen on the walls of the gallery, found no reflex. Still he was handsomer than any of them, and when he was thirteen might have served as model for any painter who wanted to image the most memorable of boys: you could hardly have seen his face thoroughly meeting yours without believing that human creatures had done nobly in times past, and might do more nobly in time to come. The finest childlike faces have this consecrating power, and make us shudder anew at all the grossness and basely-wrought griefs of the world, lest they should enter here and defile.

But at this moment on the grass among the rose-petals, Daniel Deronda was making a first acquaintance with those griefs. A new idea had entered

his mind, and was beginning to change the aspect of his habitual feelings as happy careless voyagers are changed when the sky suddenly threatens and the thought of danger arises. He sat perfectly still with his back to the tutor, while his face expressed rapid inward transition. The deep blush, which had come when he first started up, gradually subsided; but his features kept that indescribable look of subdued activity which often accompanies a new mental survey of familiar facts. He had not lived with other boys, and his mind showed the same blending of child's ignorance with surprising knowledge which is oftener seen in bright girls. Having read Shakespeare as well as a great deal of history, he could have talked with the wisdom of a bookish child about men who were born out of wedlock and were held unfortunate in consequence, being under disadvantages which required them to be a sort of heroes if they were to work themselves up to an equal standing with their legally born brothers. But he had never brought such knowledge into any association with his own lot, which had been too easy for him ever to think about it—until this moment when there had darted into his mind with the magic of quick comparison, the possibility that here was the secret of his own birth, and that the man whom he called uncle was

really his father. Some children, even younger than Daniel, have known the first arrival of care, like an ominous irremovable guest in their tender lives, on the discovery that their parents, whom they had imagined able to buy everything, were poor and in hard money troubles. Daniel felt the presence of a new guest who seemed to come with an enigmatic veiled face, and to carry dimly-conjectured, dreaded revelations. The ardour which he had given to the imaginary world in his books suddenly rushed towards his own history and spent its pictorial energy there, explaining what he knew, representing the unknown. The uncle whom he loved very dearly took the aspect of a father who held secrets about him—who had done him a wrong—yes, a wrong: and what had become of his mother, from whom he must have been taken away?—Secrets about which he, Daniel, could never inquire; for to speak or be spoken to about these new thoughts seemed like falling flakes of fire to his imagination. Those who have known an impassioned childhood will understand this dread of utterance about any shame connected with their parents. The impetuous advent of new images took possession of him with the force of fact for the first time told, and left him no immediate power for

the reflection that he might be trembling at a fiction of his own. The terrible sense of collision between a strong rush of feeling and the dread of its betrayal, found relief at length in big slow tears, which fell without restraint until the voice of Mr Fraser was heard saying—

"Daniel, do you see that you are sitting on the bent pages of your book?"

Daniel immediately moved the book without turning round, and after holding it before him for an instant, rose with it and walked away into the open grounds, where he could dry his tears unobserved. The first shock of suggestion past, he could remember that he had no certainty how things really had been, and that he had been making conjectures about his own history, as he had often made stories about Pericles or Columbus, just to fill up the blanks before they became famous. Only there came back certain facts which had an obstinate reality,—almost like the fragments of a bridge, telling you unmistakably how the arches lay. And again there came a mood in which his conjectures seemed like a doubt of religion, to be banished as an offence, and a mean prying after what he was not meant to know; for there was hardly a delicacy of feeling this lad was not capable of. But the summing

up of all his fluctuating experience at this epoch was, that a secret impression had come to him which had given him something like a new sense in relation to all the elements of his life. And the idea that others probably knew things concerning him which they did not choose to mention, and which he would not have had them mention, set up in him a premature reserve which helped to intensify his inward experience. His ears were open now to words which before that July day would have passed by him unnoted; and round every trivial incident which imagination could connect with his suspicions, a newly-roused set of feelings were ready to cluster themselves.

One such incident a month later wrought itself deeply into his life. Daniel had not only one of those thrilling boy voices which seem to bring an idyllic heaven and earth before our eyes, but a fine musical instinct, and had early made out accompaniments for himself on the piano, while he sang from memory. Since then he had had some teaching, and Sir Hugo, who delighted in the boy, used to ask for his music in the presence of guests. One morning after he had been singing "Sweet Echo" before a small party of gentlemen whom the rain had kept in the house, the baronet, passing from a smiling remark to his next neighbour, said—

"Come here, Dan!"

The boy came forward with unusual reluctance. He wore an embroidered holland blouse which set off the rich colouring of his head and throat, and the resistant gravity about his mouth and eyes as he was being smiled upon, made their beauty the more impressive. Every one was admiring him.

"What do you say to being a great singer? Should you like to be adored by the world and take the house by storm, like Mario and Tamberlik?"

Daniel reddened instantaneously, but there was a just perceptible interval before he answered with angry decision—

"No; I should hate it!"

"Well, well, well!" said Sir Hugo, with surprised kindliness intended to be soothing. But Daniel turned away quickly, left the room, and going to his own chamber threw himself on the broad window-sill, which was a favourite retreat of his when he had nothing particular to do. Here he could see the rain gradually subsiding with gleams through the parting clouds which lit up a great reach of the park, where the old oaks stood apart from each other, and the bordering wood was pierced with a green glade which met the eastern sky. This was a scene which had always been part

of his home—part of the dignified ease which had been a matter of course in his life. And his ardent clinging nature had appropriated it all with affection. He knew a great deal of what it was to be a gentleman by inheritance, and without thinking much about himself—for he was a boy of active perceptions and easily forgot his own existence in that of Robert Bruce—he had never supposed that he could be shut out from such a lot, or have a very different part in the world from that of the uncle who petted him. It is possible (though not greatly believed in at present) to be fond of poverty and take it for a bride, to prefer scoured deal, red quarries, and whitewash for one's private surroundings, to delight in no splendour but what has open doors for the whole nation, and to glory in having no privilege except such as nature insists on; and noblemen have been known to run away from elaborate ease and the option of idleness, that they might bind themselves for small pay to hard-handed labour. But Daniel's tastes were altogether in keeping with his nurture: his disposition was one in which everyday scenes and habits beget not *ennui* or rebellion, but delight, affection, aptitudes; and now the lad had been stung to the quick by the idea that his uncle—perhaps his father—thought of a career for him

which was totally unlike his own, and which he knew very well was not thought of among possible destinations for the sons of English gentlemen. He had often stayed in London with Sir Hugo, who to indulge the boy's ear had carried him to the opera to hear the great tenors, so that the image of a singer taking the house by storm was very vivid to him; but now, spite of his musical gift, he set himself bitterly against the notion of being dressed up to sing before all those fine people who would not care about him except as a wonderful toy. That Sir Hugo should have thought of him in that position for a moment, seemed to Daniel an unmistakable proof that there was something about his birth which threw him out from the class of gentlemen to which the baronet belonged. Would it ever be mentioned to him? Would the time come when his uncle would tell him everything? He shrank from the prospect: in his imagination he preferred ignorance. If his father had been wicked —Daniel inwardly used strong words, for he was feeling the injury done him as a maimed boy feels the crushed limb which for others is merely reckoned in an average of accidents— if his father had done any wrong, he wished it might never be spoken of to him: it was already a

cutting thought that such knowledge might be in other minds. Was it in Mr Fraser's? probably not, else he would not have spoken in that way about the pope's nephews: Daniel fancied, as older people do, that every one else's consciousness was as active as his own on a matter which was vital to him. Did Turvey the valet know?—and old Mrs French the housekeeper?—and Banks the bailiff, with whom he had ridden about the farms on his pony?—And now there came back the recollection of a day some years before when he was drinking Mrs Banks's whey, and Banks said to his wife with a wink and a cunning laugh, "He features the mother, eh?" At that time little Daniel had merely thought that Banks made a silly face, as the common farming men often did—laughing at what was not laughable; and he rather resented being winked at and talked of as if he did not understand everything. But now that small incident became information: it was to be reasoned on. How could he be like his mother and not like his father? His mother must have been a Mallinger, if Sir Hugo were his uncle. But no! His father might have been Sir Hugo's brother and have changed his name, as Mr Henleigh Mallinger did when he married Miss Grandcourt. But then, why had he never heard Sir Hugo speak

of his brother Deronda, as he spoke of his brother Grandcourt? Daniel had never before cared about the family tree—only about that ancestor who had killed three Saracens in one encounter. But now his mind turned to a cabinet of estate-maps in the library, where he had once seen an illuminated parchment hanging out, that Sir Hugo said was the family tree. The phrase was new and odd to him—he was a little fellow then, hardly more than half his present age—and he gave it no precise meaning. He knew more now and wished that he could examine that parchment. He imagined that the cabinet was always locked, and longed to try it. But here he checked himself. He might be seen; and he would never bring himself near even a silent admission of the sore that had opened in him.

It is in such experiences of boy or girlhood, while elders are debating whether most education lies in science or literature, that the main lines of character are often laid down. If Daniel had been of a less ardently affectionate nature, the reserve about himself and the supposition that others had something to his disadvantage in their minds, might have turned into a hard, proud antagonism. But inborn lovingness was strong enough to keep itself level with resentment. There was hardly

any creature in his habitual world that he was not fond of; teasing them occasionally, of course—all except his uncle, or "Nunc," as Sir Hugo had taught him to say; for the baronet was the reverse of a strait-laced man, and left his dignity to take care of itself. Him Daniel loved in that deep-rooted filial way which makes children always the happier for being in the same room with father or mother, though their occupations may be quite apart. Sir Hugo's watch-chain and seals, his hand-writing, his mode of smoking and of talking to his dogs and horses, had all a rightness and charm about them to the boy which went along with the happiness of morning and breakfast-time. That Sir Hugo had always been a Whig, made Tories and Radicals equally opponents of the truest and best; and the books he had written were all seen under the same consecration of loving belief which differenced what was his from what was not his, in spite of general resemblance. Those writings were various, from volumes of travel in the brilliant style, to articles on things in general, and pamphlets on political crises; but to Daniel they were alike in having an unquestionable rightness by which other people's information could be tested.

Who cannot imagine the bitterness of a first suspicion that something in this object of com-

plete love was *not* quite right? Children demand that their heroes should be fleckless, and easily believe them so: perhaps a first discovery to the contrary is hardly a less revolutionary shock to a passionate child than the threatened downfall of habitual beliefs which makes the world seem to totter for us in maturer life.

But some time after this renewal of Daniel's agitation it appeared that Sir Hugo must have been making a merely playful experiment in his question about the singing. He sent for Daniel into the library, and looking up from his writing as the boy entered threw himself sideways in his arm-chair. "Ah, Dan!" he said kindly, drawing one of the old embroidered stools close to him. "Come and sit down here."

Daniel obeyed, and Sir Hugo put a gentle hand on his shoulder, looking at him affectionately.

"What is it, my boy? Have you heard anything that has put you out of spirits lately?"

Daniel was determined not to let the tears come, but he could not speak.

"All changes are painful when people have been happy, you know," said Sir Hugo, lifting his hand from the boy's shoulder to his dark curls and rubbing them gently. "You can't be educated exactly as I wish you to be without our parting.

And I think you will find a great deal to like at school."

This was not what Daniel expected, and was so far a relief, which gave him spirit to answer—

"Am I to go to school?"

"Yes, I mean you to go to Eton. I wish you to have the education of an English gentleman; and for that it is necessary that you should go to a public school in preparation for the university: Cambridge I mean you to go to; it was my own university."

Daniel's colour came and went.

"What do you say, sirrah?" said Sir Hugo, smiling.

"I should like to be a gentleman," said Daniel, with firm distinctness, "and go to school, if that is what a gentleman's son must do."

Sir Hugo watched him silently for a few moments, thinking he understood now why the lad had seemed angry at the notion of becoming a singer. Then he said tenderly—

"And so you won't mind about leaving your old Nunc?"

"Yes, I shall," said Daniel, clasping Sir Hugo's caressing arm with both his hands. "But shan't I come home and be with you in the holidays?"

"Oh yes, generally," said Sir Hugo. "But now

I mean you to go at once to a new tutor, to break the change for you before you go to Eton."

After this interview Daniel's spirit rose again. He was meant to be a gentleman, and in some unaccountable way it might be that his conjectures were all wrong. The very keenness of the lad taught him to find comfort in his ignorance. While he was busying his mind in the construction of possibilities, it became plain to him that there must be possibilities of which he knew nothing. He left off brooding, young joy and the spirit of adventure not being easily quenched within him, and in the interval before his going away he sang about the house, danced among the old servants, making them parting gifts, and insisted many times to the groom on the care that was to be taken of the black pony.

"Do you think I shall know much less than the other boys, Mr Fraser?" said Daniel. It was his bent to think that every stranger would be surprised at his ignorance.

"There are dunces to be found everywhere," said the judicious Fraser. "You'll not be the biggest; but you've not the makings of a Porson in you, or a Leibnitz either."

"I don't want to be a Porson or a Leibnitz,"

said Daniel. "I would rather be a greater leader, like Pericles or Washington."

"Ay, ay; you've a notion they did with little parsing, and less algebra," said Fraser. But in reality he thought his pupil a remarkable lad, to whom one thing was as easy as another if he had only a mind to it.

Things went very well with Daniel in his new world, except that a boy with whom he was at once inclined to strike up a close friendship talked to him a great deal about his home and parents, and seemed to expect a like expansiveness in return. Daniel immediately shrank into reserve, and this experience remained a check on his naturally strong bent towards the formation of intimate friendships. Every one, his tutor included, set him down as a reserved boy, though he was so good-humoured and unassuming, as well as quick both at study and sport, that nobody called his reserve disagreeable. Certainly his face had a great deal to do with that favourable interpretation; but in this instance the beauty of the closed lips told no falsehood.

A surprise that came to him before his first vacation, strengthened the silent consciousness of a grief within, which might be compared in some

ways with Byron's susceptibility about his deformed foot. Sir Hugo wrote word that he was married to Miss Raymond, a sweet lady whom Daniel must remember having seen. The event would make no difference about his spending the vacation at the Abbey; he would find Lady Mallinger a new friend whom he would be sure to love,—and much more to the usual effect when a man, having done something agreeable to himself, is disposed to congratulate others on his own good fortune, and the deducible satisfactoriness of events in general.

Let Sir Hugo be partly excused until the grounds of his action can be more fully known. The mistakes in his behaviour to Deronda were due to that dulness towards what may be going on in other minds, especially the minds of children, which is among the commonest deficiencies even in good-natured men like him, when life has been generally easy to themselves, and their energies have been quietly spent in feeling gratified. No one was better aware than he that Daniel was generally suspected to be his own son. But he was pleased with that suspicion; and his imagination had never once been troubled with the way in which the boy himself might be affected, either then or in the future, by the enigmatic aspect of

his circumstances. He was as fond of him as could be, and meant the best by him. And considering the lightness with which the preparation of young lives seems to lie on respectable consciences, Sir Hugo Mallinger can hardly be held open to exceptional reproach. He had been a bachelor till he was five-and-forty, had always been regarded as a fascinating man of elegant tastes; what could be more natural, even according to the index of language, than that he should have a beautiful boy like the little Deronda to take care of? The mother might even perhaps be in the great world—met with in Sir Hugo's residences abroad. The only person to feel any objection was the boy himself, who could not have been consulted. And the boy's objections had never been dreamed of by anybody but himself.

By the time Deronda was ready to go to Cambridge, Lady Mallinger had already three daughters—charming babies, all three, but whose sex was announced as a melancholy alternative, the offspring desired being a son: if Sir Hugo had no son the succession must go to his nephew Mallinger Grandcourt. Daniel no longer held a wavering opinion about his own birth. His fuller knowledge had tended to convince him that Sir Hugo was his father, and he conceived that the

baronet, since he never approached a communication on the subject, wished him to have a tacit understanding of the fact, and to accept in silence what would be generally considered more than the due love and nurture. Sir Hugo's marriage might certainly have been felt as a new ground of resentment by some youths in Deronda's position, and the timid Lady Mallinger with her fast-coming little ones might have been images to scowl at, as likely to divert much that was disposable in the feelings and possessions of the baronet from one who felt his own claim to be prior. But hatred of innocent human obstacles was a form of moral stupidity not in Deronda's grain; even the indignation which had long mingled itself with his affection for Sir Hugo took the quality of pain rather than of temper; and as his mind ripened to the idea of tolerance towards error, he habitually linked the idea with his own silent grievances.

The sense of an entailed disadvantage—the deformed foot doubtfully hidden by the shoe, makes a restlessly active spiritual yeast, and easily turns a self-centred, unloving nature into an Ishmaelite. But in the rarer sort, who presently see their own frustrated claim as one among a myriad, the inexorable sorrow takes the form of fellowship and makes the imagination tender.

Deronda's early-wakened susceptibility, charged at first with ready indignation and resistant pride, had raised in him a premature reflection on certain questions of life; it had given a bias to his conscience, a sympathy with certain ills, and a tension of resolve in certain directions, which marked him off from other youths much more than any talents he possessed.

One day near the end of the Long Vacation, when he had been making a tour in the Rhineland with his Eton tutor, and was come for a farewell stay at the Abbey before going to Cambridge, he said to Sir Hugo—

"What do you intend me to be, sir?" They were in the library, and it was the fresh morning. Sir Hugo had called him in to read a letter from a Cambridge Don who was to be interested in him; and since the baronet wore an air at once business-like and leisurely, the moment seemed propitious for entering on a grave subject which had never yet been thoroughly discussed.

"Whatever your inclination leads you to, my boy. I thought it right to give you the option of the army, but you shut the door on that, and I was glad. I don't expect you to choose just yet —by-and-by, when you have looked about you a little more and tried your mettle among older men.

The university has a good wide opening into the forum. There are prizes to be won, and a bit of good fortune often gives the turn to a man's taste. From what I see and hear, I should think you can take up anything you like. You are in deeper water with your classics than I ever got into, and if you are rather sick of that swimming, Cambridge is the place where you can go into mathematics with a will, and disport yourself on the dry sand as much as you like. I floundered along like a carp."

"I suppose money will make some difference, sir," said Daniel, blushing. "I shall have to keep myself by-and-by."

"Not exactly. I recommend you not to be extravagant—yes, yes, I know—you are not inclined to that ;—but you need not take up anything against the grain. You will have a bachelor's income—enough for you to look about with. Perhaps I had better tell you that you may consider yourself secure of seven hundred a-year. You might make yourself a barrister—be a writer —take up politics. I confess that is what would please me best. I should like to have you at my elbow and pulling with me."

Deronda looked embarrassed. He felt that he ought to make some sign of gratitude, but

other feelings clogged his tongue. A moment was passing by in which a question about his birth was throbbing within him, and yet it seemed more impossible than ever that the question should find vent—more impossible than ever that he could hear certain things from Sir Hugo's lips. The liberal way in which he was dealt with was the more striking because the baronet had of late cared particularly for money, and for making the utmost of his life-interest in the estate by way of providing for his daughters; and as all this flashed through Daniel's mind it was momentarily within his imagination that the provision for him might come in some way from his mother. But such vaporous conjecture passed away as quickly as it came.

Sir Hugo appeared not to notice anything peculiar in Daniel's manner, and presently went on with his usual chatty liveliness.

"I'm glad you have done some good reading outside your classics, and have got a grip of French and German. The truth is, unless a man can get the prestige and income of a Don and write donnish books, it's hardly worth while for him to make a Greek and Latin machine of himself and be able to spin you out pages of the Greek dramatists at any verse you'll give him as a cue.

That's all very fine, but in practical life nobody does give you the cue for pages of Greek. In fact it's a nicety of conversation which I would have you attend to — much quotation of any sort, even in English, is bad. It tends to choke ordinary remark. One couldn't carry on life comfortably without a little blindness to the fact that everything has been said better than we can put it ourselves. But talking of Dons, I have seen Dons make a capital figure in society; and occasionally he can shoot you down a cartload of learning in the right place, which will tell in politics. Such men are wanted; and if you have any turn for being a Don, I say nothing against it."

"I think there's not much chance of that. Quicksett and Puller are both stronger than I am. I hope you will not be much disappointed if I don't come out with high honours."

"No, no. I should like you to do yourself credit, but for God's sake don't come out as a superior expensive kind of idiot, like young Brecon, who got a Double First, and has been learning to knit braces ever since. What I wish you to get is a passport in life. I don't go against our university system: we want a little disinterested culture to make head against cotton and

capital, especially in the House. My Greek has all evaporated: if I had to construe a verse on a sudden, I should get an apoplectic fit. But it formed my taste. I daresay my English is the better for it."

On this point Daniel kept a respectful silence. The enthusiastic belief in Sir Hugo's writings as a standard, and in the Whigs as the chosen race among politicians, had gradually vanished along with the seraphic boy's face. He had not been the hardest of workers at Eton. Though some kinds of study and reading came as easily as boating to him, he was not of the material that usually makes the first-rate Eton scholar. There had sprung up in him a meditative yearning after wide knowledge which is likely always to abate ardour in the fight for prize acquirement in narrow tracks. Happily he was modest, and took any second-rateness in himself simply as a fact, not as a marvel necessarily to be accounted for by a superiority. Still Mr Fraser's high opinion of the lad had not been altogether belied by the youth: Daniel had the stamp of rarity in a subdued fervour of sympathy, an activity of imagination on behalf of others, which did not show itself effusively, but was continually seen in acts of considerateness that struck his companions as moral

eccentricity. "Deronda would have been first-rate if he had had more ambition"—was a frequent remark about him. But how could a fellow push his way properly when he objected to swop for his own advantage, knocked under by choice when he was within an inch of victory, and, unlike the great Clive, would rather be the calf than the butcher? It was a mistake, however, to suppose that Deronda had not his share of ambition: we know he had suffered keenly from the belief that there was a tinge of dishonour in his lot; but there are some cases, and his was one of them, in which the sense of injury breeds—not the will to inflict injuries and climb over them as a ladder, but—a hatred of all injury. He had his flashes of fierceness, and could hit out upon occasion, but the occasions were not always what might have been expected. For in what related to himself his resentful impulses had been early checked by a mastering affectionateness. Love has a habit of saying "Never mind" to angry self, who, sitting down for the nonce in the lower place, by-and-by gets used to it. So it was that as Deronda approached manhood his feeling for Sir Hugo, while it was getting more and more mixed with criticism, was gaining in that sort of allowance which reconciles criticism with tenderness.

The dear old beautiful home and everything within it, Lady Mallinger and her little ones included, were consecrated for the youth as they had been for the boy—only with a certain difference of light on the objects. The altar-piece was no longer miraculously perfect, painted under infallible guidance, but the human hand discerned in the work was appealing to a reverent tenderness safer from the gusts of discovery. Certainly Deronda's ambition, even in his spring-time, lay exceptionally aloof from conspicuous, vulgar triumph, and from other ugly forms of boyish energy; perhaps because he was early impassioned by ideas, and burned his fire on those heights. One may spend a good deal of energy in disliking and resisting what others pursue, and a boy who is fond of somebody else's pencil-case may not be more energetic than another who is fond of giving his own pencil-case away. Still, it was not Deronda's disposition to escape from ugly scenes: he was more inclined to sit through them and take care of the fellow least able to take care of himself. It had helped to make him popular that he was sometimes a little compromised by this apparent comradeship. For a meditative interest in learning how human miseries are wrought—as precocious in him as another sort of genius in the poet

who writes a Queen Mab at nineteen—was so infused with kindliness that it easily passed for comradeship. Enough. In many of our neighbours' lives, there is much not only of error and lapse, but of a certain exquisite goodness which can never be written or even spoken—only divined by each of us, according to the inward instruction of our own privacy.

The impression he made at Cambridge corresponded to his position at Eton. Every one interested in him agreed that he might have taken a high place if his motives had been of a more pushing sort, and if he had not, instead of regarding studies as instruments of success, hampered himself with the notion that they were to feed motive and opinion — a notion which set him criticising methods and arguing against his freight and harness when he should have been using all his might to pull. In the beginning his work at the university had a new zest for him: indifferent to the continuation of the Eton classical drill, he applied himself vigorously to mathematics, for which he had shown an early aptitude under Mr Fraser, and he had the delight of feeling his strength in a comparatively fresh exercise of thought. That delight, and the favourable opinion of his tutor, determined him to try for a mathe-

matical scholarship in the Easter of his second year: he wished to gratify Sir Hugo by some achievement, and the study of the higher mathematics, having the growing fascination inherent in all thinking which demands intensity, was making him a more exclusive worker than he had been before.

But here came the old check which had been growing with his growth. He found the inward bent towards comprehension and thoroughness diverging more and more from the track marked out by the standards of examination: he felt a heightening discontent with the wearing futility and enfeebling strain of a demand for excessive retention and dexterity without any insight into the principles which form the vital connections of knowledge. (Deronda's undergraduateship occurred fifteen years ago, when the perfection of our university methods was not yet indisputable.) In hours when his dissatisfaction was strong upon him he reproached himself for having been attracted by the conventional advantage of belonging to an English university, and was tempted towards the project of asking Sir Hugo to let him quit Cambridge and pursue a more independent line of study abroad. The germs of this inclination had been already stirring in his boyish love

of universal history, which made him want to be at home in foreign countries, and follow in imagination the travelling students of the middle ages. He longed now to have the sort of apprenticeship to life which would not shape him too definitely, and rob him of the choice that might come from a free growth. One sees that Deronda's demerits were likely to be on the side of reflective hesitation, and this tendency was encouraged by his position: there was no need for him to get an immediate income, or to fit himself in haste for a profession; and his sensibility to the half-known facts of his parentage made him an excuse for lingering longer than others in a state of social neutrality. Other men, he inwardly said, had a more definite place and duties. But the project which flattered his inclination might not have gone beyond the stage of ineffective brooding, if certain circumstances had not quickened it into action.

The circumstances arose out of an enthusiastic friendship which extended into his after-life. Of the same year with himself, and occupying small rooms close to his, was a youth who had come as an exhibitioner from Christ's Hospital, and had eccentricities enough for a Charles Lamb. Only to look at his pinched features and blond hair hanging over his collar reminded one of pale

quaint heads by early German painters; and when this faint colouring was lit up by a joke, there came sudden creases about the mouth and eyes which might have been moulded by the soul of an aged humorist. His father, an engraver of some distinction, had been dead eleven years, and his mother had three girls to educate and maintain on a meagre annuity. Hans Meyrick—he had been daringly christened after Holbein—felt himself the pillar, or rather the knotted and twisted trunk, round which these feeble climbing plants must cling. There was no want of ability or of honest well-meaning affection to make the prop trustworthy: the ease and quickness with which he studied might serve him to win prizes at Cambridge, as he had done among the Blue Coats, in spite of irregularities. The only danger was, that the incalculable tendencies in him might be fatally timed, and that his good intentions might be frustrated by some act which was not due to habit but to capricious, scattered impulses. He could not be said to have any one bad habit; yet at longer or shorter intervals he had fits of impish recklessness, and did things that would have made the worst habits.

Hans in his right mind, however, was a lovable creature, and in Deronda he had happened to

find a friend who was likely to stand by him with the more constancy, from compassion for these brief aberrations that might bring a long repentance. Hans, indeed, shared Deronda's rooms nearly as much as he used his own: to Deronda he poured himself out on his studies, his affairs, his hopes; the poverty of his home, and his love for the creatures there; the itching of his fingers to draw, and his determination to fight it away for the sake of getting some sort of plum that he might divide with his mother and the girls. He wanted no confidence in return, but seemed to take Deronda as an Olympian who needed nothing—an egotism in friendship which is common enough with mercurial, expansive natures. Deronda was content, and gave Meyrick all the interest he claimed, getting at last a brotherly anxiety about him, looking after him in his erratic moments, and contriving by adroitly delicate devices not only to make up for his friend's lack of pence, but to save him from threatening chances. Such friendship easily becomes tender: the one spreads strong sheltering wings that delight in spreading, the other gets the warm protection which is also a delight. Meyrick was going in for a classical scholarship, and his success, in various ways momentous, was the more

probable from the steadying influence of Deronda's friendship.

But an imprudence of Meyrick's, committed at the beginning of the autumn term, threatened to disappoint his hopes. With his usual alternation between unnecessary expense and self-privation, he had given too much money for an old engraving which fascinated him, and to make up for it, had come from London in a third-class carriage with his eyes exposed to a bitter wind and any irritating particles the wind might drive before it. The consequence was a severe inflammation of the eyes, which for some time hung over him the threat of a lasting injury. This crushing trouble called out all Deronda's readiness to devote himself, and he made every other occupation secondary to that of being companion and eyes to Hans, working with him and for him at his classics, that if possible his chance of the classical scholarship might be saved. Hans, to keep the knowledge of his suffering from his mother and sisters, alleged his work as a reason for passing the Christmas at Cambridge, and his friend stayed up with him.

Meanwhile Deronda relaxed his hold on his mathematics, and Hans, reflecting on this, at length said, "Old fellow, while you are hoisting

me you are risking yourself. With your mathematical cram one may be like Moses or Mahomet or somebody of that sort who had to cram, and forgot in one day what it had taken him forty to learn."

Deronda would not admit that he cared about the risk, and he had really been beguiled into a little indifference by double sympathy: he was very anxious that Hans should not miss the much-needed scholarship, and he felt a revival of interest in the old studies. Still, when Hans, rather late in the day, got able to use his own eyes, Deronda had tenacity enough to try hard and recover his lost ground. He failed, however; but he had the satisfaction of seeing Meyrick win.

Success, as a sort of beginning that urged completion, might have reconciled Deronda to his university course; but the emptiness of all things, from politics to pastimes, is never so striking to us as when we fail in them. The loss of the personal triumph had no severity for him, but the sense of having spent his time ineffectively in a mode of working which had been against the grain, gave him a distaste for any renewal of the process, which turned his imagined project of quitting Cambridge into a serious intention. In speaking of his intention to Meyrick he made it

appear that he was glad of the turn events had taken—glad to have the balance dip decidedly, and feel freed from his hesitations; but he observed that he must of course submit to any strong objection on the part of Sir Hugo.

Meyrick's joy and gratitude were disturbed by much uneasiness. He believed in Deronda's alleged preference, but he felt keenly that in serving him Daniel had placed himself at a disadvantage in Sir Hugo's opinion, and he said mournfully, "If you had got the scholarship, Sir Hugo would have thought that you asked to leave us with a better grace. You have spoilt your luck for my sake, and I can do nothing to mend it."

"Yes, you can; you are to be a first-rate fellow. I call that a first-rate investment of my luck."

"Oh, confound it! You save an ugly mongrel from drowning, and expect him to cut a fine figure. The poets have made tragedies enough about signing one's self over to wickedness for the sake of getting something plummy; I shall write a tragedy of a fellow who signed himself over to be good, and was uncomfortable ever after."

But Hans lost no time in secretly writing the history of the affair to Sir Hugo, making it plain that but for Deronda's generous devotion he could

hardly have failed to win the prize he had been working for.

The two friends went up to town together: Meyrick to rejoice with his mother and the girls in their little home at Chelsea; Deronda to carry out the less easy task of opening his mind to Sir Hugo. He relied a little on the baronet's general tolerance of eccentricities, but he expected more opposition than he met with. He was received with even warmer kindness than usual, the failure was passed over lightly, and when he detailed his reasons for wishing to quit the university and go to study abroad, Sir Hugo sat for some time in a silence which was rather meditative than surprised. At last he said, looking at Daniel with examination, "So you don't want to be an Englishman to the backbone after all?"

"I want to be an Englishman, but I want to understand other points of view. And I want to get rid of a merely English attitude in studies."

"I see; you don't want to be turned out in the same mould as every other youngster. And I have nothing to say against your doffing some of our national prejudices. I feel the better myself for having spent a good deal of my time abroad. But, for God's sake, keep an English cut, and don't become indifferent to bad tobacco!

And—my dear boy—it is good to be unselfish and generous; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow-trade; you must know where to find yourself. However, I shall put no veto on your going. Wait until I can get off Committee, and I'll run over with you."

So Deronda went according to his will. But not before he had spent some hours with Hans Meyrick, and been introduced to the mother and sisters in the Chelsea home. The shy girls watched and registered every look of their brother's friend, declared by Hans to have been the salvation of him, a fellow like nobody else, and, in fine, a brick. They so thoroughly accepted Deronda as an ideal, that when he was gone the youngest set to work, under the criticism of the two elder girls, to paint him as Prince Camaralzaman.

CHAPTER XVII.

"This is true the poet sings,
That a sorrow's crown of sorrow
Is remembering happier things."
—TENNYSON: *In Memoriam.*

ON a fine evening near the end of July, Deronda was rowing himself on the Thames. It was already a year or more since he had come back to England, with the understanding that his education was finished, and that he was somehow to take his place in English society; but though, in deference to Sir Hugo's wish, and to fence off idleness, he had begun to read law, this apparent decision had been without other result than to deepen the roots of indecision. His old love of boating had revived with the more force now that he was in town with the Mallingers, because he could nowhere else get the same still seclusion which the river gave him. He had a boat of his own at Putney, and whenever Sir Hugo did not want him, it was his chief holiday to row till past

sunset and come in again with the stars. Not that he was in a sentimental stage; but he was in another sort of contemplative mood perhaps more common in the young men of our day—that of questioning whether it were worth while to take part in the battle of the world: I mean, of course, the young men in whom the unproductive labour of questioning is sustained by three or five per cent on capital which somebody else has battled for. It puzzled Sir Hugo that one who made a splendid contrast with all that was sickly and puling should be hampered with ideas which, since they left an accomplished Whig like himself unobstructed, could be no better than spectral illusions; especially as Deronda set himself against authorship—a vocation which is understood to turn foolish thinking into funds.

Rowing in his dark-blue shirt and skull-cap, his curls closely clipped, his mouth beset with abundant soft waves of beard, he bore only disguised traces of the seraphic boy "trailing clouds of glory." Still, even one who had never seen him since his boyhood might have looked at him with slow recognition, due perhaps to the peculiarity of the gaze which Gwendolen chose to call "dreadful," though it had really a very mild sort of scrutiny. The voice, sometimes audible in

subdued snatches of song, had turned out merely a high barytone; indeed, only to look at his lithe powerful frame and the firm gravity of his face would have been enough for an experienced guess that he had no rare and ravishing tenor such as nature reluctantly makes at some sacrifice. Look at his hands: they are not small and dimpled, with tapering fingers that seem to have only a deprecating touch: they are long, flexible, firmly-grasping hands, such as Titian has painted in a picture where he wanted to show the combination of refinement with force. And there is something of a likeness, too, between the faces belonging to the hands—in both the uniform pale-brown skin, the perpendicular brow, the calmly penetrating eyes. Not seraphic any longer: thoroughly terrestrial and manly; but still of a kind to raise belief in a human dignity which can afford to acknowledge poor relations.

Such types meet us here and there among average conditions; in a workman, for example, whistling over a bit of measurement and lifting his eyes to answer our question about the road. And often the grand meanings of faces as well as of written words may lie chiefly in the impressions of those who look on them. But it is precisely such impressions that happen just now to be of

importance in relation to Deronda, rowing on the Thames in a very ordinary equipment for a young Englishman at leisure, and passing under Kew Bridge with no thought of an adventure in which his appearance was likely to play any part. In fact, he objected very strongly to the notion, which others had not allowed him to escape, that his appearance was of a kind to draw attention; and hints of this, intended to be complimentary, found an angry resonance in him, coming from mingled experiences, to which a clue has already been given. His own face in the glass had during many years been associated for him with thoughts of some one whom he must be like—one about whose character and lot he continually wondered, and never dared to ask.

In the neighbourhood of Kew Bridge, between six and seven o'clock, the river was no solitude. Several persons were sauntering on the towing-path, and here and there a boat was plying. Deronda had been rowing fast to get over this spot, when, becoming aware of a great barge advancing towards him, he guided his boat aside, and rested on his oar within a couple of yards of the river-brink. He was all the while unconsciously continuing the low-toned chant which had haunted his throat all the way up the river—the

gondolier's song in the 'Otello,' where Rossini has worthily set to music the immortal words of Dante—

"Nessun maggior dolore
Che ricordarsi del tempo felice
Nella miseria:"*

and, as he rested on his oar, the pianissimo fall of the melodic wail "nella miseria" was distinctly audible on the brink of the water. Three or four persons had paused at various spots to watch the barge passing the bridge, and doubtless included in their notice the young gentleman in the boat; but probably it was only to one ear that the low vocal sounds came with more significance than if they had been an insect murmur amidst the sum of current noises. Deronda, awaiting the barge, now turned his head to the river-side, and saw at a few yards' distance from him a figure which might have been an impersonation of the misery he was unconsciously giving voice to: a girl hardly more than eighteen, of low slim figure, with most delicate little face, her dark curls pushed behind her ears under a large black hat, a long woollen cloak over her shoulders. Her hands were hanging down clasped before her, and

* Dante's words are best rendered by our own poet in the lines at the head of the chapter.

her eyes were fixed on the river with a look of immovable, statue-like despair. This strong arrest of his attention made him cease singing: apparently his voice had entered her inner world without her having taken any note of whence it came, for when it suddenly ceased she changed her attitude slightly, and, looking round with a frightened glance, met Deronda's face. It was but a couple of moments, but that seems a long while for two people to look straight at each other. Her look was something like that of a fawn or other gentle animal before it turns to run away: no blush, no special alarm, but only some timidity which yet could not hinder her from a long look before she turned. In fact, it seemed to Deronda that she was only half-conscious of her surroundings: was she hungry, or was there some other cause of bewilderment? He felt an outleap of interest and compassion towards her; but the next instant she had turned and walked away to a neighbouring bench under a tree. He had no right to linger and watch her: poorly-dressed, melancholy women are common sights; it was only the delicate beauty, the picturesque lines and colour of the image that were exceptional, and these conditions made it the more markedly impossible that he should obtrude

his interest upon her. He began to row away, and was soon far up the river; but no other thoughts were busy enough quite to expel that pale image of unhappy girlhood. He fell again and again to speculating on the probable romance that lay behind that loneliness and look of desolation; then to smile at his own share in the prejudice that interesting faces must have interesting adventures; then to justify himself for feeling that sorrow was the more tragic when it befell delicate, childlike beauty.

"I should not have forgotten the look of misery if she had been ugly and vulgar," he said to himself. But there was no denying that the attractiveness of the image made it likelier to last. It was clear to him as an onyx cameo: the brown-black drapery, the white face with small, small features and dark, long-lashed eyes. His mind glanced over the girl-tragedies that are going on in the world, hidden, unheeded, as if they were but tragedies of the copse or hedgerow, where the helpless drag wounded wings forsakenly, and streak the shadowed moss with the red moment-hand of their own death. Deronda of late, in his solitary excursions, had been occupied chiefly with uncertainties about his own course; but those uncertainties, being much at

their leisure, were wont to have such wide-sweeping connections with all life and history that the new image of helpless sorrow easily blent itself with what seemed to him the strong array of reasons why he should shrink from getting into that routine of the world which makes men apologise for all its wrong-doing, and take opinions as mere professional equipment—why he should not draw strongly at any thread in the hopelessly-entangled scheme of things.

He used his oars little, satisfied to go with the tide and be taken back by it. It was his habit to indulge himself in that solemn passivity which easily comes with the lengthening shadows and mellowing light, when thinking and desiring melt together imperceptibly, and what in other hours may have seemed argument takes the quality of passionate vision. By the time he had come back again with the tide past Richmond Bridge the sun was near setting; and the approach of his favourite hour—with its deepening stillness, and darkening masses of tree and building between the double glow of the sky and the river—disposed him to linger as if they had been an unfinished strain of music. He looked out for a perfectly solitary spot where he could lodge his boat against the bank, and, throwing himself on his back with his head

propped on the cushions, could watch out the light of sunset and the opening of that bead-roll which some oriental poet describes as God's call to the little stars, who each answer, "Here am I." He chose a spot in the bend of the river just opposite Kew Gardens, where he had a great breadth of water before him reflecting the glory of the sky, while he himself was in shadow. He lay with his hands behind his head propped on a level with the boat's edge, so that he could see all around him, but could not be seen by any one at a few yards' distance; and for a long while he never turned his eyes from the view right in front of him. He was forgetting everything else in a half-speculative, half-involuntary identification of himself with the objects he was looking at, thinking how far it might be possible habitually to shift his centre till his own personality would be no less outside him than the landscape,—when the sense of something moving on the bank opposite him where it was bordered by a line of willow-bushes, made him turn his glance thitherward. In the first moment he had a darting presentiment about the moving figure; and now he could see the small face with the strange dying sunlight upon it. He feared to frighten her by a sudden movement, and watched her with motionless attention. She looked round, but seemed only to

gather security from the apparent solitude, hid her hat among the willows, and immediately took off her woollen cloak. Presently she seated herself and deliberately dipped the cloak in the water, holding it there a little while, then taking it out with effort, rising from her seat as she did so. By this time Deronda felt sure that she meant to wrap the wet cloak round her as a drowning-shroud; there was no longer time to hesitate about frightening her. He rose and seized his oar to ply across; happily her position lay a little below him. The poor thing, overcome with terror at this sign of discovery from the opposite bank, sank down on the brink again, holding her cloak but half out of the water. She crouched and covered her face as if she kept a faint hope that she had not been seen, and that the boatman was accidentally coming towards her. But soon he was within brief space of her, steadying his boat against the bank, and speaking, but very gently—

"Don't be afraid. . . . You are unhappy. . . . Pray, trust me. . . . Tell me what I can do to help you."

She raised her head and looked up at him. His face now was towards the light, and she knew it again. But she did not speak for a few moments which were a renewal of their former gaze at each

other. At last she said in a low sweet voice, with an accent so distinct that it suggested foreignness and yet was not foreign, "I saw you before;" . . . and then added, dreamily, after a like pause, "nella miseria."

Deronda, not understanding the connection of her thought, supposed that her mind was weakened by distress and hunger.

"It was you, singing?" she went on, hesitatingly—"Nessun maggior dolore." . . . The mere words themselves uttered in her sweet undertones seemed to give the melody to Deronda's ear.

"Ah, yes," he said, understanding now, "I am often singing them. But I fear you will injure yourself staying here. Pray let me carry you in my boat to some place of safety. And that wet cloak—let me take it."

He would not attempt to take it without her leave, dreading lest he should scare her. Even at his words, he fancied that she shrank and clutched the cloak more tenaciously. But her eyes were fixed on him with a question in them as she said, "You look good. Perhaps it is God's command."

"Do trust me. Let me help you. I will die before I will let any harm come to you."

She rose from her sitting posture, first dragging the saturated cloak and then letting it fall on

the ground—it was too heavy for her tired arms. Her little woman's figure as she laid her delicate chilled hands together one over the other against her waist, and went a step backward while she leaned her head forward as if not to lose her sight of his face, was unspeakably touching.

"Great God!" the words escaped Deronda in a tone so low and solemn that they seemed like a prayer become unconsciously vocal. The agitating impression this forsaken girl was making on him stirred a fibre that lay close to his deepest interest in the fates of women—"perhaps my mother was like this one." The old thought had come now with a new impetus of mingled feeling, and urged that exclamation in which both East and West have for ages concentrated their awe in the presence of inexorable calamity.

The low-toned words seemed to have some reassurance in them for the hearer: she stepped forward close to the boat's side, and Deronda put out his hand, hoping now that she would let him help her in. She had already put her tiny hand into his which closed round it, when some new thought struck her, and drawing back she said—

"I have nowhere to go—nobody belonging to me in all this land."

"I will take you to a lady who has daughters," said Deronda, immediately. He felt a sort of relief in gathering that the wretched home and cruel friends he imagined her to be fleeing from were not in the near background. Still she hesitated, and said more timidly than ever—

"Do you belong to the theatre?"

"No; I have nothing to do with the theatre," said Deronda, in a decided tone. Then beseechingly, "I will put you in perfect safety at once; with a lady, a good woman; I am sure she will be kind. Let us lose no time: you will make yourself ill. Life may still become sweet to you. There are good people—there are good women who will take care of you."

She drew backward no more, but stepped in easily, as if she were used to such action, and sat down on the cushions.

"You had a covering for your head," said Deronda.

"My hat?" (she lifted up her hands to her head.) "It is quite hidden in the bush."

"I will find it," said Deronda, putting out his hand deprecatingly as she attempted to rise. "The boat is fixed."

He jumped out, found the hat, and lifted up the

saturated cloak, wringing it and throwing it into the bottom of the boat.

"We must carry the cloak away, to prevent any one who may have noticed you from thinking you have been drowned," he said cheerfully, as he got in again and presented the old hat to her. "I wish I had any other garment than my coat to offer you. But shall you mind throwing it over your shoulders while we are on the water? It is quite an ordinary thing to do, when people return late and are not enough provided with wraps." He held out the coat towards her with a smile, and there came a faint melancholy smile in answer, as she took it and put it on very cleverly.

"I have some biscuits—should you like them?" said Deronda.

"No; I cannot eat. I had still some money left to buy bread."

He began to ply his oar without further remark, and they went along swiftly for many minutes without speaking. She did not look at him, but was watching the oar, leaning forward in an attitude of repose, as if she were beginning to feel the comfort of returning warmth and the prospect of life instead of death. The twilight was deepening; the red flush was all gone and the little stars were

giving their answer one after another. The moon was rising, but was still entangled among trees and buildings. The light was not such that he could distinctly discern the expression of her features or her glance, but they were distinctly before him nevertheless—features and a glance which seemed to have given a fuller meaning for him to the human face. Among his anxieties one was dominant: his first impression about her, that her mind might be disordered, had not been quite dissipated: the project of suicide was unmistakable, and gave a deeper colour to every other suspicious sign. He longed to begin a conversation, but abstained, wishing to encourage the confidence that might induce her to speak first. At last she did speak.

"I like to listen to the oar."

"So do I."

"If you had not come, I should have been dead now."

"I cannot bear you to speak of that. I hope you will never be sorry that I came."

"I cannot see how I shall be glad to live. The *maggior dolore* and the *miseria* have lasted longer than the *tempo felice*." She paused and then went on dreamily,—"*Dolore*—*miseria*—I think those words are alive."

Deronda was mute: to question her seemed an unwarrantable freedom; he shrank from appearing to claim the authority of a benefactor, or to treat her with the less reverence because she was in distress. She went on, musingly—

"I thought it was not wicked. Death and life are one before the Eternal. I know our fathers slew their children and then slew themselves, to keep their souls pure. I meant it so. But now I am commanded to live. I cannot see how I shall live."

"You will find friends. I will find them for you."

She shook her head and said mournfully, "Not my mother and brother. I cannot find them."

"You are English? You must be—speaking English so perfectly."

She did not answer immediately, but looked at Deronda again, straining to see him in the doubtful light. Until now she had been watching the oar. It seemed as if she were half roused, and wondered which part of her impressions was dreaming and which waking. Sorrowful isolation had benumbed her sense of eality, and the power of distinguishing outward and inward was continually slipping away from her. Her look was full of wondering timidity, such as the forsaken one in

the desert might have lifted to the angelic vision before she knew whether his message were in anger or in pity.

"You want to know if I am English?" she said at last, while Deronda was reddening nervously under a gaze which he felt more fully than he saw.

"I want to know nothing except what you like to tell me," he said, still uneasy in the fear that her mind was wandering. "Perhaps it is not good for you to talk."

"Yes, I will tell you. I am English-born. But I am a Jewess."

Deronda was silent, inwardly wondering that he had not said this to himself before, though any one who had seen delicate-faced Spanish girls might simply have guessed her to be Spanish.

"Do you despise me for it?" she said presently in low tones, which had a sadness that pierced like a cry from a small dumb creature in fear.

"Why should I?" said Deronda. "I am not so foolish."

"I know many Jews are bad."

"So are many Christians. But I should not think it fair for you to despise me because of that."

"My mother and brother were good. But I shall never find them. I am come a long way—from abroad. I ran away; but I cannot tell you

—I cannot speak of it. I thought I might find my mother again—God would guide me. But then I despaired. This morning when the light came, I felt as if one word kept sounding within me—Never! never! But now — I begin — to think——" her words were broken by rising sobs —"I am commanded to live — perhaps we are going to her."

With an outburst of weeping she buried her head on her knees. He hoped that this passionate weeping might relieve her excitement. Meanwhile he was inwardly picturing in much embarrassment how he should present himself with her in Park Lane—the course which he had at first unreflectingly determined on. No one kinder and more gentle than Lady Mallinger; but it was hardly probable that she would be at home; and he had a shuddering sense of a lackey staring at this delicate, sorrowful image of womanhood—of glaring lights and fine staircases, and perhaps chilling suspicious manners from lady's-maid and housekeeper, that might scare the mind already in a state of dangerous susceptibility. But to take her to any other shelter than a home already known to him was not to be contemplated: he was full of fears about the issue of the adventure which had brought on him a responsibility all the

heavier for the strong and agitating impression this childlike creature had made on him. But another resource came to mind: he could venture to take her to Mrs Meyrick's—to the small home at Chelsea, where he had been often enough since his return from abroad to feel sure that he could appeal there to generous hearts, which had a romantic readiness to believe in innocent need and to help it. Hans Meyrick was safe away in Italy, and Deronda felt the comfort of presenting himself with his charge at a house where he would be met by a motherly figure of quakerish neatness, and three girls who hardly knew of any evil closer to them than what lay in history books and dramas, and would at once associate a lovely Jewess with Rebecca in 'Ivanhoe,' besides thinking that everything they did at Deronda's request would be done for their idol, Hans. The vision of the Chelsea home once raised, Deronda no longer hesitated.

The rumbling thither in the cab after the stillness of the water seemed long. Happily his charge had been quiet since her fit of weeping, and submitted like a tired child. When they were in the cab, she laid down her hat and tried to rest her head, but the jolting movement would not let it rest: still she dozed, and her sweet

head hung helpless first on one side, then on the other.

"They are too good to have any fear about taking her in," thought Deronda. Her person, her voice, her exquisite utterance, were one strong appeal to belief and tenderness. Yet what had been the history which had brought her to this desolation? He was going on a strange errand—to ask shelter for this waif. Then there occurred to him the beautiful story Plutarch somewhere tells of the Delphic women: how when the Mænads, outworn with their torch-lit wanderings, lay down to sleep in the market-place, the matrons came and stood silently round them to keep guard over their slumbers; then, when they waked, ministered to them tenderly and saw them safely to their own borders. He could trust the women he was going to for having hearts as good.

Deronda felt himself growing older this evening and entering on a new phase in finding a life to which his own had come—perhaps as a rescue; but how to make sure that snatching from death was rescue? The moment of finding a fellow-creature is often as full of mingled doubt and exultation as the moment of finding an idea.

CHAPTER XVIII.

Life is a various mother: now she dons
Her plumes and brilliants, climbs the marble stairs
With head aloft, nor ever turns her eyes
On lackeys who attend her; now she dwells
Grim-clad up darksome alleys, breathes hot gin,
And screams in pauper riot.
But to these
She came a frugal matron, neat and deft,
With cheerful morning thoughts and quick device
To find the much in little.

MRS MEYRICK'S house was not noisy: the front parlour looked on the river, and the back on gardens, so that though she was reading aloud to her daughters, the window could be left open to freshen the air of the small double room where a lamp and two candles were burning. The candles were on a table apart for Kate, who was drawing illustrations for a publisher; the lamp was not only for the reader but for Amy and Mab, who were embroidering satin cushions for "the great world."

Outside, the house looked very narrow and

shabby, the bright light through the holland blind showing the heavy old-fashioned window-frame; but it is pleasant to know that many such grim-walled slices of space in our foggy London have been, and still are the homes of a culture the more spotlessly free from vulgarity, because poverty has rendered everything like display an impersonal question, and all the grand shows of the world simply a spectacle which rouses no petty rivalry or vain effort after possession.

The Meyricks' was a home of that kind; and they all clung to this particular house in a row because its interior was filled with objects always in the same places, which for the mother held memories of her marriage time, and for the young ones seemed as necessary and uncriticised a part of their world as the stars of the Great Bear seen from the back windows. Mrs Meyrick had borne much stint of other matters that she might be able to keep some engravings specially cherished by her husband; and the narrow spaces of wall held a world-history in scenes and heads which the children had early learned by heart. The chairs and tables were also old friends preferred to new. But in these two little parlours with no furniture that a broker would have cared to cheapen except the prints and piano, there was

space and apparatus for a wide-glancing, nicely-select life, open to the highest things in music, painting, and poetry. I am not sure that in the times of greatest scarcity, before Kate could get paid work, these ladies had always had a servant to light their fires and sweep their rooms; yet they were fastidious in some points, and could not believe that the manners of ladies in the fashionable world were so full of coarse selfishness, petty quarrelling, and slang as they are represented to be in what are called literary photographs. The Meyricks had their little oddities, streaks of eccentricity from the mother's blood as well as the father's, their minds being like mediæval houses with unexpected recesses and openings from this into that, flights of steps and sudden outlooks.

But mother and daughters were all united by a triple bond — family love; admiration for the finest work, the best action; and habitual industry. Hans's desire to spend some of his money in making their lives more luxurious had been resisted by all of them, and both they and he had been thus saved from regrets at the threatened triumph of his yearning for art over the attractions of secured income—a triumph that would by-and-by oblige him to give up his fellowship. They

could all afford to laugh at his Gavarni-caricatures and to hold him blameless in following a natural bent which their unselfishness and independence had left without obstacle. It was enough for them to go on in their old way, only having a grand treat of opera-going (to the gallery) when Hans came home on a visit.

Seeing the group they made this evening, one could hardly wish them to change their way of life. They were all alike small, and so in due proportion with their miniature rooms. Mrs Meyrick was reading aloud from a French book: she was a lively little woman, half French, half Scotch, with a pretty articulateness of speech that seemed to make daylight in her hearer's understanding. Though she was not yet fifty, her rippling hair, covered by a quakerish net cap, was chiefly grey, but her eyebrows were brown as the bright eyes below them; her black dress, almost like a priest's cassock with its row of buttons, suited a neat figure hardly five feet high. The daughters were to match the mother, except that Mab had Hans's light hair and complexion, with a bossy irregular brow and other quaintnesses that reminded one of him. Everything about them was compact, from the firm coils of their hair, fastened back *à la Chinoise*, to their grey skirts in puritan non-

conformity with the fashion, which at that time would have demanded that four feminine circumferences should fill all the free space in the front parlour. All four, if they had been wax-work, might have been packed easily in a fashionable lady's travelling trunk. Their faces seemed full of speech, as if their minds had been shelled, after the manner of horse-chestnuts, and become brightly visible. The only large thing of its kind in the room was Hafiz, the Persian cat, comfortably poised on the brown leather back of a chair, and opening his large eyes now and then to see that the lower animals were not in any mischief.

The book Mrs Meyrick had before her was Erckmann-Chatrian's *Histoire d'un Conscrit.* She had just finished reading it aloud, and Mab, who had let her work fall on the ground while she stretched her head forward and fixed her eyes on the reader, exclaimed—

"I think that is the finest story in the world."

"Of course, Mab!" said Amy, "it is the last you have heard. Everything that pleases you is the best in its turn."

"It is hardly to be called a story," said Kate. "It is a bit of history brought near us with a strong telescope. We can see the soldier's faces:

no, it is more than that—we can hear everything —we can almost hear their hearts beat."

"I don't care what you call it," said Mab, flirting away her thimble. "Call it a chapter in Revelations. It makes me want to do something good, something grand. It makes me so sorry for everybody. It makes me like Schiller—I want to take the world in my arms and kiss it. I must kiss you instead, little mother!" She threw her arms round her mother's neck.

"Whenever you are in that mood, Mab, down goes your work," said Amy. "It would be doing something good to finish your cushion without soiling it."

"Oh—oh—oh!" groaned Mab, as she stooped to pick up her work and thimble. "I wish I had three wounded conscripts to take care of."

"You would spill their beef-tea while you were talking," said Amy.

"Poor Mab! don't be hard on her," said the mother. "Give me the embroidery now, child. You go on with your enthusiasm, and I will go on with the pink and white poppy."

"Well, ma, I think you are more caustic than Amy," said Kate, while she drew her head back to look at her drawing.

"Oh—oh—oh!" cried Mab again, rising and

stretching her arms. "I wish something wonderful would happen. I feel like the deluge. The waters of the great deep are broken up, and the windows of heaven are opened. I must sit down and play the scales."

Mab was opening the piano while the others were laughing at this climax, when a cab stopped before the house, and there forthwith came a quick rap of the knocker.

"Dear me!" said Mrs Meyrick, starting up, "it is after ten, and Phœbe is gone to bed." She hastened out, leaving the parlour door open.

"Mr Deronda!" The girls could hear this exclamation from their mamma. Mab clasped her hands, saying in a loud whisper, "There now! something *is* going to happen;" Kate and Amy gave up their work in amazement. But Deronda's tone in reply was so low that they could not hear his words, and Mrs Meyrick immediately closed the parlour door.

"I know I am trusting to your goodness in a most extraordinary way," Deronda went on, after giving his brief narrative, "but you can imagine how helpless I feel with a young creature like this on my hands. I could not go with her among strangers, and in her nervous state I should dread taking her into a house full of

servants. I have trusted to your mercy. I hope you will not think my act unwarrantable."

"On the contrary. You have honoured me by trusting me. I see your difficulty. Pray bring her in. I will go and prepare the girls."

While Deronda went back to the cab, Mrs Meyrick turned into the parlour again and said, "Here is somebody to take care of instead of your wounded conscripts, Mab: a poor girl who was going to drown herself in despair. Mr Deronda found her only just in time to save her. He brought her along in his boat, and did not know what else it would be safe to do with her, so he has trusted us and brought her here. It seems she is a Jewess, but quite refined, he says—knowing Italian and music."

The three girls, wondering and expectant, came forward and stood near each other in mute confidence that they were all feeling alike under this appeal to their compassion. Mab looked rather awe-stricken, as if this answer to her wish were something preternatural.

Meanwhile Deronda going to the door of the cab where the pale face was now gazing out with roused observation, said, "I have brought you to some of the kindest people in the world: there are daughters like you. It is a happy home. Will you let me take you to them?"

She stepped out obediently, putting her hand in his and forgetting her hat; and when Deronda led her into the full light of the parlour where the four little women stood awaiting her, she made a picture that would have stirred much duller sensibilities than theirs. At first she was a little dazed by the sudden light, and before she had concentrated her glance he had put her hand into the mother's. He was inwardly rejoicing that the Meyricks were so small: the dark-curled head was the highest among them. The poor wanderer could not be afraid of these gentle faces so near hers; and now she was looking at each of them in turn while the mother said, "You must be weary, poor child."

"We will take care of you—we will comfort you—we will love you," cried Mab, no longer able to restrain herself, and taking the small right hand caressingly between both her own. This gentle welcoming warmth was penetrating the bewildered one: she hung back just enough to see better the four faces in front of her, whose goodwill was being reflected in hers, not in any smile, but in that undefinable change which tells us that anxiety is passing into contentment. For an instant she looked up at Deronda, as if she were referring all this mercy to him, and then

again turning to Mrs Meyrick, said with more collectedness in her sweet tones than he had heard before—

"I am a stranger. I am a Jewess. You might have thought I was wicked."

"No, we are sure you are good," burst out Mab.

"We think no evil of you, poor child. You shall be safe with us," said Mrs Meyrick. "Come now and sit down. You must have some food, and then go to rest."

The stranger looked up again at Deronda, who said—

"You will have no more fears with these friends? You will rest to-night?"

"Oh, I should not fear. I should rest. I think these are the ministering angels."

Mrs Meyrick wanted to lead her to a seat, but again hanging back gently, the poor weary thing spoke as if with a scruple at being received without a further account of herself:

"My name is Mirah Lapidoth. I am come a long way, all the way from Prague by myself. I made my escape. I ran away from dreadful things. I came to find my mother and brother in London. I had been taken from my mother when I was little, but I thought I could find her again. I had trouble—the houses were all gone—I could

not find her. It has been a long while, and I had not much money. That is why I am in distress."

"Our mother will be good to you," cried Mab. "See what a nice little mother she is!"

"Do sit down now," said Kate, moving a chair forward, while Amy ran to get some tea.

Mirah resisted no longer, but seated herself with perfect grace, crossing her little feet, laying her hands one over the other on her lap, and looking at her friends with placid reverence; whereupon Hafiz, who had been watching the scene restlessly, came forward with tail erect and rubbed himself against her ankles. Deronda felt it time to take his leave.

"Will you allow me to come again and inquire —perhaps at five to-morrow?" he said to Mrs Meyrick.

"Yes, pray; we shall have had time to make acquaintance then."

"Good-bye," said Deronda, looking down at Mirah, and putting out his hand. She rose as she took it, and the moment brought back to them both strongly the other moment when she had first taken that outstretched hand. She lifted her eyes to his and said with reverential fervour, "The God of our fathers bless you and deliver you from all evil as you have delivered me. I did

not believe there was any man so good. None before have thought me worthy of the best. You found me poor and miserable, yet you have given me the best."

Deronda could not speak, but with silent adieux to the Meyricks, hurried away.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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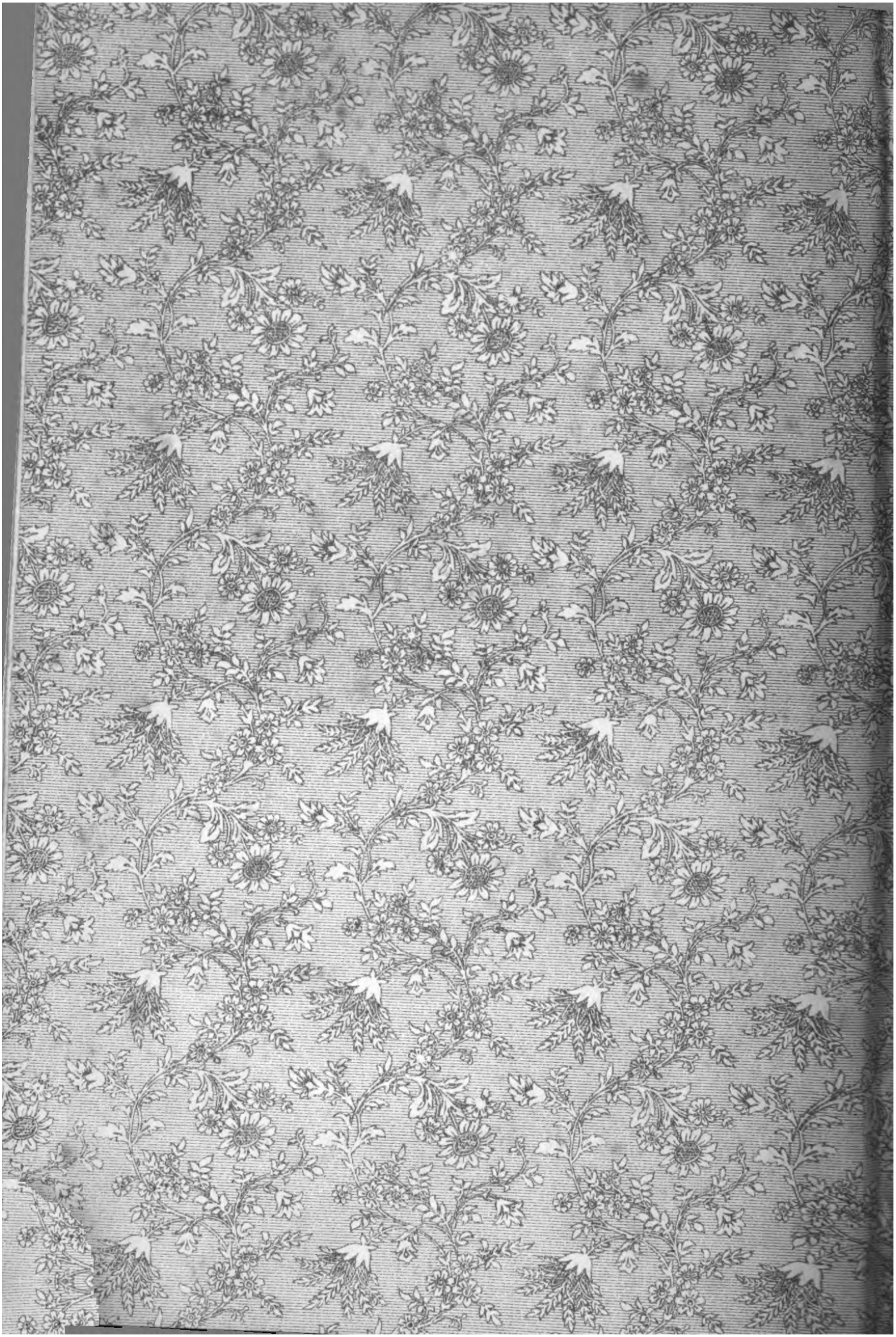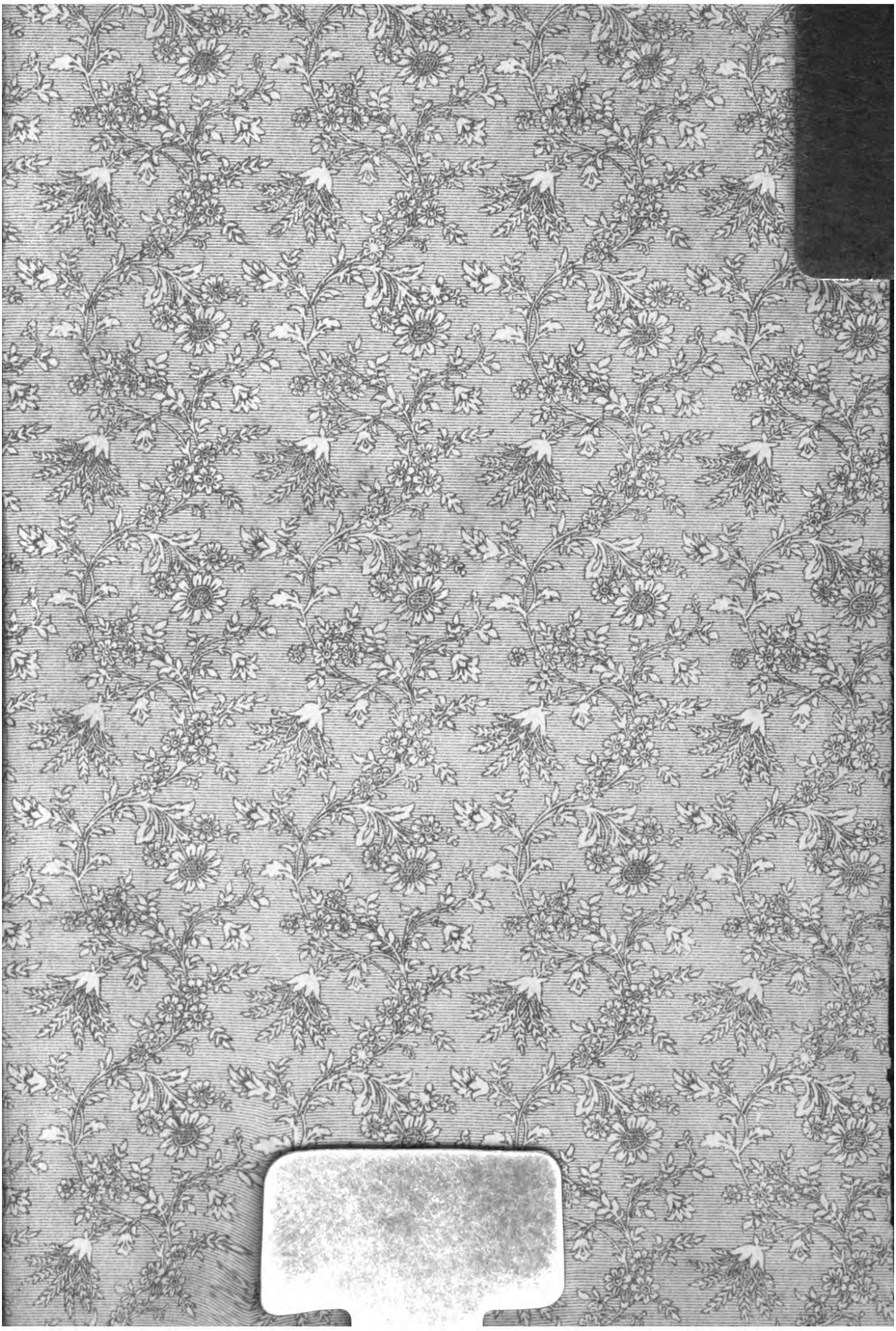
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