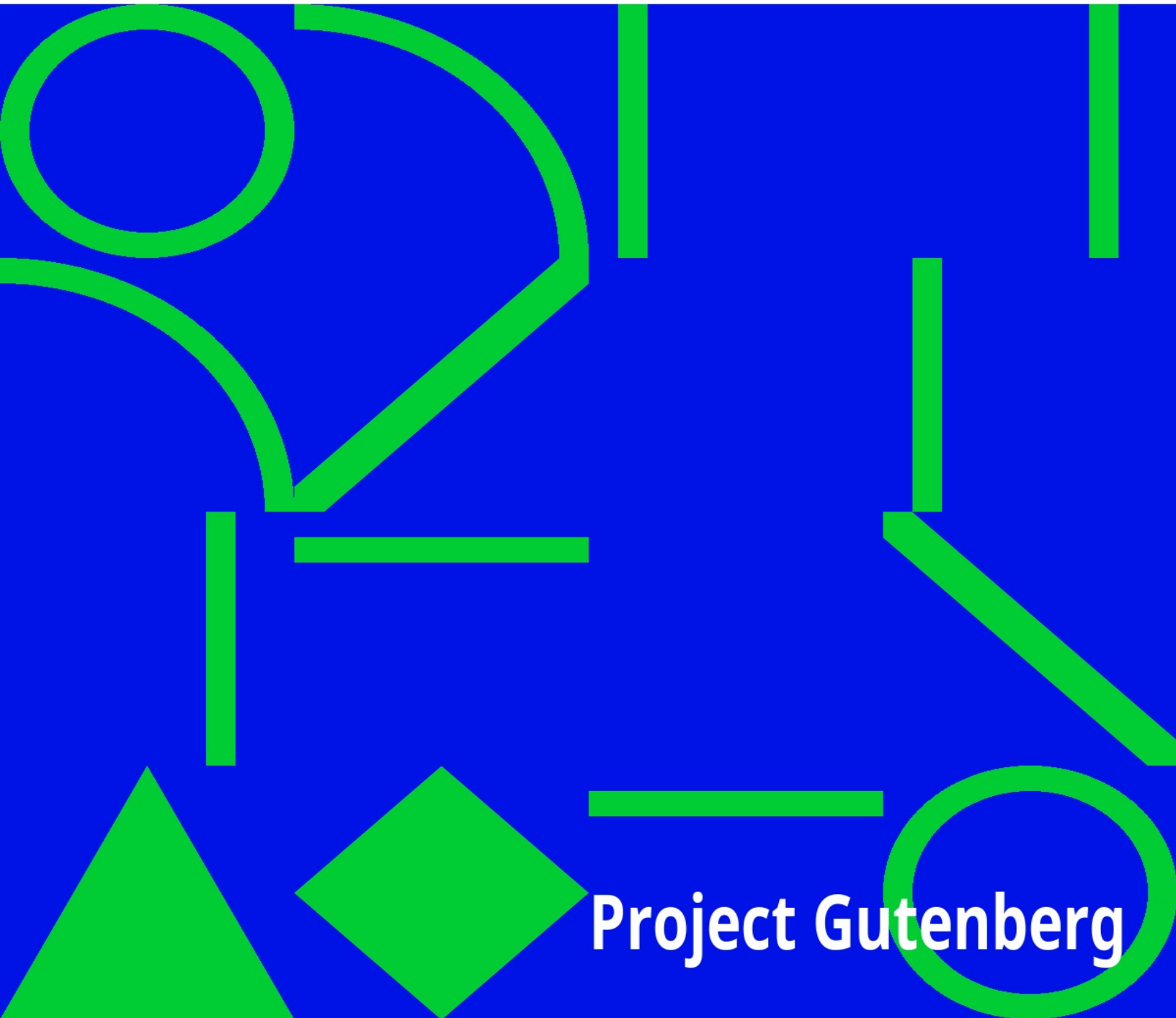
Within the Maze

A Novel, Vol. 1 (of 2)

Mrs. Henry Wood



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WITHIN THE MAZE BY MRS. HENRY WOOD

IN TWO VOLUMES.
VOL. I.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

A NOVEL.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF "EAST LYNNE," ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LEIPZIG
BERNHARD TAUCHNITZ
1872.

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OF VOLUME I.

WITHIN THE MAZE.

CHAPTER I.

Mrs. Andinnian's Home.

The house was ugly and old-fashioned, with some added modern improvements, and was surrounded by a really beautiful garden. Though situated close upon a large market town of Northamptonshire, it stood alone, excluded from the noise and bustle of the world.

The occupant of this house was a widow lady, Mrs. Andinnian. Her husband, a post-captain in the Royal Navy, had been dead some years. She had two sons. The elder, Adam, was of no profession, and lived with her: the younger, Karl, was a lieutenant in one of Her Majesty's regiments. Adam was presumptive heir to his uncle, Sir Joseph Andinnian, a baronet of modern creation: Karl had his profession alone to look to, and a small private income of two hundred a year.

They were not rich, these Andinnians: though the captain had deemed himself well-off, what with his private fortune, and what with his pay. The private fortune was just six hundred a year; the pay not great: but Captain Andinnian's tastes were simple, his wants few. At his death it was found that he had bequeathed his money in three equal parts: two hundred a year to his wife, and two hundred each to his sons. "Adam and his mother will live together," he said in the will; "she'd not be parted from him: and four hundred pounds, with her bit of pension, will be enough for comfort. When Adam succeeds his uncle, they can make any fresh arrangement that pleases them. But I hope when that time shall come they will not forget Karl."

Mrs. Andinnian resented the will, and resented these words in it. Her elder boy, Adam, had always been first and foremost with her: never a mother loved a son more ardently than she loved him. For Karl she cared not. Captain Andinnian was not blind to the injustice, and perhaps thence arose the motive that induced him not to leave his wife's two hundred pounds of income at her own disposal: when Mrs. Andinnian died, it would lapse to Karl. The captain had loved his sons equally: he would willingly have left them equally provided for in life, and divided the fortune that was to come sometime to Adam. Mrs. Andinnian, in spite of the expected rise for Adam, would have had him left better off from his father's means than Karl.

There had been nearly a lifelong feud between the two family branches. Sir Joseph Andinnian and his brother the captain had not met for years and years: and it was a positive fact that the latter's sons had never seen their uncle. For this feud the brothers themselves were not in the first instance to blame. It did not arise with them, but with their wives. Both ladies were of a haughty, overbearing, and implacable temper: they had quarrelled very soon after their first introduction to each other; the quarrel grew, and grew, and finally involved the husbands as well in its vortex.

Joseph Andinnian, who was the younger of the two brothers, had been a noted and very successful civil engineer. Some great work, that he had originated and completed, gained him his reward--a baronetcy. While he was in the very flush of his new honours, an accident, that he met with, laid him for many months upon a sick-bed. Not only that: it incapacitated him for future active service. So, when he was little more than a middle-aged man, he retired from his profession, and took up his abode for life at a pretty estate he had bought in Kent, called Foxwood Court, barely an hour's railway journey from London: by express train not much more than half one. Here, he and his wife had lived since: Sir Joseph growing more and more of an invalid as the years went on. They had no children; consequently his brother, Captain Andinnian, was heir to the baronetcy: and, following on Captain Andinnian, Adam, the captain's eldest son.

Captain Andinnian did not live to succeed. In what seemed the pride of his health and strength, just after he had landed from a three years' voyage, and was indulging in ambitious visions of a flag, symptoms of a mortal disease manifested themselves. He begged of his physicians to let him know the truth; and they complied--he must expect but a very few weeks more of life. Captain Andinnian, after taking a day or two to look matters fully in the face, went up to London, and thence
down to Sir Joseph's house in Kent. The brothers, once face to face, met as though no ill-blood had ever separated them: hands were
locked in hands, gaze went out to gaze. Both were simple-minded, earnest-hearted, affectionate-natured men; and but for their wives--to whom, if the truth must be avowed, each lay in subjection--not a
mis-word would ever have arisen between them.

"I am dying, Joseph," said the captain, when some of their mutual emotion had worn away. "The doctors tell me so, and I feel it to be true. Naturally, it has set me on the thought of many things--that I am afraid I have been too carelessly

putting off. What I have come down to you chiefly for, is to ask about my son--Adam. You'll tell me the truth, won't you, Joseph, as between brothers?"

"I'll tell you anything, Harry," was Sir Joseph's answer. "The truth about what?"

"Whether he is to succeed you or not?"

"Why, of course he must succeed: failing yourself. What are you thinking of, Harry, to ask it? I've no son of my own: it's not likely I shall have one now. He will be Sir Adam after me."

"It's not the title I was thinking of, Joseph. Failing a direct heir, I know that must come to him. But the property?--will he have that? It is not entailed; and you could cut him out absolutely."

"D'ye think I'd be so unjust as that, Harry?" was the half indignant reply. "A baronet's title, and nothing to keep it up upon! I have never had an idea of leaving it away from you; or from him if you went first. When Adam succeeds to my name and rank, he will succeed to my property. Were my wife to survive me, she'd have this place for life, and a good part of the income: but Adam would get it all at her death."

"This takes a weight off my mind," avowed Captain Andinnian. "Adam was not brought up to any profession. Beyond the two hundred a year he'll inherit from me----"

"A bad thing that--no profession," interrupted Sir Joseph. "If I had ten sons, and they were all heirs to ten baronetcies, each one should be brought up to use his brains or his hands."

"It's what I have urged over and over again," avowed the captain. "But the wife--you know what she is--set her face against it. 'He'll be Sir Adam Andinnian of Foxwood,' she'd answer me with, 'and he shall not soil his hands with work.' I have been nearly, always afloat, too, Joseph: not on the spot to enforce things: something has lain in that."

"I wonder the young man should not have put himself forward to be of use in the world!"

"Adam is idly inclined. I am sorry for it, but it is so. One thing has been against him, and that's his health. He's as tall and strong a young fellow to look at as you'd meet in a summer's day, but he is, I fear, anything but sound in constitution. A nice fellow too, Joseph."

"Of good disposition?"

"Very. We had used to be almost afraid of him as a boy; he would put himself into such unaccountable fits of passion. Just as--as--somebody else used to do, you know, Joseph," added the sailor with some hesitation.

Sir Joseph nodded. The somebody else was the captain's wife, and Adam's mother. Sir Joseph's own wife was not exempt from the same kind of failing: but in a less wild degree than Mrs. Andinnian. With her the defects of temper partook more of the nature of sullenness.

"But Adam seems to have outgrown all that: I've seen and heard nothing of it since he came to manhood," resumed the captain. "I wish from my heart he had some profession to occupy him. His mother always filled him up with the notion that he would be your heir and not want it."

"He'll be my heir, in all senses, safe enough, Harry: though I'd rather have heard he was given to industry than idleness. How does he get through his time? Young men naturally seek some pursuit as an outlet for their superfluous activity."

"Adam has a pursuit that he makes a hobby of; and that is his love of flowers; in fact his love of gardening in any shape. He'll be out amidst the plants and shrubs from sunrise to sunset. Trained to it, he'd have made a second Sir Joseph Paxton. I should like you to see him: he is very handsome."

"And the young one--what is he like? What's his name by the way? Henry?"

"No. Karl."

" *Karl?*" repeated Sir Joseph in surprise, as if questioning whether he heard aright.

"Ay, Karl. His mother was in Germany when he was born, it being a cheap place to live in--I was only a poor lieutenant then, Joseph, and just gone off to be

stationed before the West Indies. A great friend of hers, there, some German lady, had a little boy named Karl. My wife fell in love with the name, and called her own infant after it."

"Well, it sounds an outlandish name to me," cried the baronet, who was entirely unacquainted with every language but his own.

"So I thought, when she first wrote me word," assented Captain Andinnian. "But after I came home and got used to call the lad by it, you don't know how I grew to like it. The name gains upon your favour in a wonderful manner, Joseph: and I have heard other people say the same. It is Charles in English, you know."

"Then why not call him Charles?"

"Because the name is really Karl, and not Charles. He was baptized in Germany, but christened in England, and in both places it was done as 'Karl.' His mother has never cared very much for him."

"For him or his name, do you mean?"

"Oh, for him."

Sir Joseph opened his eyes. "Why on earth not?"

"Because all the love her nature's capable of--and in her it's tolerably strong--is given to Adam. She can't spare an atom from him: her love for him is as a kind of idolatry. For one thing, she was very ill when Karl was born, and neither nursed nor tended him: he was given over to the care of her sister who lived with her, and who had him wholly, so to say, for the first three years of his life."

"And what's Karl like?" repeated Sir Joseph.

"You ought to see him," burst forth the Captain with animation. "He's everything that's good and noble arid worthy. Joseph, there are not many young men of the present day so attractive as Karl."

"With a tendency to be passionate, like his brother?"

"Not he. A tendency to patience, rather. They have put upon him at home--between ourselves; kept him down, you know; both mother and brother. He is

several years younger than Adam; but they are attached to each other. A more gentle-natured, sweet-tempered lad than Karl never lived: all his instincts are those of a gentleman. He will make a brave soldier. He is ensign in the -- regiment."

"The -- regiment," repeated Sir Joseph. "Rather a crack corps that, is it not?"

"Yes: Karl has been lucky. He will have to make his own way in the world, for I can't give him much. But now that I am assured of your intentions as to Adam, things look a trifle brighter. Joseph, I thank you with all my heart."

Once more the brothers clasped hands. This reunion was the pleasantest event of their later lives. The captain remained two days at Foxwood. Lady Andinnian was civilly courteous to him, but never cordial. She did not second her brother's pressing wish that he should prolong his stay: neither did she once ask after any of his family.

Captain Andinnian's death took place, as anticipated. His will, when opened, proved to be what was mentioned above. Some years had gone by since. Mrs. Andinnian and her son Adam had continued to live together in their quiet home in Northamptonshire; Karl, lieutenant now, and generally with his regiment, paying them an occasional visit. No particular change had occurred, save the death of Lady Andinnian. The families had continued to be estranged as heretofore: for never a word of invitation had come out of Foxwood. Report ran that Sir Joseph was ailing much; very much indeed since the loss of his wife. And, now, that so much of introduction is over, we can go on with the story.

A beautiful day in April. At a large window thrown open to the mid-day sun, just then very warm and bright, sat a lady of some five and fifty years. A tall, handsome, commanding woman, resolution written in every line of her haughty face. She wore a black silk gown with the slightest possible modicum of crape on it, and the guipure cap--or, rather, the guipure lappets, for of cap there was not much to be seen--had in it some black ribbon. Her purple-black hair was well preserved and abundant still; her black eyes were stern, and fearlessly honest. It was Mrs. Andinnian.

She was knitting what is called a night-sock. Some poor sick pensioner of hers

or her son's--for both had their charities--needed the comfort. Her thoughts were busy; her eyes went fondly out to the far end of the garden, where she could just discern her son against the shrubs: the fairest and dearest sight to Mrs. Andinnian that earth had ever contained for her, or ever would contain.

"It is strange Sir Joseph does not write for him," ran her
thoughts--and they very often did run in the same groove. "I cannot imagine why he does not. Adam ought to be on the spot and get acquainted with his inheritance: his uncle must know he ought. But that I have never stooped to ask a favour in my life, I would write to Sir Joseph, and proffer a visit for Adam, and--for--yes, for me. During that woman's lifetime Adam was not likely to be welcomed there: but the woman's gone: it is two months this very day since she died."

The woman, thus unceremoniously alluded to, was Lady Andinnian: and the slight mourning, worn, was for her. Some intricacy in the knitting caused Mrs. Andinnian to bend her head: when she looked up again, her son was not to be seen. At the same moment, a faint sound of distant conversation smote her ear. The work dropped on her lap; with a look of annoyance she lifted her head to listen.

"He is talking to that girl again! I am sure of it."

Lift her head and her ears as she would, she could not tell positively whose voices they were. Instinct, however, that instinct of suspicion we all feel within us on occasion, was enough.

A very respectable manservant of middle age, thoughtful in face, fair in complexion, with a fringe of light hair round the sides of his otherwise bald head, entered the room and presented a note to his mistress. "Who is it from?" she asked as she took it off the silver waiter. An old waiter, bearing the Andinnian crest.

"Mrs. Pole's housemaid has brought it, ma'am. She is waiting for an answer."

It was but a friendly note of invitation from a neighbour, asking Mrs. Andinnian and her two sons to go in that evening. For Karl, the second son, had come home for a two days' visit, and was just then writing letters in another room.

"Yes, we will go--if Adam has no engagement," said Mrs. Andinnian to herself, but half aloud. "Hewitt, go and tell Mr. Andinnian that I wish to speak with him."

The man went across the garden and through the wilderness of shrubs. There stood his master at an open gate, talking to a very pretty girl with bright hair and rosy cheeks.

"My mistress wishes to see you, Mr. Adam."

Adam Andinnian turned round, a defiant expression on his haughty face, as if he did not like the interruption. He was a very fine man of some three-and-thirty years, tall and broad-shouldered, with his mother's cast of proud, handsome features, her fresh complexion, and her black hair. His eyes were dark grey; deeply set in the head, and rarely beautiful. His teeth also were remarkably good; white, even, and prominent, and he showed them very much.

"Tell my mother I'll come directly, Hewitt."

Hewitt went back with the message. The young lady who had turned to one of her own flower-beds, for the gardens joined, was bending over some budding tulips.

"I think they will be out next week, Mr. Andinnian," she looked round to say.

"Never mind the tulips," he answered after a pause, during which he had leaned on the iron railings, looking dark and haughty. "I want to hear more about this."

"There's nothing more to hear," was the young lady's answer.

"That won't do, Rose. Come here."

And she went obediently.

The house to which this other garden belonged was a humble, unpretending dwelling, three parts cottage, one part villa. A Mr. Turner lived in it with his wife and niece. The former was in good retail business in the town: a grocer: and he and his wife were as humble and unpretending as their dwelling. The niece, Rose, was different. Her father had been a lawyer in small local practice: and at

his death Rose--her mother also dead--was taken by her uncle and aunt, who loved both her and her childish beauty. Since then she had lived with them, and they educated her well. She was a good girl: and in the essential points of mind, manner, and appearance, a lady. But her position was of necessity a somewhat isolated one. With the tradespeople of the town Rose Turner did not care to mix: she felt that, however worthy, they were beneath her: quite of another order altogether: on the other hand, superior people would not associate with Miss Turner, or put so much as the soles of their shoes over the doorsill of the grocer's house. At sixteen she had been sent to a finishing school: at eighteen she came back as pretty and as nice a girl as one of fastidious taste would wish to see.

Years before, Adam and Karl Andinnian had made friends with the little child: they continued to be intimate with her as brothers and sister. Latterly, it had dawned on Mrs. Andinnian's perception that Adam and Miss Turner were a good deal together; certainly more than they need be. Adam had even come to neglect his flowers, that he so much loved, and to waste his time talking to Rose. It cannot be said that Mrs. Andinnian feared any real complication--any undesirable result of any kind; the great difference in their ages might alone have served to dispel the notion: Adam was thirty-three; Miss Turner only just out of her teens. But she was vexed with her son for being so frivolous and foolish: and, although she did not acknowledge it to herself, a vague feeling of uneasiness in regard to it lay at the bottom of her heart. As to Adam, he kept his thoughts to himself. Whether this new propensity to waste his hours with Miss Turner arose out of mere pastime, or whether he entertained for her any warmer feeling, was, his own secret.

Things--allowing for argument's sake that there was some love in the matter--were destined not to go on with uninterrupted smoothness. There is a proverb to the effect, you know. During the last few weeks a young medical student, named Martin Scott, had become enamoured of Miss Turner. At first, he had confined himself to silent admiration. Latterly he had taken to speaking of it. Very free-mannered, after the fashion of medical students of graceless nature, he had twice snatched a kiss from her: and the young lady, smarting under the infliction, indignant, angry, had this day whispered the tale to Adam Andinnian. And no sooner was it done, than she repented: for the hot fury that shone out of Mr. Andinnian's face, startled her greatly.

They were standing together again at the small iron gate, ere the sound of Hewitt's footsteps had well died away. Rose Turner had the true golden hair that

ladies have taken to covet and spend no end of money on pernicious dyes to try and obtain. Her garden hat was untied, and she was playing with its strings.

"Rose, I must know all; and I insist upon your telling me. Go on."

"But indeed I have told you all, Mr. Andinnian."

Mr. Andinnian gazed steadfastly into Miss Rose's eyes, as if he would get the truth out of their very depths. It was evident that she now spoke unwillingly, and only in obedience to his strong will.

"It was last night, was it, that he came up, this brute of a Scott?"

"Last night, about six," she answered. "We were at tea, and my aunt asked him to take some--"

"Which he did of course?" savagely interrupted Mr. Andinnian.

"Yes; and eat two muffins all to himself," laughed Miss Turner, trying to turn the anger off. Mr. Andinnian did not like the merriment.

"Be serious if you please, child; this is a serious matter. Was it after tea that he--that he dared to insult you?" and the speaker shut his right hand with a meaning gesture as he said it.

"Yes. Aunt went to the kitchen to see about something that was to be prepared for my uncle's supper--for she is fidgety over the cooking, and never will trust it to the servant. Martin Scott then began to tease as usual; saying how much he cared for me, and asking me to wait for him until he could get into practice."

"Well?" questioned Adam impatiently as she stopped.

"I told him that he had already had his answer from me and that he had no right to bring the matter up again; it was foolish besides, as it only set me more against him. Then I sat down to the piano and played the Chatelaine--he only likes rattling music--and sang a song, thinking it would pass the time in peace until aunt returned.
By-and-by I heard my uncle's latch-key in the front door, and I was crossing the room to go out and meet him, when Martin Scott laid hold of my arm, and--and kissed me."

Mr. Andinnian bit his lips almost to bleeding. His face was frightful in its anger. Rose shivered a little.

"I am sorry I told you, Mr. Andinnian."

"Now listen, Rose. If ever this Martin Scott does the like again, I'll shoot him."

"Oh, Mr. Andinnian!"

"I shall warn him. In the most unmistakable words; words that he cannot misconstrue; I will warn him of what I mean to do. Let him disregard it at his peril; if he does, I'll shoot him as I would shoot a dog."

The very ferocity of the threat, its extreme nature, disarmed Miss Turner's belief in it. She smiled up in the speaker's face and shook her head, but was content to let the subject pass away in silence. Adam Andinnian, totally forgetting his mother's message, began talking of pleasanter things.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Andinnian's patience was growing exhausted: she hated to keep other people's servants waiting her pleasure. Her fingers were on the bell to ring for Hewitt, when Karl entered the room, some sealed letters in his hand. A slender man of seven-and-twenty, slightly above the middle height, with pale, clearly-cut features and a remarkably nice expression of countenance. He had the deeply-set, beautiful grey eyes of his brother; but his hair, instead of being black and straight, was brown and wavy. An attractive looking man, this Karl Andinnian.

"I am going out to post these letters," said Karl. "Can I do anything for you in the town, mother?"

The voice was attractive too. Low-toned, clear, melodious, full of truth: a voice to be trusted all over the world. Adam's voice was inclined to be harsh, and he had rather a loud way of speaking.

"Nothing in the town," replied Mrs. Andinnian: and, now that you notice it, *her* voice was harsh too. "But you can go and ask your brother why he keeps me waiting. He is behind the shrubbery."

Karl left his letters on the table, traversed the garden, and found Adam with

Miss Turner. They turned to wait his approach. A half doubt, he knew not wherefore, dawned for the first time on his mind.

"How are you this morning, Rose?" he asked, raising his hat with the ceremony one observes to an acquaintance, rather than to an intimate friend. "Adam, the mother seems vexed: you are keeping her waiting, she says, and she wishes to know the reason of it."

"I forgot all about it," cried Adam. "Deuce take the thorn!"

For just at that moment he had run a thorn into his finger. Karl began talking with Miss Turner: there was no obligation on *him* to return forthwith to the house.

"Go back, will you, Karl, and tell the mother I am sorry I forgot it. I shall be there as soon as you are."

"A genteel way of getting rid of me," thought Karl with a laugh, as he at once turned to plunge into the wide shrubbery. "Good day to you, Rose."

But when he was fairly beyond their sight Karl's face became grave as a judge's. "Surely Adam is not drifting into anything serious in that quarter!" ran his thoughts. "It would never do."

"Well--have you seen Adam!" began Mrs. Andinnian, when he entered.

"Yes. He is coming immediately."

" *Coming!*"--and she curled her vexed lips. "He ought to *come*. Who is he with, Karl?"

"With Miss Turner."

"What nonsense! Idling about with a senseless child!"

"I suppose it *is* nothing but nonsense?" spoke Karl, incautiously. "She--Miss Turner--would scarcely be the right woman in the right place."

His mother glanced at him sharply. "In *what* place?--what woman?"

"As Lady Andinnian."

Karl had angered his mother before in his lifetime, but scarcely ever as now. She turned livid as death, and took up the first thing that came to her hand--a silver inkstand, kept for show, not use--and held it as if she would hurl it at his head.

"How *dare* you, sir, even in supposition, so traduce your brother?"

"I beg your pardon, mother. I spoke without thought."

As she was putting down the inkstand, Adam came in. He saw that something was amiss. Mrs. Andinnian spoke abruptly about the invitation for the evening, and asked if he would go. Adam said he could go, and she left the room to give, herself, a verbal answer to the waiting servant.

"What was the matter, Karl?"

"The mother was vexed at your staying with Rose Turner, instead of coming in. It was nonsense, she said, to be idling about with a senseless child. I--unfortunately, but quite unintentionally--added to her anger by remarking that I supposed it *was* nonsense, for she, Miss Turner, would scarcely be suitable for a Lady Andinnian."

"Just attend to your own affairs," growled Adam. "Keep yourself in your place."

Karl looked up with his sweet smile; answering with his frank and gentle voice. The smile and the voice acted like oil on the troubled waters.

"You know, Adam, that I should never think of interfering with you, or of opposing your inclinations. In the wide world, there's no one, I think, so anxious as I am for your happiness and welfare."

Adam did know it, and their hands met in true affection. Few brothers loved each other as did Adam and Karl Andinnian. Seeing them together thus, they were undoubtedly two fine young men--as their sailor father had once observed to his brother. But Karl, with his nameless air of innate goodness and refinement, looked the greater gentleman.

CHAPTER II.

Lucy Cleeve

Lingering under the light of the sweet May moon, arm within arm, their voices hushed, their tread slow, went two individuals, whom few, looking upon them, could have failed to mistake for anything but lovers. Lovers they were, in heart, in mind, in thought: with as pure and passionate and ardent a love as ever was felt on this earth. And yet, no word, to tell of it, had ever been spoken between them.

It was one of those cases where love, all unpremeditated, had grown up, swiftly, surely, silently. Had either of them known that they were drifting into it, they might have had sufficient prudence to separate forthwith, before the danger grew into certainty. For he, the obscure and nearly portionless young soldier, had the sense to see that he would be regarded as no fit match for the daughter of Colonel and the Honourable Mrs. Cleeve; both of high lineage and inordinately proud of it into the bargain; and she, Lucy Cleeve, knew that, for all her good descent, she was nearly portionless too, and that her future husband, whomsoever he might turn out to be, must possess a vast deal more of this world's goods than did Lieutenant Andinnian. Ay, and of family also. But, there it was: they had drifted into this mutual love unconsciously: each knew that it was for all time: and that, in comparison, "family" and "goods" were to them as nothing.

"And so Miss Blake is back, Lucy?"

The words, spoken by Mr. Andinnian, broke one of those long pauses of delicious silence, that in themselves seem like tastes of paradise. Lucy Cleeve's tones in answer were low and soft as his.

"She came to-day. I hardly knew her. Her hair is all put on the top of her head:

and--and--"

Lucy stopped. "And is of another colour," she had been about to conclude. But it might not be quite good-natured to say it, even to one to whom she would willingly have given her whole heart's confidence. Reared in the highest of all high and true principles, and naturally gifted with them, Lucy had a peculiar dread of deceit: her dislike of it extended even to the changing of the colour of the hair. But she was also of that sweet and generous disposition that shrinks from speaking a slighting word of another. She resumed hastily and with a slight laugh.

"Theresa is in love with Rome; and especially with its cardinals. One of them was very civil to her, Karl."

"About this picnic to-morrow, Lucy. Are you to be allowed to go?"

"Yes, now Theresa's here. Mamma would not have liked to send me without some one from home: and the weather is scarcely hot enough for herself to venture. Do--you--go" she asked timidly.

"Yes."

There was silence again: each heart beating in unison. The prospect of a whole day together, spent amidst glens, and woods, and dales, was too much for utterance.

For the past twelve months, Lieutenant Andinnian's regiment had been quartered at Winchester. On his arrival, he had brought with him a letter of introduction to one of the clergy there--a good old man, whose rectory was on the outskirts of the town. The Rev. Mr. Blake and his wife took a great fancy to the young lieutenant, and made much of him. Living with them at that time was a relative, a Miss Blake. This lady was an orphan: she had a small fortune, somewhere between two and three hundred a year: and she stayed sometimes with the Blakes, sometimes with the Cleeves, to whom she and the Blakes were likewise related.

A novel writer has to tell secrets: not always pleasant ones. In this case, it must be disclosed that the one secret wish of Theresa Blake's life, to which her whole energies (in a lady-like way) were directed, was--to get married, and to marry well. If we could see into the hearts of some other young ladies, especially

when they have left the bloom of youth behind, we might find them filled with the same ardent longing. Hitherto Miss Blake's hopes had not been realized. She was not foolish enough to marry downright unwisely: and nothing eligible had come in her way. Considering that she was so very sensible a young woman--for good common sense was what Miss Blake prided herself upon--it was very simple of her to take up the notion she did--that the attractive young lieutenant's frequent visits to the rectory were made for her sake. She fell over head and ears in love with him: she thought that his attentions (ordinary attentions in truth, and paid to her as the only young lady of a house where the other inmates were aged) spoke plainly of his love for her. Of what are called "flirtations" Theresa Blake had had enough, and to spare: but of true love she had hitherto known nothing. She ignored the difference in their years--for there was a difference--and she waited for the time when the young officer should speak out: her income joined to his and his pay, would make what she thought they could live very comfortably upon. Love softens difficulties as does nothing else in life; before she knew Karl Andinnian, Miss Blake would have scorned the notion of taking any man who could not have offered her a settlement of a thousand pounds a year at least.

But now--what was Karl Andinnian's share in all this? Simply none. He had no more notion that the young lady was in love with him than that old Mrs. Blake was. If Miss Blake did not see the years she had come to, he did; and would nearly as soon, so far as age went, have offered to marry his mother. To a young man of twenty-six, a woman of thirty-four looks quite old. And so, in this misapprehension--the one finding fresh food for her hopes day by day, the other at ease in his utter unconsciousness--the summer and autumn had passed. At the close of autumn Miss Blake departed with some friends for the Continent, more particularly to visit Paris and Rome. But that it was a long-since-made engagement, and also that she had so wished to see those renowned places, she would not have torn herself away from the locality that contained Mr. Andinnian.

Shortly afterwards the Cleeves returned to Winchester, after a long absence. They resided without the town, just beyond Mr. Blake's rectory. Lucy Cleeve had been in the habit of spending nearly as much time at the rectory as at home: and it was from the never-tiring training of him and his good wife that Lucy had learnt to be the truly excellent girl she was. On the very day of her return, she and Karl Andinnian met: and--if it was not exactly love at first sight with them, it was something very like it; for each seemed drawn to the other by that

powerful, sympathetic attraction that can no more be controlled than explained or accounted for. A few more meetings, and they loved for all time: and since then they had gone on living in a dream of happiness.

There they were, pacing together the rectory garden under the warm May moonlight. The rector had been called to a sick parishioner, and they had strolled out with him to the gate. Mrs. Blake, confined to her sofa, was unsuspicious as the day. Lucy, twenty 'years of age, was looked upon by her as a child still: and the old are apt to forget the sweet beguilements of their own long-past youth, and that the young of the present day can be drifting into the same.

"It is very pleasant; quite warm," spoke Mr. Andinnian. "Would you like another turn, Lucy?"

They both turned simultaneously without a word of assent from her, and paced side by side to the gate in a rapture of silence. Lucy quitted him to pluck a spray from the sweet-briar hedge; and then they turned again. The moon went behind a cloud.

"Take my arm, Lucy. It is getting quite dark."

She took it; the darkness affording the plea; and the night hid the blushes on her transparent cheeks. They were half-way down the walk, and Karl was bending his head to speak to her; his tones low, though their subject was nothing more than the projected party for the morrow; when some one who had approached the gate from the road, stood still there to look at them.

It was Miss Blake. She had that day returned from her continental excursion, and taken up her abode, as arranged, at Colonel Cleeve's. Whether at the rectory or at Colonel Cleeve's, Miss Blake paid at the rate of one hundred a year for the accommodation; and then, as she said, she was independent. It was a private arrangement, one that she insisted on. Her sojourn abroad had not tended to cool one whit of her love for Mr. Andinnian; the absence had rather augmented it. She had come home with all her pulses bounding and her heart glowing at the prospect of seeing him again.

But--she saw him with some one else. The moon was out again in all her silvery brightness, and Miss Blake had keen eyes. She saw one on his arm, to whom he seemed to be whispering, to whose face his own was bent; one younger and fairer than she--Lucy Cleeve. A certain possibility of what it might

mean darted through her mind with a freezing horror that caused her to shiver. But only for a moment. She drove it away as absurd--and opened, the gate with a sharp click. They turned at the sound of her footsteps and loosed arms. Mr. Andinnian doffed his hat in salutation, and held out his hand.

"Miss Blake!"

"I came with old John to fetch you, Lucy, wishing to see dear Mrs. Blake," she carelessly said in explanation, letting her hand lie in Karl's, as they turned to the house. "And it is a lovely night."

Coming into the light of the sitting-room you could see what Miss Blake was like--and Lucy, also, for that matter. Miss Blake was tall, upright; and; if there was a fault in her exceedingly well-made figure, it was that it was too thin. Her features and complexion
were very good, her eyes were watchful and had a green tinge; and
the hair originally red, had been converted into a kind of auburn that had more than one shade of colour on it. Altogether, Miss Blake was nice-looking; and she invariably dressed well, in the height of any fashion that might prevail. What with her well-preserved face, her large quantity of youthful hair, and her natty attire, she had an idea that she looked years and years less than her real age; as in fact she did.

And Lucy? Lucy was a gentle girl with a soft, sweet face; a face of intellect, and goodness, and sensibility. Her refined features were of the highest type; her clear eyes were of a remarkably light brown, the long eyelashes and the hair somewhat darker. By the side of the upright and always self-possessed Miss Blake--I had almost written self-asserting--she looked a timid shrinking child. What with Miss Blake's natural height and the unnatural pyramid of hair on the top of her head, Lucy appeared short. But Lucy was not below the middle height of women.

"I wonder--I wonder how much he has seen of Lucy?" thought Miss Blake, beginning to watch and to listen, and to put in prompting questions here and there.

She contrived to gather that the lieutenant had been a tolerably frequent visitor at Colonel Cleeve's during the spring. She
observed--and Miss Blake's observance was worth having--that his good night to

Lucy was spoken in a different tone from the one to herself: lower and softer.

"There *cannot* be anything between them! There cannot, surely, be!"

Nevertheless the very thought of it caused her face to grow cold as with a mortal sickness.

"I shall see to-morrow," she murmured. "They will be together at the picnic, and I shall see."

Miss Blake did see. Saw what, to her jealous eyes--ay, and to her cool ones; was proof positive. Lieutenant Andinnian and Miss Lucy Cleeve were lost in love the one for the other. In her conscientious desire to do her duty--and she did hope and believe that no other motive or passion prompted the step--Miss Blake, looking upon herself as a sort of guardian over Lucy's interests, disclosed her suspicions to Mrs. Cleeve. What would be a suitable match for herself, might be entirely unsuitable for Lucy.

Colonel Augustus and the Honourable Mrs. Cleeve were very excellent people, as people go: their one prominent characteristic--perhaps some would rather call it failing--being family pride. Colonel Cleeve could claim relationship, near or remote, with three lords and a Scotch duke: Mrs. Cleeve was a peer's daughter. Their only son was in India with his regiment: their only daughter, introduced and presented but the last year, was intended to make a good marriage, both as regards rank and wealth. They knew what a charming girl she was, and they believed she could not fail to be sought. One gentleman, indeed, had asked for her in London; that is, had solicited of the Colonel the permission to ask for her. He was a banker's son. Colonel Cleeve thanked him with courtesy, but said that his daughter must not marry beneath her own rank: he and her mother hoped she would be a peeress. It may therefore be judged what was the consternation caused, when Miss Blake dropped a hint of her observations.

The remark already made, as to Mrs. Blake's blind unsuspicion, held good in regard to Colonel Cleeve and his wife. They had likewise taken a fancy to the attractive young lieutenant and were never backward in welcoming him to their house. *And yet they never glanced at Lucy's interests in the matter;* they never supposed that she likewise could be awake to the same attractions; or that her attractions had charms for the lieutenant. How frequent these cases of blindness

occur in the world, let the world answer. Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve would as soon have suspected that Lucy was falling in love with the parish clerk. And why? Because the notion that any one, so much beneath them in family and position as Mr. Andinnian, should aspire to her, or that she could stoop to think of him, never would have entered into their exclusive imaginations, unless put there.

Mrs. Cleeve, dismayed, sick, frightened, but always mild and gentle, begged of Lucy to say that it was a cruel mistake; and that there was "nothing" between her and Mr. Andinnian. Lucy, amidst her blinding tears, answered that nothing whatever had been spoken between them. But she was too truthful, too honest, to deny the implication that there existed love: Colonel Cleeve sent for Mr. Andinnian.

The young man was just coming in from a full-dress parade when the note arrived. It was a peremptory one. He walked up at once, not staying to put off his regimentals. Colonel Cleeve, looking the thorough gentleman he was, and wearing his customary blue frock-coat with a white cambric frill at his breast, met him at the door of his library. He was short and slight, and had mild blue eyes. His white hair was cut nearly close, and his forehead and head were so fair that at first sight it gave him the appearance of being powdered. The servant closed the door upon them.

That Karl Andinnian was, as the phrase runs, "taken to" by the plain questioning of the Colonel cannot be denied. It was plunged into without preface. "Is it true that there is an attachment between you and my daughter? Is it true, sir, that you have been making love to her?"

For a short while Karl was silent. The Colonel saw his embarrassment. It was only the momentary embarrassment of surprise, and, perhaps, of vexation: but Karl, guileless and strictly honourable, never thought of not meeting the matter with perfect truth.

"That there does exist affection between me and your daughter, sir, I cannot deny," he replied with diffidence. "At least, I can answer for myself--that the truest and tenderest love man is, or, as I believe, can be, capable of I feel for her. As to making love to her, I have not done it consciously. But--we have been a great deal together; and I fear Miss Cleeve must have read my heart, as--as----"

"As what, Mr. Andinnian?" was the stern question.

"As I have read hers, I was going to presume to say," replied Karl, his voice and eyes alike drooping.

Colonel Cleeve felt confounded. He would have called this the very height of impudence, but the young man standing before him was so indisputably refined, so modest, and spoke as though he were grieved to the heart.

"And, pray, what could you have promised yourself by thus presuming to love my daughter?"

"I promised myself nothing. On my word of honour as a gentleman, sir, I have not been holding out any kind of hopes or promises to myself. I believe," added the young man, with the open candour so characteristic of him, "that I have been too happy in the present, in Miss Cleeve's daily society--for hardly a day passed that we did not see each
other--to cast so much as a thought to the future."

"Well, sir, what excuse have you to make for this behaviour? Do you see its folly?"

"I see it now. I see it for the first time, Colonel Cleeve.
For--I--suppose--you will not let me aspire to win her?"

The words were given with slow deprecation: as if he hardly dared to speak them.

"What do you think, yourself, about it?" sharply asked the Colonel. "Do you consider yourself a suitable match for Miss Cleeve? In *any* way? In *any* way, Mr. Andinnian?"

"I am afraid not, sir."

"You are *afraid* not! Good Heavens! Your family--pardon me for alluding to it, Mr. Andinnian, but there are moments in a lifetime, and this is one, when plain speaking becomes a necessity. Your family have but risen from the ranks, sir, as we soldiers say, and not much above the ranks either. Miss Cleeve *is* Miss Cleeve: my daughter, and a peer's grand-daughter."

"It is all true, sir."

"So much for that unsuitability. And then we come to means. What are yours, Mr. Andinnian?"

The young man lifted his head and his honest grey eyes to the half-affrighted but generally calm face. He could but tell the truth at all times without equivocation.

"I fear you will consider my means even more ineligible than my family," he said. "I have my pay and two hundred pounds a year. At my mother's death another two hundred a year will come to me."

Colonel Cleeve drew down his lips. "And that is all--in the present and in the future?"

"All I can reckon upon with any certainty. When my brother shall succeed Sir Joseph Andinnian, he may do something more for me. My father suggested it in his last testamentary paper: and I think he will do it: I believe he will. But of this I cannot be certain; and in any case it may not be much."

Colonel Cleeve paused a moment. He wished the young man would not be so straightforwardly candid, so transparently single-minded, putting himself, as it were, in all honour in his hands. It left the Colonel--the mildest man in the world by nature--less loophole to get into a proper passion. In the midst of it all, he could not help liking the young fellow.

"Mr. Andinnian, every word you say only makes the case worse. Two barriers, each in itself insurmountable, lie, by your own showing, between you and my daughter. The bare idea of making her your wife is an insult to her; were it carried into a fact--I condemn myself to speak of so impossible a thing unwillingly--it would blight her life and happiness for ever."

Karl's pale face grew red as his coat. "These are harsh words, Colonel Cleeve."

"They are true ones, sir: and justifiable. Lucy has been reared in the notions befitting her rank. She has been taught to expect that when she marries her home will be at least as well-appointed as the one she is taken from. My son is a great expense to me and my means are limited as compared with my position--I am plain with you, you see, Mr. Andinnian; you have been so with me--but still we live as our compeers live, and have things in accordance about us. But what

could *you* offer Lucy?--allowing that in point of family you were entitled to mate with her. Why, a lodging in a barracks; a necessity to tramp with you after the regiment at home and abroad."

Karl stood silent, the pain of mortification on his closed lips. Colonel Cleeve put the case rather extremely; but it was near the truth, after all.

"And you would wish to bring this disgrace, this poverty, this blight on Lucy! If you----"

"No, sir, I would not," was the impulsive interruption. "What do you take me for? Lucy's happiness is a great deal dearer to me than my own."

"If you have one spark of honour, Mr. Andinnian--and until now I believed you had your full share of it--if you do care in ever so small a degree for my daughter's comfort and her true welfare; in short, if you are a man and a gentleman, you will aid me in striving to undo the harm that has been done."

"I will strive to do what is best to be done," replied Karl, knowing the fiat that must come, and feeling that his heart was breaking.

"Very well. Our acquaintance with you must close from this hour; and I must ask you to give me your word of honour never to attempt to hold future communication with my daughter in any way: never to meet her in society even, if it be possible for you to stay away and avoid it. In future you and Miss Cleeve are strangers."

There was a dead silence. Karl seemed to be looking at vacancy, over the Colonel's head.

"You do not speak, Mr. Andinnian."

He roused himself with a sort of shudder. "I believe I was lost in glancing at the blighted life *mine* will be, Colonel Cleeve." And the Colonels in spite of his self-interest, felt a kind of pity for the feelings that he saw were stung to the quick.

"Do you refuse to comply with my mandate?"

"No, sir. Putting the affair before me in the light you have put it, no alternative

is left me. I see, too, that circumstanced as I am--and as she is--my dream of love has been nothing but madness. On my word of honour, Colonel Cleeve, could I have looked at the matter at first as I look at it now, and foreseen that we were destined to--to care for each other, I would have flown Miss Cleeve's presence."

"These regrets often come late in the day, Mr. Andinnian," was the rather sarcastic answer.

"They have in this case."

"Then I may rely on your honour?"

"You may indeed, sir. But that I see how right and reasonable your fiat is; how essential for Lucy's sake, I could hardly have complied with it; for to part with her will be rending myself from every joy of life. I give you my sacred word of honour that I will not henceforth attempt to hold communication of any kind with her: I will not meet her if I can avoid it. That I should live to say this calmly!" added Karl to himself.

"I expected no less from you, Mr. Andinnian," spoke the Colonel, stiffly but courteously. "I am bound to say that you have met this most lamentable affair in a proper spirit. I see I may rely upon you."

"You may rely upon me as you would rely upon yourself," said the young officer earnestly. "Should the time ever come that my fortunes ascend--it seems next door to an impossibility now, but such things have been heard of--and Lucy be still free----"

"That could make no alteration: want of fortune is not the only bar," haughtily interrupted Colonel Cleeve. "The present is enough for us, Mr. Andinnian: let us leave the future."

"True. The present is greatly enough; and I beg your pardon, Colonel Cleeve. I will keep my word both in the spirit and the letter. And now, I would make one request to you, sir--that you will allow me to see Lucy for an instant before we finally part."

"That you may gain some foolish promise from her?--of waiting, or something of that kind!" was the angry rejoinder.

"I told you that you might rely upon me," replied Karl with sad emphasis. "Colonel Cleeve, don't you see what a bitter blow this is to me?" he burst forth, with an emotion he had not betrayed throughout the interview. "It may be bitter to Lucy also. Let us say a word of good-bye to each other for the last time."

Colonel Cleeve hardly knew what to do. He did not like to say No; he did not like to say Yes. That it was bitter to one, he saw; that it might be bitter to the other, he quite believed: and he had a soft place in his heart.

"I will trust you in this as I trust you in the other, Mr. Andinnian. It must be good-bye, only, you understand: and a brief one."

He quitted the room, and sent Lucy in. Almost better for them both that he had not done so--for these partings are nearly as cruel as death. To them both, this severing asunder for all time seemed worse than death. Lucy, looking quiet and simple in her muslin, stood shivering.

"I could not depart without begging you to forgive me, Lucy," Karl said, his tone less firm than usual with emotion and pain. "I ought to have exercised more thought; to have foreseen what must be the inevitable ending. Colonel Cleeve has my promise that I will never again seek you in any way: that from henceforth we shall be as strangers. Oh my darling!--I may surely call you so in this last hour!--this is painful I fear to you as to me."

She went quite close to him, her eyes cast up to his with a piteous mourning in their depths; eyes too sad for tears.

"They have told me the same, Karl. There is no hope at all for us. But I--I wish in my turn to say something to you. Karl"--and her voice sank to a whisper, and she put out her hand as if inviting him to take it--"I shall never forget you; I shall never care for you less than I do now."

He did not take her hand. He took her. Almost beside himself with the bitter pain, Karl Andinnian so far forgot himself as to clasp this young girl to his heart: as to rain down on her sweet face the sad kisses from his lips. But he remembered his promise to Colonel Cleeve, and said never a word of hope for the future.

"Forgive me, Lucy; this and all. Perhaps Colonel Cleeve would hardly grudge it to us when it is to be our last meeting on earth."

"In the years to come," she sobbed, her face lying under his wet tears, "when we shall be an old man and woman, they may let us meet again. Oh, Karl, yes! and we can talk together of that best world, Heaven, where there will be no separation. We shall be drawing near its gates then, looking out for it."

A slight tap at the door, and Miss Blake entered. She had come to summon Lucy. Seeing what she did see--the tears, the emotion, the intertwined hands, Miss Blake looked--looked very grim and stately.

"Lucy, Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve have sent me to request you to go to them."

"God bless you, Lucy," he whispered. "God bless you, my best and dearest. Good-bye, for ever."

With what seemed a cool bow to Miss Blake and never a word, for in truth he was unequal to speaking it, Lieutenant Andinnian passed into the hall, caught up his hat and sword that he had left there, and let himself out, buckling on the latter. Lucy had her hands to her face, hiding it. Miss Blake waited.

"My dear Lucy, what am I to say?"

"Tell them that I wish to stay here alone for a few minutes. Tell them that Mr. Andinnian is gone."

Miss Blake, her hard, thin lips compressed with the cruellest pain woman can ever feel, took her way back again. Only herself knew, or ever would know, what this dreadful blow was to her--the finding that she had been mistaken in Karl Andinnian's love. For anguish such as this women have lost life. One small drop, taking from the bitterness, there was--to know that he and his true love had bidden each other adieu for ever.

"Perhaps--in a few weeks, or months to come--when he shall have recovered his folly--he and I may be friends again," she murmured. "Nay--who knows--may even become something warmer and dearer: his feeling for that child can only be a passing fancy. Something warmer and dearer," softly repeated Miss Blake, as she traversed the hall.

"Lucy will come to you presently, Mrs. Cleeve. There's no hurry now: Mr. Andinnian is gone."

"What is Lucy doing, Theresa?"

"Sobbing silently, I think: she scarcely spoke to me. Fancy her being so foolish!"

Mrs. Cleeve went at once to the library. She and her husband were as much alike as possible: mild, good, unemotional people who hated to inflict pain: with a great love for their daughter, and a very great sense of their own importance and position in the world, as regarded pride of birth.

"Oh, Lucy dear, it was obliged to be. You are reasonable, and must know it was. But from my very heart I am sorry for you: and I shall always take blame to myself for not having been more cautious than to allow you to become intimate with Mr. Andinnian. It seems to me as though I had been living with a veil before my eyes."

"It is over now: let it pass," was Lucy's faint answer.

"Yes, dear, it is over. All over for good. By this time twelvemonth, Lucy, I hope you will be happily married, and forget this painful episode in your life. Not, my child, that we shall like to part with you: only--it will be for your own welfare and happiness."

Lucy pressed her slender white fingers upon her brow, and looked at her mother. There was a puzzled, doubting expression in her eyes that spoke of bewilderment.

"Mamma," she said slowly, "I think perhaps I did not understand you. I have parted with Mr. Andinnian, as you and papa wished, and as--as I suppose it was right I should do; I shall never, I hope, do anything against your will. But--to try to make me marry will be quite a different thing. Were you and papa to tell me that you insisted on it, I could only resist: And I should resist to the end."

Mrs. Cleeve saw that she had not been wise. To allude to any such future contingency when Lucy was smarting under the immediate pain of separation, was a mistake. Sighing gently, she sat down and took her daughter's hand, stroking it fondly.

"Lucy, my dear, I will relate to you a little matter of my own early experience," she began in a hushed tone. " *I* once had one of the affairs of the

heart, as they are called. The young man was just as attractive as Mr. Andinnian, and quite worthy. But circumstances were unfavourable, and we had to part. I thought that all worth living for in life was over. I said that I should never care for any one else, and never marry. Not so very long afterwards, Captain Cleeve presented himself. Before he said a word to me, Lucy, before I knew what he was thinking of, I had learnt to like and esteem him: and I became his wife."

"And did you love him?" questioned Lucy, in great surprise.

"Oh dear no. Not with the kind of love I had felt for another--the kind of love that I presume you are feeling for Mr. Andinnian. Such love never comes back to the heart a second time. But, Lucy, my married life has been perfectly successful and happy. Once that great passion is over, you see, the heart is at rest, calmness and reason have supervened. Rely upon it, my dear, your married life will be all the happier for this little experience connected with Mr. Andinnian."

Lucy said no more. *She* knew. And Mrs. Cleeve thought how dutiful her daughter was.

On the following day, a letter came to the Colonel from Karl. A well-written and sensible letter; not of rebellion, but of acquiescence. While it deplored his fate in separating from Lucy; it bowed to the necessity that enforced it. A note was enclosed for Lucy: it was unsealed, in case the Colonel should wish, to read before giving it to her. The Colonel did so: he did not fear treason from Karl, but it was as well to be on the safe side and assure himself there was none. It contained only a few words, rather more coherent than Karl's emotion of the previous day had allowed him to speak: and it bade her adieu for ever. Colonel Cleeve sent both notes to his daughter, and then lost himself in a reverie: from which he was aroused by the entrance of his wife.

"Lucinda, that is really a most superior young man: high-principled, true-hearted. A pity but he had rank and money."

"Who is a superior young man?" asked Mrs. Cleeve, not having the clue.

"Lieutenant Andinnian."

CHAPTER III.

Done at Sunset

The warm June sun rode gaily in the bright-blue skies, and the sweet June Roses were in bloom. Mrs. Andinnian, entirely unconscious of the blight that had fallen on her younger son, was placidly making the home happiness (as she believed) of the elder. Had she known of Karl's sorrow, she would have given to it but a passing thought.

There was peace in the home again. The vexation regarding their young lady-neighbour had long ago subsided in Mrs. Andinnian's mind. She had spoken seriously and sharply to Adam upon the point--which was an entirely new element in his experience; telling him how absurd and unsuitable it was, that he, one of England's future baronets, and three-and-thirty years of age already, should waste his hours in frivolous talk with a girl beneath him. Adam heard her in silence, smiling a little, and quite docile. He rejoined in a joking tone.

"All this means, I suppose, mother, that you would not tolerate Miss Turner as my wife?"

"Never, Adam, never. You would have to choose between myself and her. And I have been a loving mother to you."

"All right. Don't worry yourself. There's no cause for it."

From this time--the conversation was in April, at the close of Karl's short visit to them--the trouble ceased. Adam Andinnian either did not meet the girl so much: or else he timed his interviews more cautiously. In May Miss Turner went away on a visit: Adam seemed to have dismissed her from his mind: and Mrs. Andinnian forgot that she had ever been anxious.

Never a word of invitation had come from Sir Joseph. During this same month, May, Mrs. Andinnian, her patience worn out, had written to Foxwood, proffering a visit for herself and Adam. At the end of a fortnight's time, she

received an answer. A few words of shaky writing, in Sir Joseph's own hand. He had been very ill, he told her, which was the cause of the delay in replying, as he wished to write himself. Now he was somewhat better, and gaining strength. When able to entertain her and her son--which he hoped would be soon--he should send for them. It would give him great pleasure to receive them, and to make the acquaintance of his heir.

That letter had reached Mrs. Andinnian the first day of June. Some three week's had elapsed since, and no summons had come. She was growing just a little impatient again. Morning after morning, while she dressed, the question always crossed her mind: will there be a letter to-day from Foxwood? On this lovely June morning, with the scent of the midsummer flowers wafting in through the open chamber window, it filled her mind as usual.

They breakfasted early. Adam's active garden habits induced it. When Mrs. Andinnian descended, he was in the breakfast-room, scanning the pages of some new work on horticulture. He wore a tasty suit of grey, and looked well and handsome: unusually so in his mother's eyes, for he had only returned the past evening from a few days' roving absence.

"Good morning, Adam."

He advanced to kiss his mother: his even white teeth and his grey eyes as beautiful as they could well be. Mrs. Andinnian's fond and admiring heart leaped up with a bound.

"The nonsense people write whose knowledge is superficial!" he said, with a gay laugh. "I have detected half a dozen errors in this book already."

"No doubt. What book is it?"

He held it out to her, open at the title-page. "I bought it yesterday at a railway-stall."

"What a nice morning it is!" observed Mrs. Andinnian, as she was busy with the cups.

"Lovely. It is Midsummer Eve. I have been out at work these two hours."

"Adam, I think that must be the postman's step," she remarked presently. "Some one is going round to the door."

"From Karl, perhaps," he said with indifference, for he had plunged into his book again.

Hewitt came in; one letter only on the silver waiter. He presented it to his master. Adam, absorbed in his pages, took the letter and laid it on the table without looking up. Something very like a cry from his mother startled him. She had caught up the letter and was gazing at the address. For it was one that had never before been seen there.

"Sir Adam Andinnian, Bart."

"Oh my son! It has come at last."

" *What* has come?" cried he in surprise. "Oh, I see:--Sir Joseph must be dead. Poor old fellow! What a sad thing!"

But it was not exactly Sir Joseph's death that Mrs. Andinnian had been thinking of. The letter ran as follows:--

"FOXWOOD, *June 22nd*.

"DEAR SIR,-I am truly sorry to have to inform you of the death of my old friend and many years' patient, Sir Joseph Andinnian. He had been getting better slowly, but we thought surely; and his death at the last was sudden and quite unexpected. I have taken upon myself to give a few necessary orders in anticipation of your arrival here.

"I am, Sir Adam, very sincerely yours,

"WILLIAM MOORE.
Sir Adam Andinnian."

The breakfast went on nearly in silence. Mrs. Andinnian was deep in thoughts and plans. Sir Adam, poring over his book while he ate, did not seem to be at all impressed with the importance of having gained a title.

"When shall you start, Adam?"

"Start?" he returned, glancing up. "For Foxwood? Oh, in a day or two."

" *In a day or two!*" repeated his mother, with surprised emphasis. "Why, what do you mean?"

"Just that, mother."

"You should be off in half an hour. You must, Adam."

"Not I. There's no, need of hurry," he added, with careless good humour.

"But there is need of it," she answered.

"Why? Had Sir Joseph been dying and wished to see me, I'd not have lost a single moment: but it is nothing of the kind, poor man. He is dead, unfortunately: and therefore no cause for haste exists."

"Some one ought to be there."

"Not at all. The Mr. Moore who writes--some good old village doctor, I conclude--will see to things."

"But why should you not go at once, Adam?" she persisted. "What is preventing you?"

"Nothing prevents me. Except that I hate to be hurried off anywhere. And I--I only came back to the garden yesterday."

"The garden!--that's what it is," resentfully thought Mrs. Andinnian. He read on in silence.

"Adam, if you do not go, I shall."

"Do, mother," he said, readily. "Go, if you would like to, and take Hewitt. I hate details of all kinds, you know; and if you will go, and take them on

yourself, I shall be truly obliged. Write me word which day the funeral is fixed for, and I will come for it."

Perhaps in all her life Mrs. Andinnian had never resented anything in her favourite son as she was resenting this. *She* had looked forward to this accession of fortune with an eager anxiety which none could suspect: and now that it was come, he was treating it with this cool indifference! Many a time and oft had she indulged a vision of the day when she should drive in to take possession of Foxwood, her handsome son, the inheritor, seated beside her.

"One of my sons ought to be there," she said, coldly. "If you will not go, Adam, I shall telegraph to Karl."

"I will telegraph for you," he replied, with provoking good-humour. "Karl will be the very fellow: he has ten times the head for business that I have. Let him act for me in all things, exactly as though it were he who had succeeded: I give him carte blanche. It will save all trouble to you."

Sir Adam Andinnian declined to be shaken out of his resolve and his inertness. In what might be called a temper, Mrs. Andinnian departed straight from the breakfast-table for the railway-station, to take the train. Her son duly accompanied her to see her safely away: she had refused to take Hewitt: and then he despatched a telegram to Karl, telling him to join his mother at Foxwood. Meantime, while these, the lady and the message, went speeding on their respective ways, the new baronet beguiled away the day's passing hours amidst his flowers, and shot a few small birds that were interfering with some choice seedlings just springing up.

Lieutenant Andinnian received the message promptly. But, following the fashion much in vogue amidst telegraphic messages, it was not quite as clear as daylight. Karl read that Sir Joseph was dead, that his mother was either going or gone to Foxwood; that she was waiting for him, and he was to join her without delay. But whether he was to join her at her own home and accompany her to Foxwood, or whether he was to proceed direct to Foxwood, lay in profound obscurity. The fault was not in Sir Adam's wording; but in the telegraph people's carelessness.

"Now which is it that I am to do?" debated Karl, puzzling over the sprawling

words from divers points of view. They did not help him: and he decided to proceed *home*; he thought his mother must be waiting for him there. "It must be that," he said: "Adam has gone hastening on to Foxwood, and the mother is staying for me to accompany her. Poor Uncle Joseph! And to think that I never once saw him in life!"

Mr. Andinnian had no difficulty in obtaining leave of absence: and he started on his journey. He was somewhat changed. Though only a month had gone by since the severance from Lucy Cleeve, the anguish had told upon him. His brother officers, noting the sad abstraction he was often plunged in, the ultra-strict fulfilment of his duties, as if life were made up of parades and drill and all the rest of it, told him in joke that he was getting into a bad way. They knew naught of what had happened; of the fresh spring love that had made his heart and this earth alike a paradise, or of its abrupt ending. "My poor horse has had to be shot, you know"--which was a fact; "and I can't forget him," Mr. Andinnian one day replied, reciprocating the joke.

The shades of the midsummer night were gathering as Karl neared the house of his mother. He walked up from the terminus, choosing the field-path, and leaving his portmanteau to be sent after him. The glowing fires of the departed sun had left the west, but streaks of gold where he had set illumined the heavens. The air was still and soft, the night balmy; a few stars flickered in the calm blue firmament: the moon was well above the horizon. This pathway over the fields ran parallel with the high road. As Mr. Andinnian paced it, his umbrella in his hand, there suddenly broke upon his ears a kind of uproar, marring strangely the peaceful stillness of the night. Some stirring commotion, as of a mass of people, seemed to be approaching.

"What is it, I wonder?" he said to himself: and for a moment or two he halted and stared over the border of the field and through the intervening hedge beyond. By what his sight could make out, he thought some policemen were in front, walking with measured tread; behind came a confused mob, following close on their heels: but the view was too uncertain to show this distinctly.

"Some poor prisoner they are bringing in from the county," thought Mr. Andinnian, as the commotion passed on towards the town, and he continued his way.

"This is a true Midsummer Eve night," he said to himself, when the hum of

the noise and the tramping had died away, and he glanced at the weird shadows that stood out from hedges and trees. "Just the night for ghosts to come abroad, and---- Stay, though: it is not on Midsummer Eve that ghosts come, I think. What is the popular superstition for the night? Young girls go out and see the shadowy forms of their future husbands? Is that it? I don't remember. What matter if I did? Such romance has died out for me."

He drew near his home. On the left lay the cottage of Mr. Turner. Its inmates seemed to be unusually astir within it, for lights shone from nearly every window. A few yards further Karl turned into his mother's grounds by a private gate.

Their own house looked, on the contrary, all dark. Karl could not see that so much as the hall-lamp was lighted. A sudden conviction flashed over him that he was wrong, after all; that it was to Foxwood he ought to have gone.

"My mother and Adam and all the world are off to it, no doubt," he said as he looked up at the dark windows, after knocking at the door. "Deuce take the telegraph!"

The door was opened by Hewitt: Hewitt with a candle in his hand. That is, the door was drawn a few inches back, and the man's face appeared in the aperture. Karl was seized with a sudden panic: for he had never seen, in all his life, a face blanched as that was, or one so full of horror.

"What is the matter!" he involuntarily exclaimed, under his breath.

Ay, what was the matter? Hewitt, the faithful serving man of many years, threw up his hands when he saw Karl, and cried out aloud before he told it. His master, Sir Adam, had shot Martin Scott.

Karl Andinnian stood against the doorpost inside as he listened; stood like one bereft of motion. For a moment he could put no questions: but it crossed his mind that Hewitt must be mad and was telling some fable of an excited brain.

Not so. It was all too true. Adam Andinnian had deliberately shot the young medical student, Martin Scott. And Hewitt, poor Hewitt, had been a witness to the deed.

"Is he dead!" gasped Karl. And it was the first word he spoke.

"Stone dead, sir. The shot entered his heart. 'Twas done at sunset. He was carried into Mr. Turner's place, and is lying there."

A confused remembrance of the lights he had seen arose to Karl's agitated brain. He pressed his hand on his brow and stared at Hewitt For a moment or two, he thought he himself must be going mad.

"And where is he--my brother!"

"The police have taken him away, Mr. Karl. Two of them happened to be passing just at the time."

And Karl knew that the prisoner he had met in custody, with the guardians of the law around and the trailing mob, was his brother, Sir Adam Andinnian.

CHAPTER IV.

The Trial

The tidings of the unfortunate act committed by Adam Andinnian (most people said it must have been an accident) were bruited abroad far and wide. Circumstances conspired to give to it an unusual notoriety; and for more than the traditional nine days it remained a wonder in men's minds. Sir Adam's recent accession to the family honours; the utter want of adequate motive; the name of the young lady said to be mixed up with it: all this tended to arouse the public interest. That a gentleman of peaceful tendencies, an educated man and new baronet should take up his gun and shoot another in calm deliberation, was well nigh incredible. All kinds of reports, true and untrue, were floating. Public interest was not allowed to flag. Before a sufficient space of time had elapsed for that, the period of the trial came on.

Sir Adam Andinnian was not fated, as too many prisoners are, to languish out

months of suspense in prison. The calamity occurred towards the end of June; the assizes were held in July. Almost before his final examination by the magistrates had concluded, or the coroner's inquest (protracted after the fashion of inquests, but in this case without any sufficient reason) had returned its verdict, the summer assizes were upon the county. The magistrates had committed Sir Adam Andinnian to take his trial for wilful murder; the coroner's jury for manslaughter.

But now--what effect does the reader suppose this most awful blow must have had on Mrs. Andinnian? If any one ever deserved commiseration it was surely she. To every mother it would have been terrible; to her it was worse than terrible. She loved her son with the love only lavished on an idol; she had gone forth to his new inheritance in all the pride of her fond heart, counting every day, ay, and every hour, until he should gladden it with his presence. If any mortal man stood on a pinnacle just then above all his fellows in her estimation, that man was her handsome son, Sir Adam Andinnian. And oh! the desolation that fell upon her when the son for whom she cared not, Karl, arrived at Foxwood to break the news.

And Karl? Hardly less keen, if any, was the blow upon him. Until then, he did not know how very warm and true was his affection for his brother. Staggering back to the town the same night after his interview with Hewitt--and it seemed to Karl Andinnian that he did really stagger, under the weight of his affliction--he found the prisoner at the police station, and was allowed to see him. Adam did not appear to feel his position at all. Karl thought the passion--or whatever other ill feeling it might have been that prompted him
to the fatal deed--was swaying him still. He was perfectly calm and self-possessed, and sat quite at ease while the chief of the station took down sundry reports in writing from the policemen who brought in the prisoner.

"I have done nothing that I regret," he said to Karl. "The man has but got his deserts. I should do it again to-morrow under the same provocation."

"But, Adam, think of the consequences to yourself," gasped Karl, aghast with dismay at this dangerous admission in the hearing of the officers.

"Oh, as to consequences, I shall be quite ready to take *them*," returned the prisoner, drawing himself up haughtily. "I never yet did aught that I was ashamed to acknowledge afterwards."

The Inspector ceased writing for a moment and turned round. "Sir Adam Andinnian, I would advise you for your own sake to be silent. Least said is soonest mended, you know, sir. A good rule to remember in all cases."

"Very good indeed, Walls," readily assented Sir Adam--who had previously been on speaking terms with the Inspector. "But if you think I shall attempt to disown what I've done, you are mistaken."

"It must have been an accident," urged poor Karl in a low tone, almost as though he were suggesting it. "I told Hewitt so."

"Hewitt knows better: he saw me take up the gun, level it, and shoot him," was the reply of Sir Adam, asserted openly. "Look here, Wall. The fellow courted his fate; *courted* it. I had assured him that if he dared to offend in a certain way again, I would shoot him as I'd shoot a dog. He set me at defiance and did it. Upon that, I carried out my promise, and shot him. I could not break my word, you know."

Just then a doubt crossed the Inspector's mind--as he related afterwards--that Sir Adam Andinnian was not in his right senses.

"And the mother?" breathed Karl.

" *There's* the worst of it," returned Sir Adam, his tone quickly changing to grave concern. "For her sake, I could almost regret it. You must go off to Foxwood to-morrow, Karl, and break it to her."

What a task it was! Never in all Karl's life had one like unto it been imposed upon him. With the early morning he started for Foxwood: and it seemed to him that he would rather have started to his grave.

It was perhaps somewhat singular that during the short period of time intervening before the trial, Lieutenant Andinnian should have been gazetted to his company. It gave Karl no pleasure. The rise he had hoped for, that was to have brought him so much satisfaction, could now but be productive of pain. If the trial resulted in the awful sentence--Condemnation--Karl would not of course continue in the army. No, nor could he with any inferior result; save and except acquittal. Karl felt this. It was a matter that admitted of no alternative. To remain one amidst his fellow officers with his only brother disgraced and punished, was not to be thought of. And Karl would rather have remained the nameless

lieutenant than have been gazetted captain.

The truest sympathy was felt for him, the utmost consideration evinced. Leave of absence was accorded him at his request, until the result of the trial should be known. He wanted his liberty to stand by his brother, and to make efforts for the defence. Make efforts! When the accused persisted in openly avowing he was guilty, what efforts could be made with any hope of success?

One of the hottest days that July has ever given us was that of the trial. The county town was filled from end to end: thousands of curious people had thronged in, hoping to get a place in court; or, at least, to obtain a sight of the baronet-prisoner. It was reported that but for the earnest pleadings of his mother there would have been no trial--Sir Adam would have pleaded guilty. It was whispered that she, the hitherto proud, overbearing, self-contained woman, went down on her knees to entreat him not to bring upon his head the worst and most extreme sentence known to England's law--as the said pleading guilty would have brought--but to give himself a chance of a more lenient sentence: perhaps of an acquittal. It was said that Captain Andinnian would have taken his place in the dock to countenance and stand by his brother, but was not permitted.

The trial was unusually short for one involving murder, and unusually interesting. Immediately after the judge had taken his seat in the morning, the prisoner was brought in. The crowded court, who had just risen to do homage to the judge, rose again amidst stir and excitement. Strangers, straining their eager eyes, saw, perhaps with a momentary feeling of surprise, as grand a gentleman as any present. A tall, commanding, handsome man, with a frank expression of countenance when he smiled, but haughty in repose; his white teeth, that he showed so much, and his grey eyes beautiful. He wore deep mourning for his uncle, Sir Joseph; and bowed to the judge with as much stately ceremony as though he were bowing before the Queen. On one of his fingers flashed a ring of rare beauty: an opal set round with diamonds It had descended to him from his father. Captain Andinnian, in deep mourning also, sat at the table with the solicitors.

The chief witnesses, it may be said the only ones of consequence, were Thomas Hewitt the manservant, and Miss Rose Turner. A surgeon spoke to the cause of death--a shot through the heart--and a policeman or two gave some little evidence. Altogether not much. The story that came out to the world through the speeches of counsel, including those for the defence as well as for the

prosecution, may be summed up as follows:

Mr. Andinnian (now Sir Adam) had a great friendship for a young lady neighbour who lived close by, with whom he and his mother had been intimate, and for whose best interests he had a lively regard. This was a Miss Rose Turner: a young lady (the counsel emphatically said) worthy of every consideration, and against whom not a breath of slight had been, or could be whispered. Some few months ago Miss Turner was introduced at a friend's house to a medical student (the deceased) named Martin Scott. It had been ascertained, from inquiries set on foot since Martin Scott's death, that this man's private pursuits and character were not at all reputable: but that was of course (the counsel candidly added) no reason why he should have been killed. In spite of Miss Turner's strong objection, Martin Scott persisted in offering her his attentions; and two or three times, to the young lady's great disgust, he had forcibly kissed her. These facts became known to Mr. Andinnian: and he, being of a hasty, passionate nature, unfortunately took up the matter warmly. Indignant that the young lady should have been subjected to anything so degrading, he sought an interview with the offender, and told him that if ever he dared to repeat the insult to Miss Turner, he, Mr. Andinnian, would shoot him. It appeared, the counsel added, that Mr. Andinnian avowed this in unmistakable terms; that the unfortunate deceased fully understood him to mean it, and that Mr. Andinnian would certainly do what he said if provoked. Proof of which would be given. In spite of all this, Martin Scott braved his fate the instant he had an opportunity. On the fatal evening, June the twenty-third, Miss Turner having only just returned home from an absence of some weeks, Martin Scott made his appearance at her uncle's house, followed her into the garden, and there, within sight of Mr. Andinnian (or, rather, Sir Adam Andinnian, for he had then succeeded to his title, said the counsel, stopping to correct himself) he rudely took the young lady in his arms, and kissed her several times. Miss Turner, naturally startled and indignant, broke from him, and burst into a fit of hysterical sobs. Upon this, the prisoner caught up his loaded gun and shot him dead: the gun, unhappily, lying close to his hand, for he had been shooting birds during the day. Such was the substance of the story, as told to the court.

Thomas Hewitt, the faithful serving man, who deposed that he had lived in the Andinnian family for many years, and who could hardly speak for the grief within him, was examined. Alas! he was called for the prosecution: for all his evidence told against his master, not for him.

"That evening," he said, "about eight o'clock, or from that to half-past, I had occasion to see my master, Sir Adam, and went across the garden and beyond the shrubbery of trees to find him. He was standing by the gate that divides his grounds from Mr. Turner's; and all in the same moment, as I came in view, there seemed to be a scuffle going on in Mr. Turner's wide path by the rose bushes. Just at first I did not discern who was there, for the setting sun, then going below the horizon, shone in my face like a ball of fire. I soon saw it was Miss Turner and Martin Scott. Scott seemed to be holding her against her will. She broke away from him, crying and sobbing, and ran towards my master, as if wanting him to protect her."

"Well?--go on," cried the examining counsel, for the witness had stopped. "What did you see next?"

"Sir Adam caught up his gun from the garden seat close by, where it was lying, presented it at Martin Scott, and fired. The young man sprang up into the air a foot or two, and then fell. It all passed in a moment. I ran to assist him, and found he was dead. That is all I know."

But the witness was not to be released just yet, in spite of this intimation. "Wait a bit," said the counsel for the prosecution. "You saw the prisoner take up the gun, point it at the deceased and fire. Was all this done deliberately?"

"It was not done hurriedly, sir."

"Answer my question, witness. Was it *deliberately* done?"

"I think it was. His movements were slow. Perhaps," added poor Hewitt, willing to suggest a loophole of escape for his master, "perhaps Sir Adam had forgotten the gun was loaded, and only fired it off to frighten Scott. It was in the morning he had been shooting the birds: hours before; he could easily have forgotten that it was loaded. My master is not a cruel man, but a humane one."

"How came he to leave the gun out there for so many hours, if he had done with it?" asked the judge.

"I don't know, my lord. I suppose he forgot to bring it in when he came in to dinner. Sir Adam is naturally very careless indeed."

One of the jury spoke. "Witness, what was it that you wanted with your

master when you went out that evening?"

"A telegram had come for him, sir, and I went to take it to him."

"What did the telegram contain? Do you know?"

"I believe it came from Foxwood, sir."

"From Foxwood?"

"The telegram was from my mother, Mrs. Andinnian," spoke up the prisoner, in his rather loud, but perfectly calm voice, thereby electrifying the court. "It was to tell me she had arrived safely at Foxwood Court: and that the day for my uncle Sir Joseph's funeral was not then fixed."

The prisoner's solicitor, in a great commotion, leaned over and begged him in a whisper to be silent.

"Nay," said the prisoner aloud, "if any information that I can give is required, why should I be silent?" Surely there had never before been a prisoner like unto this one!

The next witness was Rose Turner. She was accompanied by her uncle and a solicitor; was dressed handsomely in black, and appeared to be in a state of extreme nervous agitation. Her face was ashy pale, her manner shrinkingly reluctant, and her voice was so low that its accents could not always be caught. In the simple matter of giving her name, she had to be asked it three times.

Her evidence told little more than had been told by the opening counsel.

Mr. Scott had persecuted her with his attentions, she said. He wanted her to promise to marry him when he should be established in practice, but she wholly refused, and she begged him to go about his business and leave her alone. He would not; and her aunt had rather encouraged Mr. Scott; they did not know what kind of private character he bore, but supposed of course it was good. Martin Scott had twice kissed her against her will, very much to her own annoyance; she had told Mr. Andinnian of it--who had always been very kind to her, quite like a protector. It made Mr. Andinnian very angry; and he had then threatened Martin Scott that if he ever again attempted to molest her, he would shoot him. She was sure that Martin Scott understood that Mr. Andinnian was

not joking, but meant to do what he said. So far, the witness spoke with tolerable readiness: but after this not a word would she say that was not drawn from her. Her answers were given shrinkingly, and some of them with evident reluctance.

"You went out on a visit in May: where was it to?" questioned the counsel.

"Birmingham."

"How long did you stay there?"

"I was away from home five weeks altogether."

"When did you return home?--You must speak a little louder, if you please."

"On the evening of the twenty-second of June."

"That was the day before the murder?"

"It was not a murder," returned the witness, with emotion. "Sir Adam Ardinnian was quite justified in what he did."

The judge interposed. "You are not here to state opinions, young lady, but to answer questions." The counsel resumed.

"Did the deceased, Martin Scott, come to your uncle's residence on the evening of the twenty-third?"

"Yes. My uncle was at home ill that evening, and he kept Mr. Scott in conversation, so that he had no opportunity of teasing me."

"You went later, into the garden?"

"Yes. Martin Scott must have seen me pass the window, for I found he was following me out. I saw Sir Adam standing at his gate, and went towards him."

"With what motive did you go?"

A pause. "I intended to tell him that Mr. Scott was there."

"Had you seen Sir Adam at all since the previous evening?"

Whether the young lady said Yes or No to this question could not be told. Her answer was inaudible.

"Now this won't do," cried the counsel, losing patience. "You must speak so that the jury can hear you, witness; and you must be good enough to lift your head. What have you to be ashamed of?"

At this sting, a bright flush dyed the young lady's pale cheeks: but she evidently did not think of resisting. Lifting her face, she spoke somewhat louder.

"I had seen Sir Adam in the morning when he was shooting the birds. I saw him again in the afternoon, and was talking with him for a few minutes. Not for long: some friends called on my aunt, and she sent for me in."

"Was anything said about Martin Scott that day, between you and Sir Adam?"

"Not a word. We did not so much as think of him."

"Why, then, were you hastening in the evening to tell Sir Adam that Scott was there?"

The witness hesitated and burst into tears. Her answer was impeded by sobs.

"Of course it was a dreadful thing for me to do--as things have turned out. I had no ill thought in it. I was only going to tell him that Scott had come and was sitting with my uncle. There was nothing in that to make Sir Adam angry."

"You have not replied to my question. *Why* did you hasten to tell Sir Adam?"

"There was no very particular cause. Before I left home in May, I had hoped Mr. Scott had ceased his visits: when I found, by his coming this evening, that he had not, I thought I would tell Sir Adam. We both disliked Martin Scott from his rudeness to me. I began to feel afraid of him again."

"Afraid of what?"

"Lest he should be rude to me as he had been before."

"Allow me to ask--in a case of this sort, would it not have been your uncle's place to deal with Mr. Scott, rather than Sir Adam Andinnian's?"

The witness bent her head, and sobbed. While the prisoner, without affording her time for any answer, again spoke up.

"When Martin Scott insulted Miss Turner before, I had particularly requested her to inform me at once if he ever attempted such a thing again. I also requested her to let me know of it if he resumed his visits at her uncle's house. I wished to protect Miss Turner as efficiently as I would have protected a sister."

The prisoner was ordered to be silent. Miss Turner's examination went on.

"You went out on this evening to speak to the prisoner, and Martin Scott followed you. What next?"

"Martin Scott caught me up when I was close to the bed of rose bushes: that is, about half way between the house and the gate where Sir Adam was standing. He began reproaching me; saying I had not given him a word of welcome after my long absence, and did I think he was going to stand it. Before--before--"

"Before what? Why do you hesitate?"

The witness's tears burst forth afresh: her voice was pitiable in its distress. A thrill of sympathy moved the whole court; not one in it but felt for her.

"Before I was aware, Martin Scott had caught me in his arms, and was kissing my face. I struggled to get away from him, and ran towards Sir Adam Andinnian for shelter. It was then he took up his gun."

"What did Sir Adam say?"

"Nothing. He put me behind him with one hand, and fired. I recollect seeing Hewitt standing beside me then, and for a few moments I recollected no more. At first I did not know any harm was done: only when I saw Hewitt kneeling down in the path over Martin Scott."

"What did the prisoner do, then?"

"He put the gun back on the seat again, quite quietly, and walked down the path towards where they were. My uncle and aunt came running out, and--and that ended it."

With a burst of grief that threatened to become hysterical, she covered her face. Perhaps in compassion, only two or three further questions of unimportance were asked her. She had told all she knew of the calamity, she said; and was allowed to retire: leaving the audience most favourably impressed with the pretty looks, the innocence, and the modesty of Miss Rose Turner.

A young man named Wharton was called; an assistant to a chemist, and a friend of the late Martin Scott. He deposed to hearing Scott speak in the spring--he thought it was towards the end of April--of Mr. Andinnian's threat to shoot him. The witness added that he was sure Martin Scott took the threat as a serious one and knew that Mr. Andinnian meant it as such; though it was possible that with the lapse of weeks the impression might have worn away in Scott's mind. He was the last witness called on either side; and the two leading counsel then addressed the jury.

The judge summed up carefully and dispassionately, but not favourably. As many said afterwards, he was "dead against the prisoner." The jury remained in deliberation fifteen minutes only, and then came back with their verdict.

Wilful murder: but with a very strong recommendation to mercy.

The judge then asked The prisoner if he had anything to urge against the sentence of Death that was about to be passed upon him.

Nothing but this, the prisoner replied, speaking courteously and quietly. That he believed he had done only his duty: and that Martin Scott had deliberately and defiantly rushed upon his own fate; and that if young, innocent, and refined ladies were to be insulted by reprobate men with impunity, the sooner the country went back to a state of barbarism the better. To this the judge replied, that if for trifling causes men might with impunity murder others in cold blood, the country would already be in a state of barbarism, without going back to it.

But the trial was not to conclude without one startling element of sensation. The judge had put the black cap on his head, when a tall, proud-looking, handsome lady stepped forward and demanded to say a word in stay of the sentence. It was Mrs. Andinnian. Waving the ushers away who would have removed her, she was, perhaps in very astonishment, allowed to speak.

Her son had inherited an uncontrollable temper, she said; *her* temper. If anything occurred greatly to exasperate him (but this was very rare) his

transitory passion was akin to madness: In fact it was madness for the short time it lasted, which was never more than for a few moments. To punish him by death for any act committed by him during this irresponsible time would be, she urged, murder. Murder upon him.

Only these few words did she speak. Not passionately; calmly and respectfully; and with her dark eyes fixed--on the judge. She then bowed to the judge and retired. The judge inclined his head gravely to her in return, and proceeded with his sentence.

Death. But the strong recommendation of the jury should be forwarded to the proper quarter.

The judge, as was learnt later, seconded this recommendation warmly: in fact, the words he used in passing sentence as good as conveyed an intimation that there might be no execution.

Thus ended the famous trial. Within a week afterwards the fiat was known: and the sentence was commuted into penal servitude for life!

Penal servitude for life! Think of the awful blight to a man in the flower of his age and in the position of Adam Andinnian! And all through one moment's mad act!

CHAPTER V.

Unable to get strong

In an invalid's chair by the side of a fire, at midday, reclined Lucy Cleeve. Her face was delicate and thin; her sweet brown eyes had almost an anxious look in them; the white wrapper she wore was not whiter than her cheeks. Mrs. Cleeve was in the opposite chair reading. At the window sat Miss Blake, working some

colours of bright silks on a white satin ground.

As Mrs. Cleeve turned the page, she chanced to look up, and saw in her daughter a symptom of shivering.

"Lucy! My darling, surely you are not shivering again!"

"N--o, I think not," was the hesitating answer. "The fire is getting dull, mamma."

Mrs. Cleeve stirred the fire into brightness, and then brought a warm shawl of chenille silk, and folded it over Lucy's shoulders. And yet the August sun was shining on the world, and the blue skies were dark with heat.

The cruel pain that the separation from Karl Andinnian had brought to Lucy, was worse than any one thought for. She was perfectly silent over it, bearing all patiently, and so gave no sign of the desolation within. Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve said in private how reasonable Lucy was, and how well she was forgetting the young man. Miss Blake felt sure that she had never really cared for him: that the love had been all child's play. All through the month of June Lucy had gone about wherever they chose to take her: to flower-shows, and promenades, and dances, and picnics. She talked and laughed in society as others did; and no mortal wizard or witch could have divined she was suffering from the effects of a love-fever, that had been too rudely checked.

Very shortly she was to suffer from a different fever: one that sometimes proves to be just as difficult of cure. In spite of the gaiety and the going-out, Lucy seemed to be somewhat ailing: her appetite failed, and she grew to feel tired at nothing. In July these symptoms had increased, and she was palpably ill. The medical man called in, pronounced Miss Cleeve to be suffering from a slight fever, combined with threatenings of ague. The slight fever grew into a greater one, and then became intermittent. Intervals of shivering coldness would be succeeded by intervals of burning heat; and they in their turn by intense prostration. The doctor said Miss Cleeve must have taken cold; probably, he thought, had sat on damp grass at some picnic. Lucy was very obedient. She lay in bed when they told her to lie, and got up when they told her to get up, and took all the medicine ordered without a word, and tried to take the food. The doctor, at length, with much self-gratulation, declared the fever at an end; and that Miss Cleeve might come out of her bedroom for some hours in the day.

Miss Cleeve did so come: but somehow she did not gain strength, or improve as she ought to have done. Seasons of chilling coldness would be upon her still, the white cheeks would sometimes be bright with a very suspicious-looking dash of hectic. It would take time to re-establish her, said the doctor with a sigh: and that was the best he could make of it.

Whether Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve would have chosen to speak much before their daughter of the lover she had been obliged to resign, cannot be said. Most probably not. But circumstances over which they had no control led to its being done. When, towards the close of June, the news of that strange tragedy enacted by Adam Andinnian broke upon the world, all the world was full of it. Not a visitor, calling to see them, but went over the marvellous wonders of the tale in Lucy's hearing, and, as it seemed to her, for her own special benefit. The entirely unprovoked (as was at first said and supposed) nature of the crime; the singular fact that it should have been committed the very day of his assuming his rank amidst the baronetage of the kingdom; the departure of Mrs. Andinnian on the journey that he ought to have taken, and the miserable thought, so full of poignancy to the Andinnian family, that if *he* had gone, the calamity could not have happened; the summons to the young lieutenant at Winchester, his difficulty with the telegram, and his arrival at night to find what had happened at the desolate house! All these facts, and very many more details, some true, some untrue, were brought before Lucy day after day. To escape them was impossible, unless she had shut herself up from society, for men and women's mouths were full of them; and none had the least suspicion that the name of Andinnian was more than any other name to Lucy Cleeve. It was subsequent to this, you of course understand, that she became ill. During this period, she was only somewhat ailing, and was going about just as other people went.

The subject--it has been already said--did not die out quickly. Before it was allowed to do so, there came the trial; and *that* and its proceedings kept it alive for many a day more. But that the matter altogether bore an unusual interest, and that a great deal of what is called romance, by which public imagination is fed, encompassed it, was undeniable. The step in rank attained by Lieutenant Andinnian, his captaincy, was dismissed and re-discussed as though no man had ever taken it before. So that, long ere the period now arrived at, August, Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve talked of the Andinnian affairs before their daughter with as little thought of reticence as they would have given to the most common questions of everyday life, and perhaps had nearly forgotten that there had ever been a cause why they should observe it.

A word of Miss Blake. That the perfidy--she looked upon it as such--of Lieutenant Andinnian in regard to herself, was a very bitter blow and tried her heart nearly as the separation was trying Lucy's, may at once be admitted. Nothing, in the world or out of it, would have persuaded her that the young man did not at an early period love her, that he would have ultimately married her but for the stepping in between them of Lucy Cleeve: and there lay a very angry and bitter feeling against Lucy at the bottom of her heart. Not against Mr. Andinnian. The first shock over, she quite exonerated him, and threw all the weight of blame on Lucy. Is it not ever so--that woman, in a case of rivalry such as this, detests and misjudges the woman, and exempts the man?

But Miss Blake had a very strict conscience. In one of more gentle and tender nature, this would have been an admirable thing; in her, whose nature was exceptionally hard, it might cause her to grow into something undesirably stern. There was a chance for her yet. Underlying her every thought, word, action, her witty sallies in
the ball-room, her prayers in church, remained ever the one faint hope--that Karl Andinnian would recover his senses and return to his first allegiance. If this ever came to pass, and she became Mrs. Andinnian, the little kindness existing in Theresa Blake's nature would assert itself. For, though she was very just, or strove to be, she was not kind.

With this strict conscience, Miss Blake could not encourage her
ill-feeling towards Lucy. On the contrary, she put it resolutely from her, and strove to go on her way in a duteous course of life and take up her own sorrow as a kind of appointed cross. All very well, this, so far as it went: but there was one dreadful want ever making itself heard--the want to fill the aching void in her lonely heart. After a disappointment to the affections, all women feel this need; and none unless they have felt it, can know or imagine the intense need of it. When the heart has been filled to the uttermost with a beloved object, every hour of the day gladdened with his sight, every dream of the night rejoicing with the thought of the morning's renewed meeting, and he is compulsorily snatched away for ever, the awful blank left is almost worse than death. Every aim and end and hope in life seems to have died suddenly out, leaving only a vacuum: a vacuum that tells of nothing but pain. But for finding some object which the mind can take up and concentrate itself upon, there are women who could go mad. Miss Blake found hers in religion.

Close upon that night when you saw Mr. Andinnian and Lucy Cleeve pacing

together the garden of the Reverend Mr. Blake's rectory, Mr. Blake was seized with a fit. The attack was not in itself very formidable, but it bore threatening symptoms for the future. Perfect rest was enjoined by his medical attendants, together with absence from the scene of his labours. As soon, therefore, as he could be moved, Mr. Blake departed; leaving his church in the charge of his many-years curate, and of a younger man who was hastily engaged to assist him. This last was a stranger in the place, the Reverend Guy Cattacomb. Now, singular to say, but it was the fact, immediately after Mr. Blake's departure, the old curate was incapacitated by an attack of very serious illness, and he also had to go away for rest and change. This left the church wholly in the hands of the new man, Mr. Cattacomb. And this most zealous but rather mistaken divine, at once set about introducing various changes in the service; asking nobody's permission, or saying with your leave, or by your leave.

The service had hitherto been conducted reverently, plainly, and with thorough efficiency. The singing was good; the singers--men and boys--wore white surplices: in short, all things were done decently and in order: and both Mr. Blake and his curate were excellent preachers. To the exceeding astonishment of the congregation, Mr. Cattacomb swooped down upon them the very first Sunday he was left to himself, with what they were pleased to term "vagaries." Vagaries they undoubtedly were, and not only needless ones, but such as were calculated to bring a wholesome and sound Protestant church into disrepute. The congregation remonstrated, but the Reverend Guy persisted. The power for the time being, lay in his hands, and he used it after his own heart.

"Man, proud man, dressed in a little brief authority,
Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven as make the angels weep."

How applicable are those lines of Shakespeare's to some of the overzealous young divines of the present day!

The progress of events in Mr. Blake's church need not be traced. It is enough to say that the Reverend Mr. Cattacomb--whose preaching was no better than the rest of him: a quarter of an hour's rant, of which nobody could make any sense at all--emptied the church. Nearly all the old congregation left it. In their places a sprinkling of young people began to frequent it. We have had examples of these

things. The Reverend Guy led, and his flock (almost the whole of them ardent young girls of no experience) followed. There were banners and processions, and images of saints and angels, and candlesticks and scrolls and artificial flowers, and thrown-up incense, and soft mutterings coming from nowhere, and all kinds of odd services at all kinds of hours,
and risings-up and sittings-down, and bowings here and bowings there, and private confessions and public absolutions. Whether the worship, or, in fact, the church itself was meant to represent the Roman Catholic faith or the Protestant no living soul could tell. It was ultra-foolish--that is really the only name for it--and created some scandal. People took to speak of its frequenters slightingly and disrespectfully as "Mr. Cattacomb and his tail." The tail being the ardent young ladies who were never away from his heels.

Never a one amidst them more ardent than Miss Blake. In the Rev. Guy and his ceremonies she found that outlet for the superfluous resources of her heart that Karl Andinnian had left so vacant. Ten times a day, if the church had ten services, or scraps of services, was Miss Blake to be seen amid the knot of worshippers. At early morning she went to Matins; at sunset she went to Vespers. Once a week she was penned up in a close box which the Reverend Guy had put up as a confessional, confessing her sins. Some ladies chose the Reverend Mr. Cattacomb as their father priest in this respect; some chose his friend and coadjutor the Reverend Damon Puff: a very zealous young man also, whom the former had appointed to his assistance. One confessional box was soon found quite insufficient, and a second was introduced. Lookers-on began to wonder what would come next. Miss Blake did not neglect the claims of society in her new call to devotion; so that, what with the world and what with the church, she had but little spare time on her hands. It was somewhat unusual to see her, as now, seated quietly at her needle. The work was some beauteous silken embroidery, destined to cover a cushion for Mr. Cattacomb's reverend knees to rest upon when at his private devotions. The needle came to a sudden pause.

"I wonder if I am wrong," she exclaimed, after regarding attentively the leaf that had been growing under her hands. "Mrs. Cleeve, do you think the leaves to this rose should be *brown?* I fancy they ought to be green."

"Do not ask me anything about it, Theresa."

Mrs. Cleeve's answer wore rather a resentful accent. The fact was, both herself

and Colonel Cleeve were sadly vexed at Miss Blake's wholesale goings in for the comprehensive proceedings of Mr. Cattacomb. They had resigned their pew in the church themselves, and now walked regularly to the beautiful services in the cathedral. Colonel Cleeve remonstrated with Miss Blake for what he called her folly. He told her that she was making herself ridiculous; and that these ultra innovations could but tend to bring religion itself into disrepute. It will therefore be understood that Mrs. Cleeve, knowing what the embroidery was destined for, did not regard it with approbation.

"Theresa, if I thought my dear child, here, Lucy, would ever make the spectacle of herself that you and those other girls are doing, I should weep with sorrow and shame."

"Well I'm sure!" cried Miss Blake. "Spectacle!"

"What else is it To see a parcel of brainless girls running after Guy Cattacomb and that other one--Puff? Their mothers ought to know better than to allow it. God's pure and reverent and holy worship is one thing; this is quite another."

Lucy asked for some of the cooling beverage that stood near: her mouth felt always parched. As her mother brought it to her, Lucy pressed her hand and looked up in her face with a smile. Mrs. Cleeve knew that it was as much as to say "There is no fear of *me*."

Colonel Cleeve came in as the glass was being put down. He looked somewhat anxiously at his daughter: he was beginning to be uneasy that she did not gain strength more quickly.

"How do you feel now, my dear?"

"Only a little cold, papa."

"Dear me--and it is a very hot day!" remarked the colonel, wiping his brows, for he had been walking fast.

"Is there any news stirring in the town?" asked Mrs. Cleeve.

"Nothing particular. Captain Andinnian has sold out. He could not do anything else under the circumstances."

"It is a dreadful blight upon the young man's career!" said Mrs. Cleeve.

"There was no help for it, Lucinda. Had he been a general he must have done the same. A man who has a brother working in chains, cannot remain an officer in the Queen's service. Had the brother been hanged, I think the Commander-in-chief would have been justified in cashiering Captain Andinnian, if he had not taken the initiative," added the colonel, who was very jealous of his order.

Miss Blake turned with a flush of emotion. This news fell on her heart like lead. Her first thought when the colonel spoke had been--If he has left the army, there will be nothing to bring him again to Winchester.

"Captain Andinnian cannot be held responsible for what his brother did," she said.

"Of course not," admitted the colonel.

"Neither ought it to be visited upon him."

"The worst of these sad things, you see, Theresa, is, that they *are* visited upon the relatives: and there's no preventing it. Captain Andinnian must go through life henceforth as a marked man; in a degree as a banned one: liable to be pointed at by every stranger as a man who has a brother a convict."

There was a pause. The last word grated on their ears. Miss
Blake inwardly winced at it: should she become the wife of Karl Andinnian----

"Will Sir Adam be sent to Australia?" asked Mrs. Cleeve of her husband, interrupting Theresa's thoughts.

"No. To Portland Island. It is said he is already there."

"I wonder what will become of his money? His estate, and that?"

"Report runs that he made it all over to his mother before the trial. I don't know how far that may be true. Well, it is a thousand pities for Captain Andinnian," summed up the colonel: "he was a very nice young fellow."

They might have thought Lucy, sitting there, her face covered by her hand, was asleep, so still was she. Presently, Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve were called

away to receive some visitors; and Miss Blake began folding her silks and white satin in tissue paper, for the hour of some service or other was at hand. Halting for a moment at the fire to shake the ends of silk from her gown into the hearth, she glanced at Lucy.

"Suppose you had been married to Karl Andinnian, Lucy!"

"Well?"

"What an awful fate it would have been for you!"

"I should only have clung to him the closer, Theresa," was the low answer. And it must be premised that neither Lucy nor any one else had the slightest notion of Miss Blake's regard for Karl.

Miss Blake glanced at her watch. She had two minutes yet. She turned and stood before Lucy. In her unselfish judgment--and she did try to judge unselfishly always--a union with Captain Andinnian now, though she herself might stoop to put up with it in her great love, would be utterly beneath Lucy Cleeve.

"You--you do not mean to imply that you would marry Captain Andinnian, as things are?"

"I would. My father and mother permitting."

"You unhappy girl! Where's your pride?"

"I did not say I was going to do it, Theresa. You put an imaginary proposition; one that is altogether impossible, and I replied to *that*. I do not expect ever to see Karl Andinnian again in this world."

Something in the despairing accent touched Miss Blake, in spite of her wild jealousy. "You seem very poorly to-day, Lucy," she gently said. "Are you in pain?"

"No," replied Lucy, with a sigh: "not in pain. But I don't seem to get much better, do I, Theresa? I wish I could, for papa and mamma's sake."

CHAPTER VI.

An Atmosphere of Mystery

It seemed to Mrs. Andinnian and to her son, Karl, that trouble like unto theirs had never yet fallen upon man. Loving Adam as they did, for his sake it was more than they knew how to bear. The disgrace and blight to themselves were terrible; to Karl especially, who was, so to say, only entering on life. There are some calamities that can never be righted in this world; scarcely softened. This was one. Calamities when we can only *bear*, bear always here; when nothing is left us but to look forward to, and live on for, the next world, where no pain will be. In Karl's mind this was ever present.

The bare fact of the selling-out was to Karl Andinnian a bitter blow. He was attached to his profession: and he had been looking forward to finding, in the active discharge of its duties, a relief from the blank left by the loss of Lucy Cleeve. Now he must be thrown utterly upon himself; an idle man. Everyone was very kind to him; from the Commander-in-chief, with whom he had an interview, downwards evincing for him the truest respect and sympathy: but not one of them said, "Won't you reconsider your determination and remain with us?" His Royal Highness civilly expressed regret at the loss Her Majesty would sustain in so good a servant; but he took the withdrawal as a matter that admitted of no question. There could be none. Captain Andinnian's only brother, escaping the gallows by an accorded favour, was working in chains on Portland Island: clearly the captain, brave and unsullied man though he individually was, could but hasten to hide his head in private life.

It was a happy thing for Karl that he had plenty of business on his hands just now. It saved him in a degree from thought. Besides his own matters, there were many things to see to for his mother. The house in Northamptonshire was given up, its furniture sold, its household, except Hewitt, discharged. Karl was on the spot and saw to it all. Whilst there, he had rather a struggle with himself. His natural kindliness of feeling prompted him to call and see Miss Turner:

personally he shrunk from it, for he could not forget that it was through her all the misery had happened. He did violence to his inclination, and called. The young lady seemed to be in very depressed spirits, and said but little. The event seemed to have tried her much, and she was pale and thin. During the interval that had elapsed since the trial, her uncle, to whom she was much attached, had died. She told Karl that her aunt, Mrs. Turner, intended to remove at once to her native place, a remote district of Cumberland: Rose supposed she should have to remove with her. Mr. Turner had left a very fair amount of property. His wife was to receive the interest of it for her life; at her death the whole of it would come to Rose. As Karl shook hands with her on leaving, and wished her well, something he said was taken by her as alluding to the unhappy tragedy, though he had intended nothing of the sort. It had a strange effect upon her. She rose from her seat, her hands trembling; her face became burning red, then changed to a ghastly whiteness. "Don't speak of it, Captain Andinnian," she exclaimed in a voice of horror; "don't hint at it, unless you would see me go mad. There are times when I think that madness will be my ending." Again wishing her well; he took his departure. It was rather unlikely, he thought, that their paths would cross each other again in life.

Hewitt was sent to Foxwood. It would probably be made the future home of Mrs. Andinnian and her younger son; but at present they had not gone there. For some little time, while Karl was busy in London, Northamptonshire, or elsewhere, he had lost sight of his mother. She quitted the temporary home she occupied, and, so to say, disappeared. While he was wondering what this meant, and where she could be; he received a letter from her dated Weymouth. She told him she had taken up her abode there for the present, and she charged him not to disclose this to any one, or to let her address be known. Just for a moment, Karl was puzzled to imagine what her motive could be in going to a place that she knew nothing of. All at once the truth flashed upon him--she would be as near as possible to that cruel prison that contained her ill-fated son.

It was even so. Adam Andinnian was on Portland Island; and his mother had taken up her residence at Weymouth to be near him. Karl, who knew not the place, or the rules observed, wondered whether a spectator might stroll about on the (so-called) island at will, or ever get a chance glimpse of the gangs at their labour.

In the month of October, Captain Andinnian--to call him by this title for a short while longer--went to Weymouth. He found his mother established in a

small, mean, ready-furnished house in an obscure part of the town. It was necessary for him to see her on matters connected with the Foxwood estate, of which he had now the management; but she had charged him to come to her in as private a manner as he well could, and not to make himself or his name known at the station or elsewhere, unless under necessity. "She is right," thought Karl; "the name of Andinnian is notorious now." That was true; and he did not suppose she had any other motive for the injunction.

"But, my dear mother, why are you *here?*" he asked within five minutes of his entrance, as he looked at the confined walls of the mean abode. "You might at least have been more comfortably and suitably lodged."

"What I choose to do, I do," she answered, in the distant tones of former days. "It is not for you to question me."

Mrs. Andinnian was altered. Mental suffering had told upon her. The once fresh hues of her complexion had given place to a fixed pallor; the large dark eyes had acquired a fierce and yet restless look. In manner alone was she unaltered, at least to Karl: and as to her pride, it seemed to be more dominant than ever.

"I was only thinking of your comfort, mother," he replied to her fierce rejoinder. "This is so different from what you have been accustomed to."

"Circumstances are different," she said curtly.

"Have you but one servant in the whole house? For everything?"

"She is enough for me: she is a faithful woman. I tell you that circumstances are not what they were."

" *Some* are not--unhappily," he answered. "But others, pecuniary ones, have changed the other way. You are rich now."

"And do you think I would touch a stiver of the riches that are my dear Adam's?" she retorted, her eyes blazing. "Save what may be necessary to keep up Foxwood, and to--to-- No," she resumed, after the abrupt breaking off, "I hoard them for him."

Karl wondered whether trouble had a little touched her brain. Poor Adam

could have no further use for riches in this world. Unless, indeed, in years to come, he should obtain what was called a ticket of leave. But Karl fancied that in a case like Adam's--Condemnation commuted--it was never given.

Mrs. Andinnian began asking the details of the giving-up of her former home. In answering, Karl happened to mention incidentally the death of their neighbour, Mr. Turner, and his own interview with Rose. The latter's name excited Mrs. Andinnian beyond all precedent: it brought on one of those frightful fits of passion that Karl had not seen of late years.

"I loathe her," she wildly said. "But for her wicked machinations, my darling son had not fallen into this dreadful fate that is worse than death. May my worst curses light upon the head of Rose Turner!"

Karl did what he could to soothe the storm he had unwittingly evoked. He told his mother that she would never, in all probability, be grieved with the sight of the girl again, for she was removing to the out-of-the-world district of Cumberland.

The one servant, alluded to by Karl, was a silent-mannered, capable woman of some forty years. Her mistress called her "Ann," but Karl found she was a Mrs. Hopley, a married woman. That she appeared to be really attached to her mistress, to sympathise with her in her great misfortune, and to be solicitous to render her every little service that could soothe her, Captain Andinnian saw and felt grateful for.

"Where is your husband?" he one day inquired.

"Hopley's out getting his living, sir," was the answer. "We have had misfortunes, sir: and when they come to people such as us, we must do the best we can to meet them. Hopley's working on his side, and me on mine."

"He is not in Weymouth then?"

"No, he is not in Weymouth. We are not Weymouth people, sir. I don't know much about the place. I never lived at it till I came to Mrs. Andinnian."

By this, Karl presumed that his mother had brought Mrs. Hopley with her when she came herself: but he asked no further. It somewhat explained what he had rather wondered at--that his mother, usually so reticent, and more than ever

so now, should have disclosed their great calamity to this woman. He thought the servant must have been already cognisant of it.

"What misfortune was it of your own that you allude to?" he gently asked.

"It was connected with our son, sir. I and my husband never had but him. He turned out wild. While he was quite a lad, so to say, he ruined us, and we had to break up the home."

"And where is he now?"

She put her check apron before her face to hide her emotion. "He is dead," was the low answer. "He died a dreadful death, sir, and I can't yet bear to talk of it. It's hardly three months ago."

Karl looked at the black ribbon in her cap, at the neat
black-and-white print gown she did her work in: and his heart went out to the woman's sorrow. He understood better now--she and her mistress had a grief in common. Later, he heard somewhat more of the particulars. Young Hopley, after bringing his parents to beggary, had plunged into crime; and then, to avoid being taken, had destroyed himself.

But, as the days went on, Karl Andinnian could not help remarking that there was an atmosphere of strangeness pervading the house: he could almost have said of mystery. Frequently were mistress and maid closeted together in close conference; the door locked upon them, the conversation carried on in whispers. Twice he saw Ann Hopley go out so be-cloaked and be-large-bonneted that it almost looked as though she were dressed for disguise. Karl thought it very strange.

One evening, when he was reading to his mother by candle-light, the front door was softly knocked at, and some one was admitted to the kitchen. In the small house, all sounds were plainly heard. A minute or two elapsed, and then Ann came in to say a visitor wished to speak to her mistress. While Karl was wondering at this--for his mother was entirely unknown in the place--Mrs. Andinnian rose without the least surprise, looked at her son, and hesitated.

"Will you step into another room, Karl' My interview must be private."

So! she had expected this visit. Captain Andinnian went into his

bedroom. He saw--for his curiosity was excited, and he did not quite close the door--a tall, big, burly man, much wrapped up, and who kept his hat on, walk up the passage to the sitting-zoom, lighted thither by Ann. It seemed to the captain as though the visitor wished his face not to be looked at. The interview lasted about twenty minutes. Ann then showed the man out again, and Karl returned to the parlour.

"Who was it, mother?"

"A person to see me on private business," replied Mrs. Andinnian, in a voice that effectually checked further inquiries.

The days passed monotonously. Mrs. Andinnian was generally buried in her own thoughts, scarcely ever speaking to him; and when she did speak, it was in a cold or snappish manner. "If she would but make a true son of me, and give me her confidence!" Karl often thought. But, to do anything of the kind was evidently not the purport of Mrs. Andinnian.

He one day went over to Portland Island. The wish to make the pilgrimage, and see what the place was like, had been in his mind from the first: but, in the midst of the wish, a dreadful distaste to it drew him back, and he had let the time elapse without going. October was in its third week, and the days were getting wintry.

It is a dreary spot--and it struck with a strange dreariness on Captain Andinnian's spirit. Storms, that seemed to fall lightly on other places, rage out their fury there. Half a gale was blowing that day, and he seemed to feel its roughness to the depth of his heart. The prospect around, with its heaving sea, romantic enough at some times, was all too wild to-day; the Race of Portland, that turbulent place which cannot be crossed by vessel, gave him a fit of the shivers. As to the few houses he saw, they were as poor as the one inhabited by his mother.

In one of the quarries, amidst its great masses of stone, Captain Andinnian halted, his eyes fixed on the foaming sea, his thoughts most bitter. Within a few yards of him, so to say, worked his unfortunate brother; chained, a felon; all his hopes in this world blighted; all his comforts in life gone out for ever. Karl himself was peculiarly susceptible to physical discomfort, as sensitive-natured men are apt to be; and he never thought without a shudder of what Adam had to

undergo in this respect.

"Subjected to endless toil; to cruel deprivation; to isolation from all his kind!" groaned Karl aloud to the wild winds. "Oh, my brother, if----"

His voice died away in very astonishment. Emerging from behind one of the blocks, at right angles with him, but not very near, came two people walking side by side, evidently conversing in close whispers. In the cloaked-up woman, with the large black bonnet and black crape veil over her face, Karl was sure he saw their servant, Ann Hopley. The other must be, he thought, one of the warders: and, unless Karl was greatly mistaken, he recognised in his strong, burly frame the same man who had come a night or two before to his mother's house. They passed on without seeing him, but he saw the man's face distinctly.

A light dawned on his mind. His mother was striving to make a friend of this warder, with a view to conveying messages, perhaps also, it might be, physical comforts, to Adam: yes, that was undoubtedly the solution of the mystery. But why need she have hidden it from him, Karl?

When he got home that night--for he stayed out until he was tired and weary--Ann Hopley, in her usual home attire, was putting the tea-tray on the table.

"I fancied I saw Ann out to-day," he observed to his mother, when they were alone.

"She went out on an errand for me," replied Mrs. Andinnian.

"I have been over to the Island," continued Karl. "It was there I thought I saw her."

Mrs. Andinnian was pouring some cream into the tea-cups when he spoke. She put down the small frail glass jug with a force that smashed it, and the cream ran over the tea-board.

"You have been to the Island!" she cried in a voice that betrayed some dreadful terror. "To the *Island?*"

Karl was rising to see what he could do towards repairing the mishap. The words arrested him. He had again been so unlucky as to raise one of her storms of passion: but this time he could see no reason in her anger: neither did he quite

understand what excited it.

"To-day is the first time I have been to the Island, mother. I could not summon up the heart before."

"How *dared* you go?"

"I am thinking of going again," he answered, believing her question to relate to physical bravery. "And of getting--if it be possible to obtain--permission to see *him*."

The livid colour spreading itself over Mrs. Andinnian's face grew more livid. " *I forbid it, Karl*. I forbid it, do you hear? You would ruin everything, I forbid you to go again on the Island, or to attempt to see Adam. Good heavens! you might be recognised for his brother."

"And if I were?" cried Karl, feeling completely at sea.

Mrs. Andinnian sat with her two hands on the edge of the tea-tray, staring at him, in what looked like dire consternation.

"Karl, you must go away to-morrow. To think that you could be such a fool as to go *there!* This is worse than all: it is most unfortunate. To-morrow you leave."

"Mother, why will you not place trust in me?" he asked, unable to fathom her. "Do you think you could have a truer confidant? or Adam a warmer friend? I guess the object of Ann's visits to the Island. I saw her talking with one of the warders to-day--the same man, or I fancied it, that came here the other night. That moment solved me the riddle, and----"

"Hush--sh--sh--sh!" breathed Mrs. Andinnian, in a terrified voice, ringing the bell, and looking round the walls of the room as if in dread that they had ears. "Not another word, Karl; I will not, dare not, hear it."

"As you please, mother," he rejoined, feeling bitterly hurt at her lack of trust.

"Have you more cream in the house, Ann?" said Mrs. Andinnian, calmly, when the woman appeared. "And you had better change the tray."

The meal was concluded in silence. Karl took up a newspaper he had brought in; Mrs. Andinnian at moodily gazing into the fire. And so the time went on.

Suddenly there arose the distant sound of guns, booming along on the still night air. To Captain Andinnian it suggested no ulterior thought; brought no cause for agitation: but his mother started up in wild commotion.

"The guns, Karl! the guns!"

"What guns are they?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "What are they firing for?"

She did not answer; she only stood still as a statue, her mouth slightly open with the intensity of listening, her finger lifted up. In the midst of this, Ann Hopley opened the door without sound, and looked in with a terror-stricken face.

"It's not *him*, ma'am; don't you be afeared. It's some other convicts that are off; but it can't be him. The plan's not yet organized."

And Karl learnt that these were the guns from Portland Island, announcing the escape, or attempted escape, of some of its miserable prisoners.

Well for him if he had learned nothing else! The true and full meaning of what had been so mysterious flashed upon him now, like a sheet of lightning that lights up and reveals the secrets of the darkness. It was not Adam's comforts they were surreptitiously seeking to ameliorate; they were plotting for his escape.

His escape! As the truth took possession of Captain Andinnian, his face grew white with a sickening terror; his brow damp as with a death sweat.

For he knew that nearly all these attempted escapes result in utter failure. The

unhappy, deluded victims are recaptured, or drowned, or shot. Sitting there in his shock of agony, his dazed eyes gazing out to the fire, a prevision that death in one shape or other would be his brother's fate, if he did make the rash venture, seated itself firmly within him, as surely and vividly as though he had seen it in some fortuneteller's magic crystal.

"Mother," he said, in a low tone, as he took her hand, and the door closed on Ann Hopley, "I understand it all now. I thought, simple that I was, that I had understood it before: and that you were but striving to find a way of conveying trifles in the shape of comforts to Adam. This is dreadful."

"What is the matter with you?" cried Mrs. Andinnian. "You look ready to die."

"The matter is, that this has shocked me. I pray Heaven that Adam will not be so foolhardy as to attempt to escape!"

"And *why* should he not?" blazed forth Mrs. Andinnian.

Karl shook his head. "In nine cases out of ten, the result is nothing but death."

"And the tenth case results in life, in liberty!" she rejoined, exultantly. "My brave son does well to try for it."

Karl hid his eyes. The first thought, in the midst of the many tumultuously crowding his brain, was the strangely different estimation different people set on things. Here was his mother glorying in that to-be-attempted escape as if it were some great deed dared by a great general: *he* saw only its results. They could not be good; they must be evil. Allowing that Adam did escape and regain his liberty: what would the "liberty" be? A life of miserable concealment; of playing at hide-and-seek with the law; a world-wide apprehension, lying on him always, of being retaken. In short, a hunted man, who must not dare to approach the haunts of his fellows, and of whom every other man must be the enemy. To Karl the present life of degrading labour would be preferable to that.

"Do you wish to keep him there for life--that you may enjoy the benefit of his place at Foxwood and his money?" resumed Mrs. Andinnian, in a tone that she well knew how to make contemptuously bitter. The words stung Karl. His answer was full of pain: the pain of despair.

"I wish life had never been for him, mother. Or for me, either. If I could restore Adam to what he has forfeited by giving my own life, I would do it willingly. I have not much left to live for."

The tone struck Mrs. Andinnian. She thought that even the reflected disgrace, the stain on his name, scarcely justified it. Karl said
a few words to her then of the blight that had fallen on his own
life--the severance from Lucy Cleeve. She told him she was sorry: but it was quite evident that she was too much preoccupied with other things to care about it. And the sad evening passed on.

With the morning, Weymouth learnt the fate of the poor convict--it was only one--who had attempted to escape, after whom the guns were let loose like so many blood-hounds. He was retaken. It was a man who had attempted escape once before, and unsuccessfully.

"The plans were badly laid," calmly remarked Mrs. Andinnian.

She did not now insist upon Karl's quitting her: he knew all; and, though he could not approve, she knew he would not do anything to frustrate. The subject was not again brought up: Mrs. Andinnian avoided it: and some more days wore on. Karl fancied, but could not be sure, that the other attempt at escape caused the action of this to be delayed: perhaps entirely abandoned. His mother and Ann Hopley seemed to be always in secret conference, and twice again there came stealthily to the house at night the same warder, or the man whom Karl had taken for one.

CHAPTER VII.

At the Charing-Cross Hotel

On All Saints' Day, the first of November--and it was as bright a day for the

festival as the saints, whether in that world or this, could wish--Captain Andinnian took leave of his mother, and went to London. His chief business there was to transact some business with the family lawyers, Plunkett and Plunkett. Their chambers were within the precincts of the Temple, and for convenience' sake he took up his quarters at the Charing Cross Hotel.

In the course of the afternoon, as he was turning out of Essex Street, having come through the little court from Plunkett and Plunkett's, he ran against a gentleman passing down the Strand. "I beg your pardon," Karl was beginning, and then became suddenly silent. It was Colonel Cleeve.

But, instead of passing on, as Karl might have expected him to do, the Colonel stopped and shook him cordially by the hand. To pass him would have jarred on every kindly instinct of Colonel Cleeve's nature. As to the affair with his daughter, he attached no importance to it now, believing it had made no permanent impression on Lucy, and had himself three-parts forgotten it.

"You have sold out, Captain Andinnian. I--I have been so very sorry for the sad causes that induced the step. Believe me, you have had all along my very best sympathy."

Karl hardly knew what he answered. A few words of murmured thanks; nothing more.

"You are not well," returned the Colonel, regarding the slender form that looked thinner than of yore, very thin in its black attire. "This has told upon you."

"It has; very much. There are some trials that can never be made light in this life," Karl continued, speaking the thoughts that were ever uppermost in his mind. "This is one of them. I thank you for your sympathy, Colonel Cleeve."

"And that's true, unfortunately," cried the Colonel, warmly, in answer. "You don't know how you are regretted at Winchester by your brother officers."

With another warm handshake, the Colonel passed on. Karl walked back to his hotel. In traversing one of its upper passages, a young lady came out of a sitting-room to cross to an opposite chamber. Captain Andinnian took a step back to let her pass in front of him; she turned her head, and they met face to face.

"Lucy!"

"Karl!"

The salutation broke from each before they well knew where they were or what had happened, amidst a rush of bewildering excitement, of wild joy. They had, no doubt, as in duty bound, been trying to forget each other; this moment of unexpected meeting proved to each how foolish was the fallacy. A dim idea made itself heard within either breast that they ought, in that duty alluded to, to pass on and linger not: but we all know how vain and weak is the human heart. It was not possible: and they stood, hand locked within hand.

Only for an instant. Lucy, looking very weak and ill, withdrew her hand, and leaned back against the doorpost for support. Karl stood before her.

"I have just met Colonel Cleeve," he said: "but I had no idea that *you* were in London. Are you staying here?"

"Until to-morrow," she answered, her breath seeming to be a little short. "We came up yesterday. Papa chose this hotel, as it is convenient for the Folkestone trains. Mamma is here."

"Lucy, how very ill you look!"

"Yes. I had fever and ague in the summer, and do not get strong again. We are going to Paris for change. You do not look well either," added Lucy.

"I have not had fever: but I have had other things to try me," was his reply.

"Oh, Karl! I have been so grieved!" she earnestly said. "I did not know your brother, but I--I seemed to feel all the dreadful trouble as much as you must have felt it. When we are not strong, I think we do feel things."

"You call it by its right name, Lucy--a *dreadful* trouble. No one but myself can know what it has been to me."

They were gazing at each other yearningly: Lucy with her sweet brown eyes so full of tender compassion; Karl's grey-blue ones had a world of sorrowful regret in their depths. As she had done in their interview when they were parting, so she now did again--put out her hand to him, with a whisper meant to soothe.

"You will live it down, Karl."

He slightly shook his head: and took her hand to hold it between his.

"It is only since this happened that I have become at all reconciled to--to what had to be done at Winchester, Lucy. It would have been so greatly worse, had you been tied to me by--by any engagement."

"Not worse for you, Karl, but better. I should have helped you so much to bear it."

"My darling!"

The moment the words had crossed his lips, he remembered what honour and his long-ago-passed word to Colonel Cleeve demanded of him--that he should absolutely abstain from showing any tokens of affection for Lucy. Nay, to observe it strictly, he ought not to have stayed to talk with her.

"I beg your pardon, Lucy," he said, dropping her hand.

She understood quite well: a faint colour mantled in her pale face. She had been as forgetful as he.

"God bless you, Lucy," he whispered. "Farewell."

"O Karl--a moment," she implored with agitation, hardly knowing, in the pain of parting, what she said. "Just to tell you that I have not forgotten. I never shall forget. My regret, for what had to be, lies on me still."

"God bless you," he repeated, in deep emotion. "God bless and restore you, Lucy!"

Once more their fingers met in a brief handshake. And then they parted; he going one way, she the other; and the world had grown dim again.

Later in the day Karl heard it incidentally mentioned by some people in the coffee-room, that Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve with their daughter and two servants were going to make a prolonged stay on the Continent for the benefit of the young lady's health, who had been suffering from fever. Little did they think that the quiet, distinguished looking man in mourning, who had but come in to ask

for some information, and was waiting while the waiter brought it, had more to do with the young lady's failing health than any fever.

Captain Andinnian took his breakfast next morning in private: as he sat down to it, the waiter brought him a newspaper. While listlessly unfolding it, he took the opportunity to ask a question.

"Have Colonel Cleeve and his family left the hotel?"

"Yes, sir. Just gone off for Folkestone. Broiled ham, sir; eggs; steak with mushrooms," continued the man, removing sundry covers.

"Thank you. You need not wait."

But--ere the man had well closed the door, a startled sound like a groan of agony burst from Karl's lips. He sprung from his seat at a bound, his eyes riveted on the newspaper in one stare of disbelieving horror. The paragraph had a heading in the largest letters--

"ATTEMPTED ESCAPE FROM PORTLAND ISLAND. DEATH OF THE PRISONER, SIR ADAM ANDINNIAN."

Karl let the newspaper fall, and buried his face on the table-cloth to shut out the light. He had not courage to read more at once. He lay there praying that it might not be true.

Alas! it was too true. Two prisoners had attempted to escape in concert; Sir Adam Andinnian and a man named Cole. They succeeded in reaching the water, and got off in a small boat lying ready in wait. Some warders pursued them in another boat; and, after an exciting chase in the dark night, came up with them as they reached the Weymouth side. Sir Adam was shot dead by a pistol; the small boat was upset, and one of the warders drowned. Cole was supposed to have made his escape.

Such was the statement given in the newspapers. And, however uncertain the minor details might be at this early stage, one part appeared to admit of no doubt--Adam Andinnian was dead.

"I seemed to foresee it," moaned Karl. "From the very first, the persuasion has lain upon me that this would be the ending."

Ere many minutes elapsed, ere he had attempted to touch a morsel of breakfast, a gentleman was shown in. It was Mr. Plunkett: a stout man in spectacles, with a large red nose. He had the *Times* in his hand. Captain Andinnian's paper lay open on the breakfast table; Captain Andinnian's face, as he rose to receive his visitor, betrayed its own story.

"I see; you have read the tidings," began Mr. Plunkett, sitting down. "It is a dreadful thing."

"Do--do you think there's any chance that it may not be true?" he rejoined in an imploring tone.

"There's not the slightest as to the main fact--that Sir Adam is dead," replied the lawyer decisively. "What *could* he have been thinking of, to hazard it?"

Karl sat shading his face.

"I'll tell you what it is, sir--there was a spice of madness in your brother's composition, I said so when he shot Scott. There must have been. And who, but a madman, would try to get away from Portland Island?"

"Nay. A rash act, Mr. Plunkett; but not one that implies madness."

There ensued a silence. These interviews are usually attended by embarrassment.

"I have intruded on you this morning to express my best sympathy, and to ask whether I can be of any service to you, Captain Andinnian," resumed the lawyer. "I beg your pardon: Sir Karl, I ought to say."

Karl had raised his head in resentment--in defiance. It caused the lawyer's break.

"Nay, but you are Sir Karl, sir. You succeed to your brother."

"The reminder grated on me, Mr. Plunkett."

"The title's yours and the estates are yours. Every earthly thing is yours."

"Yes, yes; I suppose so."

"Well, if we can do anything for you, Sir Karl, down there"--indicating with a nod of his head the direction in which Portland Island might be supposed to lie--"or at Foxwood, you have only to send to us. I hope you understand that I am not speaking now with a view to business, but as a friend," concluded Mr. Plunkett. "I'll say no more now, for I see you are not yourself."

"Indeed I am not," replied Karl. "I thank you all the same. As soon as I can I must get down to my mother."

The lawyer said good morning, and left him to his breakfast. But Karl had no appetite: then, or for many a day to come. Calling for his bill, he took his departure.

Never had Karl imagined distress and anguish so great as that which he witnessed on his arrival at Weymouth. For once all his mother's pride of power had deserted her. She flung herself at the feet of Karl, demanding *why* he did not persist in his objection to the contemplated attempt, and interfere openly, even by declaring all to the governor of Portland prison, and so save his brother. It was altogether too distressing for Karl to bear.

The first account was in the main correct. Adam Andinnian and the warder were both dead: the one shot, the other drowned.

It was understood that the body might be given up to them for burial. Though whether this was a special favour, accorded to the entreaties of Mrs. Andinnian, or a not-unusual one, Karl knew not. He was glad of this, so far: but he would have thought it better that the place of interment should be Weymouth, and the ceremony made one of the utmost privacy. Mrs. Andinnian, however, ruled otherwise. She would have her unfortunate son taken to Foxwood, and she at once despatched Karl thither to make arrangements.

On the day but one after Karl reached Foxwood, all that remained of poor Sir Adam arrived. Mrs. Andinnian came in company. She could not bear to part even with the dead.

"I wish I could have been him," remarked Karl sadly, as he stood with his hand on the coffin.

"I have seen him, Karl," she answered amid her blinding tears. "They suffered me to look at him. His face was peaceful."

They, and they only, saving Hewitt, attended the funeral. He was buried in the family vault, in Foxwood churchyard, side by side with Sir Joseph and Lady Andinnian.

What an ending, for a young man who, but a few short months before, had been full of health and hope and life!

But the world, in its cold charity; said it was better so.

CHAPTER VIII.

In the Avenue d'Antin

New Year's Day. Or, as the French more emphatically term it, the Jour de l'An. Gay groups went strolling along the Boulevards in the glowing sunshine, gazing at the costly étrennes displayed in the tempting shops: women glancing at the perfect attire of other women that passed; men doffing their hats so perpetually that it almost seemed they might as well have kept them off altogether; children in their fantastic costumes chattering to their mothers, and turning their little heads on all sides: all, men, women, and children, apparently free from every care, save that of pleasure, which constitutes so observable a feature in Parisian life.

Amidst the crowd, passing onwards with a listless step, as if pleasure had no part in his heart and he had no use for étrennes, was a solitary individual: a distinguished looking man of pleasing features and altogether refined face,

whom few of the traversers could have mistaken for aught but an Englishman. His mourning apparel and a certain air of sadness that pervaded his face seemed to be in unison. Several women--ingrained coquettes from their birth, as French women nearly always are born to be--threw glances of admiration at the handsome man, in spite of the fact that their husbands--for that one day--were at their side; and wondered what near relative he had lost. But the gentleman passed on his listless way, seeing them not, and utterly unconscious that any answering glances from his own eyes were coveted. It was Sir Karl Andinnian.

Close upon the burial of his ill-fated brother Adam, Mrs. Andinnian, prostrate with grief and trouble, took to confine herself to her own apartment at Foxwood Court: for it was at that residence she thenceforth took up her abode. Karl found himself nearly altogether excluded from her presence. Even at meals she declined to join him, and caused them to be served for herself apart. "Do you wish me away from Foxwood?" Karl one day asked her. "I do; I would be entirely alone," was her reply. "I am aware that Foxwood is yours now, Karl, and you may think I have no right even to express a hint that you might for a time leave it; but I feel that the chance of my regaining strength and spirits would be greater if left entirely to myself: your presence here is a strain upon me."

The answer was to Karl welcome as sunshine in harvest. He had been longing to travel; to try and find some relief from his thoughts in hitherto untrodden scenes: consideration for his mother--the consciousness that it would be wrong both in duty and affection
to leave her--had alone prevented his proposing it. Within
four-and-twenty hours after this he had quitted Foxwood.

But Karl was not so soon to quit England. Various matters had to be settled in regard to the estate; and when he reached London his lawyers, Plunkett and Plunkett, said they should want him for a little while. The crime committed by Sir Adam so immediately upon the death of Sir Joseph, had caused a vast deal of necessary business to remain in abeyance. Certain indispensable law proceedings to be gone through, had to be gone through now. So Karl Andinnian perforce took up his temporary abode in London; and at the end of a week or two, when he found himself at liberty, he crossed over the water, Vienna being his first halting place. The sojourn there of a former brother officer, Captain Lamprey, who had been Karl's chiefest friend and stuck to him in his misfortunes, induced it. Captain Lamprey was staying in Vienna with his newly married wife, and he wrote to ask Karl to join them. Karl did so. Captain Lamprey's term of leave

expired the end of December. He and his wife were going home to spend the Christmas, and Karl accompanied them as far as Paris. Mrs. Andinnian, in answer to a question from Karl, whether she would like him to return to her for Christmas, had written back to him a resolute and ungracious No.

So here he was, in Paris. It was all the same to him; this resting-place or that resting-place. His life had been blighted in more ways than one. Of Lucy Cleeve he thought still a great deal too much for his peace. She was far enough removed from him in all senses of the word. In a letter received by Captain Lamprey from some friends at Winchester, it was stated that the Cleeves were wintering in Egypt. Where Karl's own place of sojourn was next to be, he had not decided, but his thoughts rather turned towards every chief continental city that was famed for its gallery of paintings. He thought he would make a pilgrimage to all of them. Karl had the eye of a true artist: to gaze at good paintings was now the only pleasure of his life. He had not yet anything like done with those in Paris and Versailles.

On, upon his course along the Boulevards, passed he. Now and again his eyes turned towards the lovely étrennes with a longing: once in a way, when the throngs allowed him, he halted to look and admire: a longing to buy étrennes himself, and that he had some one to give them to when bought. It was not well possible for any body to feel more completely isolated from the happy world than did Karl Andinnian.

"How d'ye do, Sir Karl? Charming day for the holiday, is it not!"

Sir Karl made some answering assent, raised his hat, bowed, and passed on. The remark had come from an Englishman with whom he had a slight acquaintance, who had come out shop-gazing with his flock of daughters.

He went straight home then to his hotel--Hotel Montaigne, Rue Montaigne. As he crossed the courtyard, the landlord--a ponderous gentleman with a ponderous watch-chain--came out and gave him some letters. From some cause the English delivery had been late that morning.

One of the letters was from Captain Lamprey, the other from Plunkett and Plunkett. Neither contained any interest; neither thought to wish him happiness for the New Year. It was all the same to Karl Andinnian: the New Year could not have much happiness in store for him.

He strolled out again, turning his steps towards the Champs Elysées. It was but one o'clock yet, and the brightest part of the day. At one of the windows of the palace he fancied he caught a transient glimpse of the Empress. Shortly afterwards, the peculiar clatter of the Prince Imperial's escort was heard advancing, surrounding the little prince in his carriage.

The Champs Elysées were bright to-day. Children attired in silks and satins were playing in the sun, their bonnes sitting by in their holiday costume. New Year's Day and All Saints' Day are the two most dressy epochs in the year in France--as everybody knows. Invalids sat in the warmth: ladies flitted hither and thither like gay butterflies. By a mere chance, Karl always thought it so, his eyes fell on two ladies seated alone on a distant bench. Involuntarily his steps halted; his heart leaped up with a joyous bound. They were Mrs. and Miss Cleeve.

But, ah how ill she looked--Lucy. The bounding heart fell again as though some dead weight were pressing it. Thin, worn, white; with dark circles round the eyes, and lips that seemed to have no life in them. For a moment Karl wondered whether he might not approach and question her: but he remembered his bargain with Colonel Cleeve.

They did not see him: they were looking at some children in front of them; playing at "Marlborough s'en va-t-en guerre." Karl pursued the path he was on, which would carry him away from their bench at right angles. He resolved that if they saw him he would go up and speak: if they did not, he must continue his way.

And he had to continue it. Mrs. Cleeve, Who did not look to be in strong health either, seemed absorbed by the play and the childish voices chanting the chanson; Lucy had now bent her forehead upon her hand, as though some ache were there. Karl went on, out of sight, his brow aching too.

"Bon jour, monsieur."

The salutation, which had a touch of surprised pleasure in its tone, came from a natty-looking little Frenchwoman, with a thin red face and shrewd grey eyes. She might have been given five-and-thirty years: but in the register of her native *Mairie* she would have been found hard upon forty. Sir Karl stopped. She was Lucy's maid: formerly Lucy's nurse.

"C'est vous, Aglaé!"

"Mais oui, monsieur."

"I thought I saw Mrs. and Miss Cleeve sitting on a bench just now," continued Karl; changing his language. "Are you staying in Paris?"

"Oh, very long since," replied Aglaé, to whom both languages were nearly alike. "Our apartment is close by, sir--a small house in the Avenue d'Antin. The delight to find myself in my proper land again, where I can go about without one of those vilain bonnets and hear no street gamins hoot at me for it, is untellable."

"I understood that Colonel Cleeve and his family had gone to Egypt for the winter," observed Karl.

"To Egypt, or to some other place of barbarisme: so it was projected, sir. But my young lady, Miss Lucy, is not strong enough to be taken."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Karl, with assumed quietness.

"The matter? Oh! The matter is, that she has got no happiness left in her heart, sir," cried Aglaé, explosively, as if in deep resentment against things in general. "It's dried up. And if they don't mind, she will just go unwarningly out of life. That's my opinion: and, mind, sir, I do not go to say it without reason."

A slight blush mantled in Karl's face. He seemed to be watching a red paper kite, that was sailing beneath the blue sky.

"They see it now, both of them; the Colonel and Madame; they see that she's just slipping away from them, and *they* are ill. Ah but! the senseless--what you call it--distinctions--that the English set up!"

"But what is the cause?" asked Karl. Though it seemed to him that he could discern quite well without being answered.

Aglaé threw her shrewd eyes into his.

"I think, sir, you might tell it for yourself, that. She has not been well since that fever. She was not well before the fever, since--since about the month of May."

He drew in his lips. Aglaé, with native independence, continued to stare at

him.

"Why don't you call and see her, sir?"

"Because--well, I suppose you know, Aglaé. I should not be welcome to Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve."

"And the poor young lady, who never did harm to living soul, is to be let shrink down into her grave for the sake of English prejudice! *I* can see. I've got my wits about me, and have seen it all along. My service to you, sir. Bon jour."

The maid went on in a rage, her dainty cap nodding, her smart boots going down rather more noisily than was needful. Sir Karl passed on his way, thinking deeply. He walked about until the daylight was fading, and then strode back rapidly to his hotel, with the air of a man who is about to carry out some resolution that will not wait. *He* was. A resolution that had been floating in his mind before he' saw Lucy or encountered her maid.

Colonel Cleeve was seated alone that evening in his dining-room in the Avenue d'Antin, when a letter was delivered to him. For a few minutes he let it lie unheeded. The thoughts he was buried in were very
sad ones--they ran on the decaying strength of his only daughter. It seemed to him and Mrs. Cleeve that unless some wonderful change--say a miracle, for instance--interposed, Lucy's life was not worth many weeks' purchase. They knew now--he and his wife--that the parting with Karl Andinnian had been too cruel for her.

Arousing himself from his gloomy visions, the Colonel opened the
note--which had been left by hand. Why here was a strange thing!--he started in surprise. Started when he saw the contents of the letter and the signature appended. Had the miracle come?

It was one of the plain, candid, straightforward letters, so characteristic of Karl Andinnian. He said that he had chanced to see Miss Cleeve that day, that he had been shocked by her appearance; that he had happened to hear from Aglaé subsequently how very alarmingly she was failing. He went on to add with shrinking deprecation, every word of which told of the most sensitive refinement, that he feared the trouble of last May might have had something to do with it, and be still telling upon her. He then put a statement of his affairs, as to possessions and income, before Colonel Cleeve, and asked whether he might

presume again to address Lucy now that he could offer a good settlement and make her Lady Andinnian.

Three times over Colonel Cleeve read the note, pausing well to reflect between each time. Then he sent for his wife.

"He is of no family--and there's that dreadful slur upon it besides," remarked the Colonel, talking it over. "But it may be the saving of Lucy's life."

"It is a good letter," said Mrs. Cleeve, reading it through her eye-glass.

"It's as good and proper a letter as any young man could write. All his instincts are honourable. Some men might have written to Lucy herself. Putting aside his lack of family and the other disrepute, we could not wish a better son-in-law than Sir Karl Andinnian."

"Yes," deliberated Mrs. Cleeve, after a pause. "True. The disadvantages are great: but they seem little when balanced against the chance of restoring Lucy's life. She will be a baronet's wife; she will be sufficiently rich; and--I think--she will be intensely happy."

"Then I'll send for him," said Colonel Cleeve.

The interview took place on the following morning. It was a peculiar one. Just as plainly open as Karl had been in his letter, so was the Colonel now.

"I think it may be the one chance for saving my child's life," he said; "for there is no denying that she was very much attached to you, Sir Karl. Sitting alone after dinner last evening, I was telling myself that nothing short of a miracle could help her: the doctors say they can do nothing, the malady is on her mind--though for my part I think the chief ill is the weakness left by that ague-fever. Your letter came to interrupt my thoughts; and when I read it I wondered whether that was the miracle."

"If you will only give me Lucy, my whole life shall be devoted to her best comfort, sir," he said in a low tone. "My happiness was wrecked equally with hers: but I am a man and therefore stronger to bear."

"Nothing would have induced me to give her to you had your brother lived,"

resumed the Colonel. "If I am too plain in what I say I must beg you to excuse it: but it is well that we should understand each other thoroughly. Yourself I like; I always have liked you; but the disgrace reflected upon you was so great while your brother was living, a convict, that to see Lucy your wife then would I think have killed both me and Mrs. Cleeve. Take it at the best, it would have embittered our lives for ever."

"Had my unfortunate brother lived, I should never have attempted to ask for her, Colonel Cleeve."

"Right. I have observed that on most subjects your ideas coincide with my own. Rather than that--the disgrace to her and to us; and grievous though the affliction it would have brought to me and her mother--we would rather have laid our child to rest."

The deep emotion with which Colonel Cleeve spoke--the generally self-contained man whose calmness almost bordered upon apathy--proved how true the words were, and how terribly the sense of disgrace would have told upon him.

"But your unhappy brother has paid the forfeit of his crimes by death," he continued, "and it is to be hoped and expected that in time the remembrance of him and of what he did will die out of people's minds. Therefore we have resolved to trust to this hope, and give you Lucy. It will be better than to let her die." Sir Karl Andinnian drew in his slender lips. But that he had passed through a course of most bitter humiliation--and *that*, wherever it falls, seems for the time to wash out pride--he might have shown resentment at the last words. The Colonel saw he felt the sting: and he wished it had not been his province to inflict it.

"It was best to explain this, Sir Karl. Pardon me for its sound of harshness. And now that it is over and done with, let me say that never for a moment have I or Mrs. Cleeve blamed you. It was not your fault that your brother lost himself; neither could you have helped it: and we have both felt almost as sorry for you as though you had been a relative of our own. I beg that henceforth his name may never be mentioned between you and us: the past, so far as regards him, must be as though it had never been. You will observe this reticence?"

"Unquestionably."

"The affair is settled then, Andinnian. Will you see Lucy?"

"If I may," replied Karl, a bright smile succeeding to the sadness on his face. "Does she know I am here?"

"She knows nothing. Her mother thought it might be better that I should speak to you first. You can tell her all yourself. But mind you do it quietly, for she is very weak."

Lucy happened to be alone in, the salon. She sat in a red velvet arm-chair as big as a canopy, looking at the pretty étrenne her mother had given her the previous day--a bracelet of links studded with turquoise and a drooping turquoise heart. A smile of gratitude parted her lips; though tears stood in her eyes, for she believed she should not live to wear it long.

"Lucy," said her father, looking in as he opened the door. "I-have brought you a visitor who has called--Sir Karl Andinnian."

Lucy rose in trembling astonishment; the morocco case, which had been on her lap, falling to the ground. She wore a dress of violet silk, and Aglaé had folded about her a white shawl--for chillness was present with her still. Karl advanced, and the Colonel shut them in together.

He took both her hands in his, slipping the bracelet on to her attenuated wrist,--and quietly held them. The poor wan face and the hectic colour his presence had called up, had all his attention just then.

"I saw you in the Champs Elysées yesterday, Lucy. It pained me very much to see you so much changed."

"Did you see me? I was there with mamma. It is the fever I had in the summer that hangs about me and does not let me yet get strong."

"Is it *nothing* else, Lucy?"

The hectic deepened to crimson. The soft brown eyes drooped beneath the gaze of his.

"I fancied there might be another cause for it, Lucy, and I have ventured to say so to Colonel Cleeve. He agrees with me."

"You--you were not afraid to call here!" she exclaimed, as if the fact were a subject of wonder.

"What I had to say to Colonel Cleeve I wrote by letter. After that, he invited me to call."

Karl sat down on the red sofa opposite the chair, and put Lucy by him, his arm entwining her waist. "I want you," he said, "to tell me exactly what it is that keeps you from getting strong, Lucy."

"But I cannot tell you, for I don't know," she answered with a little sob. "I wish I could get well, Karl--for poor papa and mamma's sake."

"Do you think I could do anything towards the restoration, Lucy?" he continued, drawing her closer to his side.

"What could you do?"

"Watch you, and tend you, and love you. And--and make you my wife."

"Don't jest, Karl," she said, whispering and trembling. "You know it may not be."

"But if Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve say that it may be?"

The tone of his voice was redolent of anything but jesting: it was one of deep truthful emotion. Lucy looked questioningly up at him.

"Oh Karl, don't play with me! What do you mean?"

He caught the sweet face, and held it to his. His own hands were trembling, his race was pale as hers. But she could not mistake his grave earnestness.

"It means, my darling, that you are to be mine for ever. My wife. They are going to give you to me: your father brought me here that I might myself break it to you."

A minute's doubting look; a slight shiver as if the joy were too great; and then with a sigh she let her head fall on his breast--its future resting-place.

"And what's this that you were looking at, Lucy?" he asked after a while, turning the pretty bracelet round and round her wrist.

"Mamma bought it me yesterday for my New Year's étrenne. I was thinking--before you came--that I might not live to wear it."

"I was thinking yesterday, Lucy, as I walked along the Boulevards, that I would give a great deal to have some one to buy étrennes for. It is not too late, is it? Meanwhile----"

Breaking off his sentence, he took a very rare ring from his finger, one of the most brilliant of opals encompassed by diamonds. She had never seen him wear it before.

"Oh, how very beautiful!" she exclaimed, as it flashed in a gleam of reflected sunlight.

"I do not give it you, Lucy," he said, putting it upon her finger. "I lend it you until I can find another fit to replace it. That may be in a day, or so. This ring was my father's: made a present of to him by an Eastern Sultan, to whom he was able to render an essential service. At my father's death it came to my brother: and--later--to me."

Karl's voice dropped as he was concluding. Lucy Cleeve felt for him; she knew what *he* must feel at the allusion. She glided her hand into his, unsought.

"So until then this ring shall be the earnest of our betrothal, Lucy. You will take care of it: and of my love."

The ring was the same that had been seen on Sir Adam's finger at the trial. On that same day, after his condemnation, he had taken it off, and caused it to be conveyed to Karl--his, from henceforth. But Karl had never put it on his own finger until after his brother's death.

CHAPTER IX.

As Sir Karl Andinnian was leaving the house, he saw Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve in the dining-room. The latter held out her hand to Karl. He clasped it warmly.

"I am glad it is settled," she said, in a low, impressive tone. "You will take good care of her, I know, and make her happy."

"With the best energies of my heart and life," was his earnest answer. "Dear Mrs. Cleeve, I can never sufficiently thank you."

The voices penetrated to a dressing-chamber at the end of the short passage, the door of which was ajar. A lady in travelling attire peeped out. It was Miss Blake, who had just arrived from England somewhat unexpectedly. Karl passed out at the front door. Miss Blake's eyes, wide open with astonishment, followed him.

"Surely that was Captain Andinnian!" she exclaimed, advancing towards the dining-room.

"Captain Andinnian that used to be, Theresa," replied Colonel Cleeve. "He is Sir Karl Andinnian now."

"Yes, yes; but one is apt to forget new titles," was her impatient rejoinder. "I heard he was staying in Paris. What should bring him in *this* house? Is he allowed to call at *it*."

"For the future he will be. He is to have Lucy. Mrs. Cleve will tell you about it," concluded the Colonel. "I must write my letters."

Mrs. Cleeve was smiling meaningly. Theresa Blake, utterly puzzled, looked from one to the other. "Have Lucy!" she cried. "Have her for what?"

"Why, to be his wife," said Mrs. Cleeve. "Could you not have guessed, Theresa?"

"To--be--his--wife!" echoed Miss Blake. "Karl Andinnian's wife! No, no; it

cannot be."

"But it *is*, Theresa. It has been settled to-day. Sir Karl has now gone out from his first interview with her. Why, my dear, I quite believe that if we had not brought it about, Lucy would have died. They are all the world to each other."

Miss Blake went back to her room with her shock of agony. From white to scarlet, from scarlet to white, changed her face, as she sat down to take in the full sense of the news, and what it inflicted on her. A cry went up aloud to Heaven for pity, as she realized the extreme depth of her desolation.

This second blow was to Miss Blake nearly, if not quite, as cruel as the first had been. It stunned her. The hope that Karl Andinnian would return to her had been dwelt on and cherished as the weeks had gone on, until it became as a certainty in her inmost heart. Of course, his accession to wealth and honours augmented the desirability of a union with him, though it could not augment her love. She had encouraged the secret passion within her; she had indulged in sweet dreams of the future; she had rashly cherished an assurance that she should, sooner or later, become Sir Karl's wife. To find that he was indeed to have Lucy was truly terrible.

Miss Blake had undergone disappointment on another score. The new modes of worship in Mr. Blake's church, together with the Reverend Guy Cattacomb, had collapsed. Matters had gone on swimmingly until the month of December. Close upon Christmas the rector came home: it should, perhaps, be mentioned that his old curate had died. Mr. Blake was hardly fit to return to his duties; but the reports made to him of the state of things in his church (they had been withheld during his want of strength), brought him back in grief and shame. His first act was to dismiss the Rev. Guy Cattacomb: his second to sweep away innovations and restore the service to what it used to be. Miss Blake angrily resented this but she was unable to hinder it. Her occupation in Winchester was gone; she was for the present grown tired of the place, and considered whither her steps should be next directed. She had a standing invitation to visit the Cleeves, and felt inclined to do so; for she loved the gay Parisian capital with all her heart. Chance threw her in the way of Captain Lamprey. She heard from him that Sir Karl Andinnian was in Paris; and it need not be stated that the information caused the veering scale to go down with a run. Without writing to apprise Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve, she started. And, in the first few minutes of her arrival at their house, she was gratified by the sight of Karl; and heard at the

same time the startling tidings that destroyed her hopes for ever.

It was like a fate. *Comme un sort*, as Mademoiselle Aglaé might have phrased it. Only a few months before, when Miss Blake got home to Winchester from Paris, her heart leaping and bounding with its love for Karl Andinnian, and with the prospect of again meeting him, she had been struck into stone at finding that his love was Lucy's; so now, hastening to Paris from Winchester with somewhat of the same kind of feelings, and believing he had bade adieu to Lucy for ever, she found that the aspect of matters had altered, and Lucy was to be the wife of his bosom. Miss Blake's state of mind under this shock was not an enviable one. And--whereas she had hitherto vented her silent anger on Lucy, woman fashion, she now turned it on Karl. What right, she asked herself, forgetting the injustice of the question, what right had he to go seeking Lucy in Paris, when she had been so unequivocally denied to him for ever? It was a worse blow to her than the first had been.

Waiting until the trace of some of the anguish had passed from her white face, until she had arranged her hair and changed her travelling dress, and regained composure of manner, she went into the presence of Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve. They were yet in the dining-room, talking of Lucy's future prospects; getting, in fact, with every word more and more reconciled to them.

"The alliance will be an everlasting disgrace to you," quietly spoke Miss Blake. "It will degrade Lucy."

"I do not see it, Theresa," said the Colonel. "I do not think any sensible people will see it in that light. And consider Lucy's state of health! Something had to be sacrificed to that. This may, and I believe will, restore her; otherwise she would have died. The love they bear for each other is marvellous--quite out of the common."

Theresa bit her pale lips to get a little colour in them. "A min whose brother was tried and condemned for wilful murder, and who died a convict striving to escape from his lawful fetters! He is no proper match for Lucy Cleeve."

"The man is dead, Theresa. His crimes and mistakes have died with him. Had he lived, the convict, we would have followed Lucy to the grave rather than allowed one of the Andinnian family to enter ours."

Theresa played with a tremendously big wooden cross of black wood, that she

wore appended to a long necklace of black beads--the whole thing most incongruously unbecoming, and certainly not in the best of taste in any point of view. That she looked pale, vexed, disturbed, Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve saw: and they set it down in their honest and simple hearts to her anxiety for Lucy.

"Against Sir Karl Andinnian nothing can be urged, Theresa: and his brother, as I say, is dead," pursued the Colonel. "In himself he is everything that can be desired: a sweet-tempered, honourable gentleman. He is a baronet of the realm now, you know; and his proposed settlement on Lucy is good."

"I don't call him rich," doggedly returned Miss Blake. "Compare him with some baronets."

"And compare him, on the other hand, with others! His income averages about seven thousand a-year, I believe. Out of that he will accord his mother a good portion while she lives. Compare that with my income, Theresa--as we are on the subject of comparisons; I cannot count anything like *two* thousand."

"Are you sure that he is worthy of Lucy in other ways?" resumed Miss Blake, her tone unpleasantly significant. "I have heard tales of him."

"What tales?"

"Words dropped from the officers at Winchester. To the effect that he is *wild*."

"I can hardly believe that he is," said the Colonel, uneasily, after a pause. "I should dislike to give Lucy to any man of that kind."

"Oh, well, it may not be true," returned Miss Blake, her suggestive conscience reminding her that she was saying more than she ought: or, rather, giving a colouring to it that she was not altogether justified in. "You know little Dennet. More than a year ago--it was before I went abroad--he was talking at the rectory one day about the officers generally, hinting that they were unsteady. I said--of course it was an absurd thing for me to say--that I felt sure Mr. Andinnian was steady: and Dennet rejoined, in a laughing kind of way, that Andinnian was as wild as the rest. That's the truth," concluded Miss Blake, honestly, in obedience to her conscience.

Not very much, you will think; but Colonel Cleeve did not like the doubt it implied; and he resolved to set it at rest, if questioning could do it. That same

evening, when Karl arrived to dinner, as invited, the Colonel caused him to be shown into a little apartment, that was as much a boot-closet as anything else: but they were cramped for room in the Avenue D'Antin. Colonel Cleeve was standing by the fire. He and Karl were very much alike in one particular--that of unsophistication. In his direct, non-reticent manner, he mentioned the hint he had received, giving as nearly as possible the words Theresa had given.

"Is it true, or is it not, Sir Karl?"

"It is not true: at least, in the sense that I fear you may have been putting upon it," was the reply: and Karl Andinnian's truthful eyes went straight out to the Colonel's. "When I was with the regiment I did some foolish things, sir, as the others did, especially when I first joined: a young fellow planted down in the midst of careless men can hardly avoid it, however true his own habits and principles may be. But I soon drew in. When my father lay on his dying bed, he gave me some wise counsel, Colonel Cleeve."

"Did you follow it?"

"If I did not quite always, I at any rate mostly tried to. Had I been by inclination one of the wildest of men, events would have surely sobered me. My acquaintance with Lucy, the love for her that grew up in my heart, would have served to keep me steady; and since then there has been that most dreadful blow and its attendant sorrow. But I was not wild by inclination: quite the contrary. On my word, Colonel Cleeve, I have not gone into the reckless vice and folly that some men go into; no, not even in my days of youth and carelessness. I can truly say that I have never in my life done a wrong thing but I
have been bitterly ashamed of it afterwards, whatever its nature;
and--and--have asked forgiveness of God."

His voice died away with the last hesitating sentence. That he was asserting the truth as before Heaven, Colonel Cleeve saw, and judged him rightly. He took Karl's hands in his: he felt that he was one amid a thousand.

"God keep you, for a true man and a Christian!" he whispered. "I could not desire one more worthy than you for my daughter."

When they reached the drawing-room, Lucy was there: Lucy, who had not joined in the late dinner for some time past. She wore pink silk; she had a transient colour in her face, and her sweet brown eyes lighted up at sight of Karl.

As he bent low to speak to her, Theresa Blake covered her brow, as though she had a pain there.

"Madame est servie."

Sir Karl advanced to Mrs. Cleeve, as in duty bound. She put him from her with a smile. "I am going on by myself, Karl. Lucy needs support, and you must give it her. The Colonel has to bring Miss Blake."

And as Karl took her, nothing loth, under his arm, and gave her the support tenderly, Miss Lucy blushed the rosiest blush that had been seen in her face for many a month. Mademoiselle Aglaé, superintending the arrangement of the round table, had taken care that their seats should be side by side. Theresa's fascinated eyes, opposite, looked at them more than there was any need for.

"Lucy has got a prize," whispered the Colonel to her, as she sat on his right hand. "A prize if ever there was one. I have been talking to him about that matter, Theresa, and he comes out nobly. And--do you see how changed Lucy is, only in this one day? how well and happy she looks? Just think! it was only this time last night that his note was brought in."

Miss Blake did see. Saw a great deal more than was agreeable; the unmistakable signs of mutual love amidst the rest. Her own feelings were changing: and she almost felt that she was not far off hating her heart's cherished idol, Karl Andinnian, with a jealous and bitter and angry hatred. But she must wait for that. Love does not change to hate so quickly.

It was decided that the marriage should take place without delay; at least, with as little delay as Lucy's health should allow. Perhaps in February. Day by day, she grew better: appetite returned, spirits returned, the longing to get well returned: all three very essential elements in the case. At a week or two's end Lucy was so much stronger that the time was finally fixed for February, and Sir Karl wrote to tell Plunkett and Plunkett to prepare the deeds of settlement. He also wrote to his mother--which he had somewhat held back from doing: for instinct told him the news would terribly pain her; that she would accuse him of being insensible to the recent loss of his brother. And he found that he had judged correctly; for Mrs. Andinnian did not vouchsafe him any answer.

It grieved him much: but he did not dare to write again. It must be remembered that the relations between Karl and his mother were quite

exceptional ones. She had kept him at a distance all his life, had repressed his instincts of affection; in short, had held him in complete subjection. If she chose not to accord him an answer, Karl knew that he should only make matters worse by writing to ask why she would not.

"He has forgotten his ill-fated brother: he casts not a thought to my dreadful sorrow; he is hasting with this indecent haste to hear the sound of his own gay wedding bells!" As surely as though he had heard her speak the complaints, did Karl picture to himself the manner of them. In good truth, he would no have preferred to marry so soon himself; but it was right that private feelings should give way to Lucy. They were in a hurry to get her to a warmer place; and it was deemed better that Karl should go with her as her husband than as her lover. In the latter case, Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve must have gone--and he, the Colonel, wanted to be in England to attend to some matters of business. Sir Karl and his wife were to stay away for a year; perhaps more; the doctors thought it might be well for Lucy. Karl was only too glad to acquiesce: for the arrangement, as he candidly avowed, would leave him at liberty to allow his mother a year's undisturbed possession of Foxwood. And so the month of January came to an end, Lucy gaining ground regularly and quickly. As to Miss Blake, she stayed where she was, hardening her heart more and more against Karl Andinnian.

On the 6th of February Sir Karl went to London. The marriage was to take place in Paris on the 12th. He had various matters to transact, especially with his lawyers. The deeds of settlement on Lucy, previously despatched to Paris by Plunkett and Plunkett, had been already signed. When in London Karl wrote a short note to his mother, saying he was in town, and should run down to Foxwood to see her. In her reply, received by return of post, she begged he would not go down to Foxwood, as it might "only upset her"--if, the words ran, she might so far presume to deny his entrance to his own house.

It was rather a queer letter. Karl thought so as he studied it. By one of the sentences in it, it almost seemed as though Mrs. Andinnian were not aware of his projected marriage. The longer he reflected, the more desirable did it appear to him that he should see her. So he wrote again, craving pardon for disobeying her, but saying he must come down.

About six-o'clock in the evening he reached Foxwood. It was the last day of his stay; on the following one he must depart for Paris. A servant-maid admitted

him, and Hewitt came out of the dining-room. The man's face wore a look of surprise.

"I suppose my mother is expecting me, Hewitt."

"I think not, Sir Karl. I took a telegram to the station this morning, sir, to stop your coming," he added in a confidential tone, as he opened the door to announce his master.

Mrs. Andinnian was dining in solitary state in the solitary dining-room. She let fall her knife and fork, and rose up with an angry glare. Her dress was of the deepest mourning, all crape. Save the widow's cap, she had not put on mourning so deep for her husband as she wore for her ill-fated son.

"How did you dare to come, after my prohibitory telegram, Karl?" she exclaimed, imperiously.

"I have had no telegram from you, mother," was his reply. "None whatever."

"One was sent to you this morning."

"I missed it, then. I have been about London all day, and did not return to the hotel before coming here."

He had been standing close to her with his hand extended. She looked fixedly at him for a few moments, and then allowed her hand to meet his.

"It cannot be helped, now; but I am not well enough to entertain visitors," she remarked. "Hewitt, Sir Karl will take some dinner."

"You surely do not look on me as a visitor," he said, smiling, and taking the chair at table that Hewitt placed. But, for all the smile, there was pain at his heart. "My stay will be a very short one, mother," he added, "for I must be away long before dawn to-morrow morning."

"The shorter the better," answered Mrs. Andinnian. And Sir Karl could not help feeling that it was scarcely the thing to say to a man coming to his own house.

He observed that only Hewitt was waiting at table: that no one else was called

to bring in things required by the fact of his unexpected intrusion. Hewitt had to go backwards and forwards. During one of these absences Karl asked his mother *why* she should have objected to his coming.

"You have been told," she answered. "I am not in a state to bear the least excitement or to see any one. No visitor whatever is welcomed at Foxwood. My troubles are great, Karl."

"I wish I could lighten them for you, mother."

"You only increase them. But not willingly, I am sure, Karl. No fault lies with you."

It was the kindest thing she had said to him. As they went on talking, Karl became more and more convinced, from chance expressions, that she was in ignorance of his engagement and approaching marriage. When Hewitt had finally left them together after dinner, Karl told her of it. It turned out that Mrs. Andinnian had never received the letter from Paris: though where the fault lay, Karl could not divine. He remembered that he had given it to the waiter of the Hôtel Montaigne to post--a man he had always found to be very exact. Whether he had neglected it, or whether the loss lay at the door of the post itself, the fact was the same--it had never reached Mrs. Andinnian.

She started violently when Karl told her. He noticed it particularly, because she was in general so cold and calm a woman. After staring at Karl for a minute or two she turned her gaze to the fire and sat in silence, listening to him.

"Married!" she exclaimed, when he had stopped. "Married!--and your brother scarcely cold in his dishonoured grave! It must not be, Karl."

Karl explained to her why it must be. Lucy's health required a more genial climate, and he had to take her to one without delay. When respect for the dead and consideration for the living clash, it was right and just that the former should give way, he observed. Mrs. Andinnian did not interrupt him; and he went on to state the arrangements he had completed as to Lucy's settlement. He then intimated, in the most delicate words he could use, that their proposed prolonged residence abroad would afford his mother at present undisturbed possession of Foxwood; and he mentioned the income (a very liberal one) he had secured to her for life.

She never answered a word. She made no comment whatever, good or bad; but sat gazing into the fire as before. Karl thought she was hopelessly offended with him.

He said that he had a letter to write. Mrs. Andinnian gave a dash at the bell and ordered Hewitt to place ink and paper before Sir Karl. When tea came in she spoke a few words--asking whether he would take sugar and such like--but, that excepted, maintained her silence. Afterwards, she sat at the fire again in her arm-chair; buried in disturbed thought; and then she rose to pace the room with uncertain steps, like one who is racked by anxious perplexity. At first Karl felt both annoyed and vexed, for he thought she was making more of the matter than she need have done; but soon he began to doubt whether she had not some trouble upon her apart from him and his concerns. A word, that unwittingly escaped her, confirmed him in this.

"Mother," he said, "you seem to be in great distress of your own: for I cannot believe that any proceedings of mine would thus disturb you."

"I am, Karl. I am."

"Will you not let me share it, then?--and, if possible, soothe it? You will find me a true son."

Mrs. Andinnian came back to her seat and replied calmly. "If you could help me in any way, Karl, you should hear it. But you cannot--you cannot, that I can see. Man is born to trouble, you know, as the sparks fly upwards."

"I thought that *I* had offended you: at least, pained you by my coming marriage. It grieved me very much."

"My trouble is my own," she answered.

Karl could not imagine what it could be. He tried to think of various causes--just as we all do in a similar case--and rejected them again. She had always been a strangely independent, secretive woman: and such women, given to act with the daring independence of man, but possessing not man's freedom of power, may at times drift into troubled seas. Karl greatly feared it must be something of this kind. Debt? Well, he did *not* think it could be debt. He had never known of any outlets of expense: and surely, if this were so, his mother would apply to him to release her. But, still the idea kept coming back again: for he felt sure she

had not given the true reason for wishing to keep him away from Foxwood, and he could not think of any other trouble. Sunk in these thoughts, he happened to raise his glance and caught his mother's sharp eyes inquisitively fixed on him.

"What are you deliberating upon, Karl?"

"I was wondering what your care could be."

"Better not wonder. *You* could not help me. Had my brave Adam been alive, I might have told him. He was daring, Karl; you are not."

"Not daring, mother? I? I think I am sufficiently so. At any rate, I could be as daring as the best in your interests."

"Perhaps you might. But it would not serve me, you see. And sympathy--the sympathy that my poor lost Adam gave me--I have never from you sought or wished for."

She was plain at any rate. Karl felt the stab, just as he had felt many other of her stabs during his life. Mrs. Andinnian shook off her secret thoughts with a kind of shiver; and, to banish them, began talking with Karl of ordinary things.

"What has become of Ann Hopley?" he enquired. "She was much attached to you: I thought perhaps you might have kept her on."

"Ann Hopley?--oh, the servant I had at Weymouth. No, I did not keep her on, Karl. She had a husband, you know."

At ten o'clock Mrs. Andinnian wished him goodnight and good-bye, and retired. Karl sat on, thinking and wondering. He was sorry she did not place confidence in him, and so give him a chance of helping her: but she never had, and he supposed she never would. At times--and this was one--it had almost seemed to Karl as though she could not be his mother.

CHAPTER X.

"Will you take anything, Sir Karl?"

The question came from Hewitt, who had looked in to ask for orders for the morning, arousing his master from a curious train of thought.

"I don't mind a drop of hot brandy and water, Hewitt. Half a glass. Something or other seems to have given me the shivers. Is it a cold night?"

"No, Sir Karl; the night's rather warm than cold."

"Has my mother any particular trouble or worry upon her, Hewitt, do you know?" he asked, as he mechanically watched the mixing of the spirit and water. "She seems to be very much put out."

"I have noticed it myself, sir; but I don't know what the cause is," was the answer. "For my part, I don't think she has been at all herself since Sir Adam's death. Loving him as she did--why, of course, sir, it was a heavy blow; one not to be got over easily."

"And that's true, Hewitt. How many servants have you here?" resumed Karl, asking the question not really with any particular care to know, but simply to turn the subject.

"There's me and two maids, sir."

"You and two maids!" echoed Karl, in surprise. "Yes, sir, me and two maids. That's all; except the out o' door gardeners."

"But that's not enough for Foxwood. It is only what we had in Northamptonshire. How does the work get done? Why does my mother not keep more?"

"My mistress says she can't afford more, Sir Karl," returned Hewitt, who seemed sore upon the point, and spoke shortly.

"But she can afford more," returned Karl, impulsively; "a great many more.

Her income is a large one now."

Hewitt rubbed his bald head with an air of perplexity. Karl spoke to him of things that he would not have entered on with any less esteemed and faithful servant. Hewitt had been so long in the family that he seemed like an old confidential friend. From his boyhood's days, Karl had looked up to Hewitt with respect The man stood before his master, as if intending to wait and see him drink the brandy-and-water.

"There can be no debts, you know, Hewitt," spoke Sir Karl, hastily.

Hewitt did not evince any surprise whatever at the implied suggestion. It seemed to be rather the contrary.

"I have fancied that my mistress had some embarrassment on her mind, sir, such as debt might cause," was the rejoinder, much to Karl's astonishment. "I have fancied her money goes somewhere--though I should never hint at such a thing to anybody but you, sir; nor to you if you had not asked me. Perhaps Sir Adam left some debts behind him."

"No, he did not, Hewitt. Any debts left by Sir Adam would have been paid out of the estate before it came to me. Plunkett and Plunkett informed me at once that there were no debts at all: except the costs of the trial."

"Then it must be some that have cropped up since: that is, the claim for them," surmised Hewitt. "It is what I've thought myself, Sir Karl."

"But why have you thought it?"

"Well, sir, one can't help one's thoughts," answered Hewitt, falling away from the question--but not intentionally. "One evening, sir, when my mistress seemed fit to die with trouble, I asked her if anything had happened to vex her: and she answered--after looking at me sternly in silence--No, nothing fresh; only some sorrow of a good many years ago. It was the evening after that gentleman called, Sir Karl: a gentleman who came and stayed with her ever so long."

"What gentleman?" asked Karl.

"Some stranger, sir; I didn't know him. He came up to the house and asked for Mrs. Andinnian. I told him (they were my general orders) that Mrs. Andinnian

was not well enough to see visitors. Oh, indeed, he said, and asked to come in and write a note. I was standing by when he began to write it, and he ordered me to the other end of the room: I suppose he feared I might look over. It seemed to me that he wrote but one or two words, Sir Karl; not more: quite in a minute the paper was folded and sealed--for he told me to light the taper. 'There,' said he, 'take that to Mrs. Andinnian: I think she'll see me.' My mistress was very angry when I took it to her, asking why I disobeyed orders; but when she opened it, her face went deadly white, and she bade me show the gentleman up to her sitting-room. He was there about two hours, sir."

Karl thought this rather strange. "What sort of man was he, Hewitt?"

"A well-dressed gentleman, sir; tall. He had had a hurt to his left arm, and wore it in a black silk sling. When he took it out of the sling to seal the note, he could hardly use it at all. It was that same evening after he had been, sir, that my mistress seemed so full of trouble: a great deal more so than usual."

"Did you hear his name?"

"No, sir, I didn't hear his name. A tray of luncheon was ordered up for him; and by the little that I heard said when I took it in and fetched it away, I gathered that he was a gentleman applying for the agency of your estate."

"But I do not require an agent," cried Karl in some wonder.

"Well, sir, I'm sure that's what the gentleman was talking of. And my mistress afterwards said a word or two to me about the place being neglected now Sir Karl was absent, and she thought she should appoint an agent to look after it."

"But the place is not neglected," reiterated Karl. "How long was this ago?"

"About three weeks, Sir Karl. I've not heard anything of it since, or seen the gentleman. But my mistress seems to have some secret care or uneasiness, apart from the death of Sir Adam. She seems always to be in an inward worry--and you know how different from that she used to be. It has struck me, Sir Karl, that perhaps that stranger came to prefer some claims left by Sir Adam."

Karl did not think this likely, and said so. But neither of them could be at any certainty.

"I wish you would write to me from time to time during my absence, Hewitt, and let me know how my mother is," resumed Karl, dropping the unsatisfactory subject.

"And that I will with pleasure, Sir Karl, if you will furnish me with an address to write to."

"And be sure, Hewitt, that you send to me in any trouble or sickness. I wish my poor mother's life was a less lonely one!"

Hewitt shook his head as he left the room. He felt sure that his mistress would

never more allow her life to be anything but a lonely one: the light of it had gone out of it for ever with her beloved son.

Sir Karl went up to his chamber shortly. Before he had well closed his door, a maid knocked at it, and said Mrs. Andinnian wished to see him. Karl had supposed his mother to be in bed: instead of that, he found her standing by the fire in her little sitting-room, and not undressed.

"Shut the door, Karl," she said--and he saw that her face was working with some painful emotion. "I have been debating a question with myself the better part of this evening, down stairs and up--whether or no I shall disclose to you the trouble that is upon us: and I have resolved to do so. Of two evils, it may, perhaps, be the least."

"I am very glad indeed, my mother."

"Hush!" she solemnly said, lifting a warning hand. "Speak not before you know. Glad! It has been consideration for you, Sir Karl," she added, in that stern and distant tone that so pained him, "that has alone kept me silent. You have no doubt been thinking me unnaturally cold and reserved; but my heart has been aching. Aching for you. If I have not loved you with the passionate love I bore for your poor brother--and oh, Karl, he was my firstborn!--I have not been so neglectful of you as you may imagine. In striving to keep you away from Foxwood, I was but anxious that your peace should not be imperilled earlier than it was obliged to be."

"Let me hear it mother. I can bear it, I daresay."

"You may *bear* it, Karl. A man can bear most things. But, my son, I dread to tell it you. You will regard it as an awful calamity, a frightful perplexity, and your spirit may faint under it."

Karl smiled sadly. "Mother, after the calamities I have undergone within the past year I do not think Fate can have any worse in store for me."

"Wait--and judge. Your anger will naturally fall on me, Karl, as the chief author of it. Blame me, my son, to your heart's content: it is my just due. I would soften the story to you if I knew how: but it admits not of softening. What is done cannot be undone."

Mrs. Andinnian rose, opened the door, looked up and down the corridor, shut it again, and bolted it. "I do not need to fear eaves-droppers in the house," she observed, "and the doors are thick: but this secret is as a matter of life or death. Sit down there, Karl,"--pointing to a chair opposite her own.

"I would rather stand, mother."

"Sit down," she reiterated: and Karl took his elbow from the mantel-piece, and obeyed her. He did not seem very much impressed with what he was about to hear: at least not to the extent that her preparation seemed to justify. Each leaned forward, looking at the other. Mrs. Andinnian had her arms on the elbows of her chair; Karl's were crossed.

"First of all, Karl, you will take an oath, a solemn vow to God, that you will never disclose this secret to any human being without my consent."

"Is this necessary, mother?"

"It is necessary for you and for me," she sharply answered, as if the question vexed her. "I tell you nothing unless you do."

Karl rose, and took the oath. Resuming his seat as before, he waited.

No, she could not say it. They sat, gazing at each other, she in agitation, he in expectancy; and for a minute or two she literally could not say what she had to say. It came forth at last. Only four words.

Only four words. But Karl Andinnian as he heard them sprang up with a cry: almost as the ill-fated man Martin Scott had sprung, when shot to death by his brother.

"Mother! This cannot be true!"

Mrs. Andinnian went over to him and pushed him gently into his chair. "Hush, Karl; make no noise," she soothingly whispered. "It would not do, you see, for the household to be alarmed."

He looked up at his mother with a kind of frightened gaze. She turned away and resumed her seat. Karl sat still, tumultuous ideas crowding on him one after another.

"You should have disclosed this to me before I engaged myself to marry," he cried at last with a burst of emotion.

"But don't you see, Karl, I did not know of your intended marriage. It is because you have informed me of it to-night that I disclose it now."

"Would you have kept it from me always?"

"That could not have been. You must have heard it some time. Listen, Karl: you shall have the story from beginning to end."

It was one o'clock in the morning, before Karl Andinnian quitted his mother's room. His face seemed to have aged years. Any amount of perplexity he could have borne for himself, and borne it calmly; but he did not know how to grapple with this. For what had been disclosed to him ought to do away with his proposed marriage.

He did not attempt to go to bed. The whole of the rest of the night he paced his room, grievously tormented as to what course he should take. The wind, howling and raging around the house--for it was one of the most turbulent of nights--seemed but an index of his turbulent mind. He knew that in honour he was bound to disclose the truth to Colonel Cleeve and Lucy; but this might not be. Not only was he debarred by his oath; but the facts themselves did not admit of disclosure. In the confusion of his mind he said to his mother, "May I not give a hint of this to Lucy Cleeve, and let her then take me or leave me?" and Mrs. Andinnian had replied by demanding whether he was mad. In truth, it would have been nothing short of madness.

What to do? what to do? In dire distress Karl Andinnian strode the carpet as he asked it. He might make some other excuse, if indeed he could invent one, and write to break off the marriage--for, break it off to their faces he could not. But, what would be the effect on Lucy? Colonel Cleeve had not concealed that they gave her to him to save her life. Were he to abandon her in this cowardly and heartless manner, now at the eleventh hour, when they were literally preparing the meats for the breakfast table, when Lucy's wedding lobe and wreath were spread out ready to be worn, it might throw her back again to worse than before, and verily and indeed kill her. It was a dilemma that has rarely fallen on man. Karl Andinnian was as honest and honourable a man as any in this world, and he could see no way out of it: no opening of one. He might not

impart to them so much as a hint of the dreadful secret; neither could he inflict the stab that might cost Lucy's life: on the other hand, to make Lucy his wife, knowing what he now knew, would be dishonour unutterable. What was he to do? What was he to do? There was absolutely no loophole of escape, no outlet on either side.

Karl Andinnian knelt down and prayed. Man, careless, worldly man, rarely does these things. He did. In his dire distress he prayed to be guided to the right. But all the uncertainty came back as he rose up again, and he could not see his course at all. Very shortly Hewitt knocked at his door: saying it was time for Sir Karl to get up, if he would catch the passing train. When Sir Karl came forth Hewitt thought how very quickly he had dressed.

"It is a rough morning, sir," said Hewitt, as he opened the hall door.

"Ay, I can hear that. Farewell, Hewitt."

Delayed a tide by the non-controllable winds and waves, Sir Karl reached Paris only on the evening of the eleventh. He drove at once from the station to the Avenue d'Antin, and asked to see Lucy in private. Torn by conflicting interests, he had at length resolved to sacrifice his own sense of honour to Lucy's life. At least, if she should not decide against it.

She was looking radiant. She told him (in a jest) that they had considered him lost, that all had prophesied he had decamped and deserted her. Karl's smile in answer to this was so faint, his few words were so spiritless and subdued, that Lucy, a little sobered, asked whether anything was the matter. They were standing on the hearth-rug: Karl a few steps apart from her.

"What should you say if I had deserted you, Lucy?"

"I should just have said Bon voyage, monsieur," she answered gaily, never believing the question had a meaning.

"Lucy, my dear, this is no time for jesting. I have come back with a great care upon me. It is a fact, believe it or not as you will, that I had at one time determined to desert you: to write and give you up."

There was no immediate answer, and Karl turned his eyes on her. The words told home. Her blanched face had a great terror dawning on it.

"Sit down, Lucy, while you listen to me," he said, placing her in a chair. "I must disclose somewhat of this to you, but it cannot be much."

Remaining standing himself, he told her what he could. It was a most arduous task to speak at all, from the difficulties that surrounded it. A great and unexpected misfortune had fallen upon him, he said; one that from its nature he might not further allude to. It would take away a good deal of his substance; it ought in short to debar his marriage with her. He went on to tell of the conflict he had passed through, as to whether he should quit her or not, and of his final resolve to disclose so much to her, and to leave with her the decision. If she decided against him, he would invent some other plea to Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve for breaking off the marriage; or let the act appear to come from her, as she should will. If she decided for him, why then----

"Tell me one thing, Karl," she said as he broke down. "Has this matter had its rise in any dishonour or ill-doing of yours?"

"No," was the emphatic rejoinder. "I am as innocent in it, and until a day or two ago, was as unconscious of it as you can be. You need not fear that, Lucy."

"Then on your part you need not have doubted me, Karl," she said, the glad tears rising to her eyes with the intensity of her relief. "It was cruel of you to think of a separation now. I am yours."

"Lucy, look fully into the future. At least as fully as these indefinite words of mine will admit of. I hope--I trust--that no further complication may come of it; that it may be never known
to the world. But it may, and probably will, be otherwise. A great calamity may fall upon us; in the world's eyes we should both be dishonoured--*dishonoured*, Lucy; I through others, you through me."

"I am yours; yours for all time," was the reiterated answer.

"Very well, Lucy. So be it. But, my darling, if that blow should fall, you may repent of your marriage with me. I know your parents would repent it for you."

"Hush, Karl!" she whispered, rising from her seat to the arms opening to receive her. " *I* repent? That can never be. My dearest friend, my almost husband, I am yours for weal or for woe. Have you forgotten the vows I shall take to you to-morrow in the sight of God? For richer for poorer, for better for

worse."

"God bless you, Lucy! May God bless and protect us both." And as Sir Karl held her to him, his frame shook with its own emotion, and a scalding tear fell on her face from an aching heart.

The second week in March, just as nearly as possible a month after the marriage, Sir Karl Andinnian received at Florence, where he and his wife were staying, a telegram from Hewitt at Foxwood. It stated that Mrs. Andinnian was ill with some kind of fever; it had taken a dangerous turn, and her life might be a question of a few hours.

As quickly as it was practicable for them to travel, Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian reached Paris. Mrs. Cleeve and Miss Blake were still there; the Colonel was in London. The Cleeves had let their house at Winchester, and could not yet get back to it. Sir Karl left Lucy with her mother: not daring, as he said, to take her on to Foxwood, lest the fever should be infectious. The change in Lucy was wonderful: her cheeks were plump and rosy, her eyes told their own unmistakable tale of happiness. Mrs. Cleeve could do nothing but look at her.

"We did well to give her to him," said she to Theresa. But, for answer, Miss Blake only drew in her lips. The sting had not left her.

"O Karl, my darling, don't stay long away from me!" whispered Lucy, clinging to him in the moment of his departure. "And be sure take care of yourself, Karl, and do not run any risk, if you can help it, of the fever."

With many a sweet word of reassurance, murmured between his farewell kisses of passionate tenderness, Karl answered her. To part with one another, even for this short and temporary space of time, seemed a great trial.

A change for the better had taken place in Mrs. Andinnian, when Karl arrived at Foxwood. She was in no immediate danger. Mr. Moore, the surgeon at Foxwood, informed him that he must not trust to this improvement. The fever had in a degree subsided, but her state of prostration was so great that he feared she might yet die of the weakness. Karl inquired the nature of the illness: Mr. Moore replied that it was a species of low fever more than anything else, and appeared to have been induced chiefly by the sad state of mind Mrs. Andinnian had been brought into, grieving over the fate of her elder son. Dr. Cavendish of

Basham (the neighbouring market town) had attended regularly with Mr. Moore. Sir Karl at once telegraphed to London for a physician of world-wide reputation. When this great doctor arrived, he only confirmed the treatment and opinion of the other two; and said that nothing could well be more uncertain than the recovery of Mrs. Andinnian.

Karl wrote these various items of information to his wife in Paris, and showed her how impossible it was that he could quit his mother during the uncertainty. Lucy replied by saying she should think very ill of him if he could; but she begged him to allow her to come to Foxwood and help him in the nursing, saying she was not afraid of the fever. She added a pretty and affectionate message to Mrs. Andinnian that she would find in her a loving daughter. The same post brought Karl a letter from Mrs. Cleeve, who evidently *was* afraid of the fever. " *Do* you take precautions for yourself, dear Sir Karl, and *do* you fumigate all letters before you send them out?" Such was its chief burthen.

Karl believed there was no danger from the fever: but, alas, he dared not have Lucy. He had reached Foxwood only to find more complication than ever in the unhappy secret disclosed to him by his mother. Only a word or two dropped by her--and in her weak, and sometimes semi-lucid state, he could not be sure she would not drop them--and Lucy might know as much as he did. Besides, there was no establishment at Foxwood sufficient to receive Lady Andinnian.

Hour after hour, day after day, he sat by his mother's bedside. When they were alone, she could only whisper of the trouble she had disclosed to him. Karl felt that it was wearing her out. He told her so, and she did not deny it. Never for a moment did she let the subject rest: it filled her mind to the exclusion of everything else in the world.

Karl felt that death would inevitably end it: and he watched her grow weaker. The strain upon his own mind was great. Brooding over the matter as he did--for, in truth, to think of any other theme was not practicable--he saw what a wrong he had committed in marrying Lucy. Sir Karl's only interludes of change lay in the visits of the medical men. Dr. Cavendish came once a day; Mr. Moore twice or thrice. The latter was rather brusque in his manner, but kindly, keen, and sensible. He was plain, with a red face and nose that turned up; and brown hair tinged with grey. The more Karl saw of him, the more he liked him: and he felt sure he was clever in his calling.

"It is a great misfortune that Mrs. Andinnian should have taken poor Sir Adam's death so much to heart," Mr. Moore one day observed to Karl, when he found his patient exhausted, restless, in all ways worse. "While she cultivates this unhappy frame of mind, we can do nothing for her."

"Her love for my brother was a great love, Mr. Moore; quite passing the ordinary love of mothers."

"No doubt of that. Still, Sir Karl, it is not right to let regret for his death kill her."

Karl turned the conversation. He knew how wrong were the surgeon's premises. Her regret for his brother's death had been terrible: but it was not that that was killing Mrs. Andinnian.

The days went on, Mrs. Andinnian growing weaker and weaker. Her mind had regained unfortunately all its activity: unfortunately because she had not strength of body to counterbalance its workings. Karl had a great deal to do for her: consultations to hold with her and letters to write; but even yet he was not admitted to her full confidence. During that night's interview with her, when he had learned so much, he had enquired who the gentleman was that had called and taken luncheon. Mrs. Andinnian had declined to answer him, further than it was a Mr. Smith who had applied for the agency of Sir Karl's estate. Hewitt informed him that Mr. Smith had called again the very day succeeding Sir Karl's departure. He had held a long interview with Mrs. Andinnian, and she had never been well since that hour.

It was very strange: strange altogether. Karl now found out that Mr. Smith had been appointed the agent, and had had a house side by side with Foxwood Court assigned to him as his residence. The information nearly struck Karl dumb. He felt sure there was more behind, some inexplicable cause for this: but no more satisfactory explanation could he obtain from his mother. " *She* was ill, *he* was going to live abroad, therefore it was necessary some responsible person should be on the spot to look after things," was all she said. And Mr. Smith arrived at Foxwood and took up his abode: and Sir Karl did not dare to forbid it.

To Karl's intense surprise, the next letter he had from his wife was dated London. They had left Paris and come over. With his whole heart Karl hoped they would not be coming to Foxwood; and in his answering letter he talked a

good deal about the "fever."

As to himself, he was wearing to a shadow. One might surely have thought he had a fever, and a wasting one. In writing to Mrs. Cleeve he admitted he was not well; and she wrote him back four pages full of instructions for fumigation, and beseeching him not to come to them. There is nothing like trouble to wear out a man.

The event that had been prognosticated by the doctors and feared by Karl took place--Mrs. Andinnian died. In the midst of praying for a few days' longer life, she died. Only a few days, had run her incessant prayer; a few days! Karl's anguish, what with the death, and what with the weight of other things, seemed more than he could bear. Mrs. Andinnian's grave was made close to that of her son Adam: and the funeral was a very quiet one.

Karl remained at Foxwood, ostensibly fumigating the house and himself preparatory to joining his wife in town. He looked as much like a skeleton as a man. Mr. Moore noticed it, and asked what was coming to him.

One day Mr. Smith, the agent, called, and was shown in to Sir Karl. The interview lasted about twenty minutes, and then the bell was rung.

"Is the gentleman going to remain here as your agent, sir?" enquired Hewitt, with the familiarity of an old servant, when he had closed the door on the guest.

"Why, yes, Hewitt, while I am away. My mother appointed him. She thought it better some one should be here to act for me--and I suppose it is right that it should be so."

Freely and lightly spoke Karl. But in good truth Mr. Smith fairly puzzled him. He knew no more who he was or whence he came than he had known before; though he did now know what his business was at Foxwood. Mr. Smith's conversation during the interview had turned on the Foxwood estate: but he must have been aware Sir Karl saw all the while that his agency was only a blind--a blind to serve as a pretext for his residence at Foxwood. The two were playing a shallow part of pretence with one another. Mrs. Andinnian had fixed the amount of salary he was to receive, and Sir Karl meant to continue the payment of it. Why?--the reader may ask. Because Sir Karl dared not refuse; for the man knew too much of Mrs. Andinnian's dangerous secret: and it lay in his power to render it more dangerous still.

At length Sir Karl went up to London to rejoin his wife. Lucy gave a startled cry when she saw him--he was looking so ill; and Mrs. Cleeve accused him of having had the fever. Karl turned it off lightly: it was nothing, he said, but the confinement to his mother's sick-room.

But Miss Blake, who was growing very keen in her propensity for making the world better than it is, could not understand two things. Why Karl need have lingered so long at Foxwood, or why he could not have had his wife there.

CHAPTER XI.

At the Gate of the Maze

A more charming place than Foxwood Court presented in the summer months when the rare and sweet flowers by which it was surrounded were in bloom, could not have been found in the Kentish county. The mansion was not very large, but it was exceedingly gay and pretty to look upon; a white building with a goodly number of large windows, those on the lower floor mostly opening to the ground, so that the terrace could be gained from the rooms at will. The terrace--a gravel walk with brilliant flower beds on either side--ran along the front and the two sides of the house. A marble step or two in four places descended to a lower walk, or terrace, and from thence there was spread out the level lawn, a wide expanse, dotted with beds of flowers, and bounded with groves of beautiful trees. The chief entrance to the house was in its centre: a pillared portico, surmounting a flight of steps that led down to the broad walk dividing the lawn. At the end of this walk between the bank of trees were the large iron gates and the lodge; and there were two or three small private gates of egress besides in the iron palisades that enclosed the grounds beyond the trees. If there was a fault to be found with the locality altogether, it perhaps was that it had too many trees about it.

The iron gates opened upon a broad highway: but one that from

circumstances, now to be explained, was not much used, except by visitors to Foxwood Court. To the left of the gates a winding road led round to the village of Foxwood; it lay in front, distant about a quarter of a mile. To the right the road went straight to the little railway station: but as there was also a highway from the village to the station direct, cutting off all the round by Foxwood Court, it will readily be understood why that part of the road was rarely used. In the village of Foxwood there were a few good and a few poor houses; some shops; a church and parsonage, the incumbent an elderly man named Sumnor; Mr. Moore, the surgeon; and a solicitor, Mr. St. Henry, who was universally called in the place Lawyer St. Henry. Some good mansions were scattered about in the vicinity; and it was altogether a favoured and attractive neighbourhood.

In a small but very pretty room of Foxwood Court, at the side of the house that looked towards the railway station, and faced the north, sat Mrs. Cleeve and Miss Blake at breakfast. It was a warm and lovely June morning. The table, set off with beautiful china from the Worcester manufactories, with silver plate, and with a glass of choice flowers, was drawn close to the window, whose doors were wide open. By Mrs. Cleeve's hand lay a letter just received from her daughter, Lady Andinnian, saying that she and Karl were really commencing their journey home.

But for interference, how well the world might get on! After Karl Andinnian quitted Foxwood to rejoin his wife in London--as was related previously--Lucy had so far regained her health and strength that there was really no need for her to go, as had been arranged, to another climate. She herself wished not to go, but to take up her abode at once at Foxwood Court, and Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve seeing her so well, said they would prefer that she should remain in England. Karl, however, ruled it otherwise; and to the Continent he went with his wife. Nothing more would have been thought of this, but for Miss Blake. She was very keen-sighted, and she was fond of interference. Somewhat of love still, anger, and jealousy rankled in her heart against Karl Andinnian. Anything she could say against him she did say: and she contrived to impress Mrs. Cleeve with a notion that he, in a sort, had kidnapped Lucy and was taking her abroad for some purposes of his own. She boldly averred that Sir Karl had been *keeping* his wife away from Foxwood by statements of the fever, and such like, false and plausible: and that he probably meant to hide her away from them in some remote place for ever.

This served to startle Mrs. Cleeve--though she only half believed it. She wrote

to Sir Karl, saying that both herself and the Colonel wished to see Lucy home, and begged of him to return and take up his abode at Foxwood. Karl replied that Foxwood was not ready for them; there was no establishment. Mrs. Cleeve wrote again--urging that she and Theresa should go down and engage two or three servants, just enough to receive himself and Lucy: afterwards they could take on more at will. A few days' delay and Karl's second answer came. He thanked Mrs. Cleeve for the trouble she offered to take, and accepted it: specifying a wish that the servants should be natives of the
locality--and who had always lived in it.

"Karl wishes to employ his poor neighbours," observed Mrs. Cleeve. "He is right, Theresa. You must see how good and thoughtful he is."

Theresa could find no cause to confute this much. But she was more and more persuaded that Sir Karl would have kept Lucy away from Foxwood if he could. And we must admit that it looked like it.

Mrs. Cleeve lost no time in going down with Miss Blake to Foxwood Court. Hewitt, who had been left in charge, with an elderly woman, received them. They thought they had never seen a more respectable or thoroughly efficient retainer than Hewitt. The gardeners were the only other servants employed. They lived out of doors: the chief one, Maclean, inhabiting the lodge with his wife.

While Miss Blake was looking out for some young women servants, two or three of whom were speedily found and engaged, she made it her business to look also after the village and its inhabitants. That Miss Blake had a peculiar faculty for searching out information, was indisputable: never a better one for the task than she: and when an individual is gifted with this quality in a remarkable degree, it has to be more or less exercised. Miss Blake might have been a successful police detective: attached to a private inquiry office she would have made its fortune.

And what she learnt gave her a profound contempt for Foxwood. We are speaking of the village now: not the Court. In the first place, there was no church: or, at least, what Miss Blake chose to consider none. The vicar, Mr. Sumnor, set his face against views of an extreme kind, and that was enough for Miss Blake to wage war with. Old Sumnor, to sum him up in Miss Blake's words, might be conscientious enough, but he was as slow as a tortoise. She attended his church the first Sunday, and found it unbearably tame. There were

no candles or flowers or banners or processions: and there was no regular daily service held. Miss Blake thought one might as well be without breakfast and dinner. Foxwood was a benighted place and nothing less.

Mr. Sumnor's family consisted of an invalid daughter left him by his first wife; a second wife and two more daughters. Mrs. Sumnor kept him in subjection, and her two daughters were showy and fast young ladies. The surgeon, Mr. Moore, a widower, had four blooming girls, and a sister, Aunt Diana, a kind of strong-minded female, who took care of them. The young ladies were pretty, but common-place. As to the lawyer, St. Henry, he had no children of his own, but had taken to a vast many of his dead brother's. There were many other young ladies in the vicinity; but it was an absolute fact that there were no gentlemen--husbands and fathers of families excepted; for the few sons that existed were gone out to make their way in the world. Miss Blake considered it not at all a desirable state of things, and accorded it her cool contempt. But the place showed itself friendly, and came flocking in its simple manners and hearty good will to see the Hon. Mrs. Cleeve, Lady Andinnian's mother, and to ask what it could do for her. So that Miss Blake, whether she liked it or not, soon found herself on terms of sociability with Foxwood.

One morning an idea dawned upon her that seemed like a ray from heaven. Conversing with the Miss St. Henrys, those ladies--gushing damsels with enough brown hair on their heads to make a decent-sized hayrick, and in texture it was nearly as coarse as hay--informed her confidentially that they also considered the place dead, in the matter of religion. Often visiting an aunt in London--whose enviable roof-top was cast within the shadow of a high ritualistic establishment, boasting of great hourly doings and five charming curates--it might readily be imagined the blight that fell upon them when doomed to return to Foxwood Church and plain old Sumnor: and they breathed a devout wish that a church after their own hearts might be established at Foxwood, This was the ray of light that flashed upon Miss Blake. She started at its brightness. A new church at Foxwood! If the thing were possible to be accomplished, *she* would accomplish it. The Rev. Guy Cattacomb, what with prejudiced bishops and old-world clergymen, did not appear to be appreciated according to his merits, and had not yet found any active field for his views and services. Miss Blake was in occasional correspondence with him, and knew this. From being a kind of dead-and-alive creature under the benighting torpidity of Foxwood, Miss Blake leaped at once into an energetic woman. An object was given her: and she wrote a long letter to Mr. Cattacomb telling him what it was. This morning his answer had

been delivered to her.

She chirped to the birds as she sat at breakfast: she threw them crumbs out at the window. Mrs. Cleeve was quitting Foxwood that day, but hoped to be down again soon after Karl and her daughter reached it.

"You are sure, Theresa, you do not mind being left alone here?" cried Mrs. Cleeve, eating her poached egg.

But Theresa, buried in her own active schemes, and in the letter she had just had from Mr. Cattacomb--though she did not mention aloud the name of the writer--neither heard nor answered. Mrs. Cleeve put the question again.

"Mind being left here? Oh dear no, I shall like it. I hated the place the first few days, but I am quite reconciled to it now."

"And you know exactly what there is to do for the arrival of Sir Karl and Lucy, Theresa?"

"Why of course I do, Mrs. Cleeve. There's Hewitt, too: he is a host in himself."

Breakfast over, Miss Blake, as was customary, went out. Having no daily service to take up her time, she hardly knew how to employ it. Mr. Cattacomb's letter had told her that he should be most happy to come to officiate at Foxwood if a church could be provided for him: the difficulty presenting itself to Miss Blake's mind was--that there was no church to provide. As Miss Blake had observed to Jane St. Henry only yesterday, she knew they might just as well ask the Dean of Westminster for his abbey, as old Sumnor for his church, or the minister for his Dissenting chapel opposite the horse-pond.

Revolving these slight drawbacks in her brain, Miss Blake turned to the right on leaving the gates. Generally speaking she had gone the other way, towards the village. This road to the right was more solitary. On one side of it were the iron palisades and the grove of trees that shut in Foxwood; on the other it was bounded by a tall hedge that had more trees behind it. A little farther on, this tall hedge had a gate in the middle, high and strong, its bars of iron so closely constructed that it would not have been well possible for
ill-intentioned tramps to mount it. The gate stood back a little, the road winding in just there, and was much shut in by trees outside as well as in. Opposite the

gate, over the road, stood a pretty red-brick cottage villa, with green venetian shutters, creeping clematis around its parlour windows, and the rustic porch between them. It was called Clematis Cottage, and may be said to have joined the confines of Foxwood Court, there being only a narrow side-lane between, which led to the Court's stables and back premises. Miss Blake had before noticed the cottage and noticed the gate: she had wondered in her ever-active curiosity who occupied the one; she had wondered whether any dwelling was enclosed within the other. This morning as she passed, a boy stood watching the gate, his hands in his pockets and whistling to a small dog which had contrived to get its one paw into the gate and seemed to be in a difficulty as to getting it back again. Miss Blake, after taking a good look at Clematis Cottage, crossed the road; and the boy, in rustic politeness, turned his head and touched his shabby cap.

"Where does this gate lead to?" she asked. "To any house?"

"Yes, 'um," replied the boy, whose name, as he informed Miss Blake in reply to her question, was Tom Pepp. "It's the Maze."

"The Maze," she repeated, thinking the name had an odd sound. "Do you mean that it is a house, boy?--a dwelling place?"

"It be that, 'um, sure enough. Old Mr. Throcton used to live in't Folks said he was crazy."

"Why is it called the Maze!"

"It *is* a maze," said the boy, patting his dog, which had at length regained its liberty. "See that there path, 'um"--pointing to the one close within the gate--"and see them there trees ayont it?"

Miss Blake looked through the interstices of the gate at the trees beyond the path. They extended on all sides farther than she could see. Thick, clustering trees, and shrubs full of leafy verdure, with what looked like innumerable paths amidst them.

"That's the maze," said the boy, "and the place is called after it. Once get among them there trees, 'um, and you'd never get out again without the clue. The house is in the middle on't; a space cleared out, with a goodish big garden and grass-plat. I've been in three or four times when old Mr. Throcton lived there."

"Did you get in through the maze?" asked Miss Blake.

"Yes, 'um; there ain't no other way. 'Twere always along of mother; she knowed the housekeeper. The man servant he'd take us through the trees all roundabout and bring us out again."

"Where does this path lead to?" was the next question, speaking of the one inside between the labyrinth and the gate.

"He goes round and round and round again," was the lucid answer. "I've heard say that a door in it leads right to the house, 'um, but nobody can find the door save them that know it."

"What an extraordinary place!" exclaimed Miss Blake, much impressed with the narration. "One would think smugglers lived there--or people of that kind."

The boy's eyes--and intelligent eyes they were--went up to Miss Blake's. He did not particularly understand what a smuggler might be, but felt sure it could not apply to Mr. Throcton.

"Mr. Throcton was a rich gentleman that had always lived here," he said. "There warn't nothing wrong with him--only a bit crazy. For years afore he died, 'um, he'd never see nobody; and the house, mother said, were kept just like a prison."

Miss Blake, very curious, looked at the lock and tried to shake the gate. She might as well have tried to shake the air.

"Who lives in it now, Tom Pepp?"

"A young lady, 'um."

"A young lady?" echoed Miss Blake. "Who else?"

"Not nobody else," said the boy.

"Why, you don't mean to say a young lady lives alone there?"

"She do, 'um. She and a old servant or two."

"Is she married or single?"

Tom Pepp could not answer the last question. Supposed, now he came to think of it, she must be single, as no husband was there. He did not know her name.

"What is she like?" asked Miss Blake.

"I've never see'd her," said Tom Pepp. "I've never see'd her come out, and never see'd nobody go in but the butcher's boy. He don't go in, neither: he rings at the gate and waits there till they come to him. A woman in a poke bonnet comes out and does the other errands."

"Well, it must be a very lively place for a young lady!" mentally observed Miss Blake with sarcasm. "She must want to hide herself from the world."

"Mother see'd her at church once with her veil up. She'd never see'd nothing like her so pretty at Foxwood."

Turning to pursue her walk, Tom Pepp, who worked for Farmer Truefit, and who was in fact playing truant for half an hour and thought it might be policy not to play it any longer, turned also, the farm lying in that direction. At that moment, Miss Blake, happening to cast her eyes across the road, saw the head and shoulders of a gentleman stretched out of one of the sash windows of Clematis Cottage, evidently regarding her attentively.

"Who is that gentleman, Tom Pepp?"

"Him! Well now, what did I hear his name was again!" returned the lad, considering. "Smith. That's it. It's Mr. Smith, 'um. He be a stranger to the place, and come here just afore Mrs. Andinnian died. It's said he was some friend of her'n."

"Rather a curious person, that Mrs. Andinnian, was she not!" remarked Miss Blake, invited to gossip by the intelligence of the boy.

"I never seed her," was the reiteration. "I've never yet seed the new master of Foxwood, Sir Karl Andinnian. It's said Sir Karl is coming home himself soon," added the boy; "him and his lady. Hope he'll be as good for the place as Sir Joseph was."

They passed on; the opposite gentleman's eyes following Miss Blake: of which she was quite conscious. Soon they came to the road on the left hand that led direct to the village. Miss Blake glanced down it, but continued her walk straight onwards, as if she had a mind to go on to the railway station. Casting her eyes this way and that, she was attracted by a pile of ruins on the other side the road, with what looked like a kind of modern room amidst them.

"Why, what's that?" she cried to Tom Pepp, standing still to gaze.

"Oh, them be the ruins, 'um," answered Tom Pepp. "It had used to be the chapel belonging to the grey friars at the monastery."

"What friars?--what monastery!" eagerly returned Miss Blake, much interested.

The friars were dead years ago, and the monastery had crumbled to pieces, and Mr. Truefit's farm was built upon where it used to stand, was the substance of the boy's answer; delivered in terrible fright, for he caught sight of his master, Mr. Truefit, at a distance.

The farmhouse lay back beyond the first field. Miss Blake glanced at it; but all her interest was concentrated in these ruins close at hand.

"Surely they have not desecrated sacred ruins by putting up a barn amidst them!" she exclaimed, as she crossed the road to explore. There were half-crumbled walls around, part of an ivied stone block that she thought must have been the basement of a spire, and other fragments.

"It's not a barn," said Tom Pepp; "never was one. They mended some o' the old walls a few years ago, and made it into a school-room, and the children went to school in it--me for one. Not for long, though. Lady Andinnian and Sir Joseph--it was more her than him--fell out with Parson Sumnor and the trusts; and my lady said the children should never come to it again. After that, the trusts built 'em a school-room in the village; and 'twas said Sir Joseph sent 'em a five-hunderd pound in a letter and never writ a word to tell where it come from. He was a good man, he was, when my lady 'ud let him be."

Miss Blake did not hear half; she was lost in an idea that had taken possession of her, as she gazed about inside the room. It was narrow, though rather long, with bare whitewashed walls and rafters above, the windows on either side being

very high up.

"If this place was the chapel in the old times, it must have been consecrated!" cried she breathlessly.

"Very like, 'um," was the lad's answer, in blissful ignorance of her meaning. "Them grey friars used to eat their meals in it, I've heard tell, and hold jollifications."

Preoccupied, the sinful insinuation escaped Miss Blake. The conviction, that this consecrated place would be the very thing needed for Mr. Cattacomb's church, was working in her brain. Tom Pepp was ensconced in a dark corner, his dog in his arms, devoutly hoping his master would not come that way until he had made his escape. The ruins belonged to Farmer Truefit, the boy said. The fact being, that they stood on the land the farmer rented; which land was part of the Andinnian estate.

"Has nothing been done with the room since it was used for the school!" asked Miss Blake.

"Nothing," was the boy's reply. It was kept locked up until Lady Andinnian's death: since then, nobody, so far as he knew, had taken notice of it.

"What a beautiful little chapel it will make!" thought Miss Blake. "And absolutely there's a little place that will do for a vestry! I'll lose no time."

She went off straight to an interview with Mr. Truefit; which was held in the middle of a turnip-field. The farmer, a civil man, stout and sturdy, upon hearing that she was a relative of his new landlord's wife, the young Lady Andinnian, and was staying at Foxwood Court, took off his hat and gave her leave to do what she liked to the room and to make it into a place of worship if she pleased; his idea being that it was to be a kind of Methodist chapel, or a mission-room.

This sublime idea expanding within her mind, Miss Blake walked hurriedly back to Foxwood--for Mrs. Cleeve was to depart at midday. In passing the Maze, the interest as to what she had heard induced her to go up to the gate again, and peer in. Turning away after a good long look, she nearly ran against a rather tall gentleman, who was slowly sauntering amid the trees outside the gate. A gentleman in green spectacles, with a somewhat handsome face and black whiskers--the same face and whiskers, Miss Blake thought, that had watched her

from the opposite window. He wore grey clothes, had one black glove on and his arm in a sling.

Mr. Smith took off his hat and apologised. Miss Blake apologised. Between them they fell into conversation. She found him a very talkative, pleasant man.

"Curious place, the Maze?" he echoed in answer to a remark of Miss Blake's. "Well, yes, I suppose it may be called so, as mazes are not very common."

"I have been told a young lady lives in it alone."

"I believe she does. In fact, I know it, for I have seen her, and spoken with her."

"Oh, have you!" cried Miss Blake, more curious than ever.

"When I went to receive the premium for Sir Karl Andinnian--due on taking the house," quietly explained Mr. Smith.

"And who is she?"

"She is a Mrs. Grey."

"Oh--a married woman."

"Certainly. A single lady, young as she is, would scarcely be living entirely alone."

"But where is her husband?"

"Travelling, I believe. I understood her to say so."

"She is quite young then?"

"Quite."

"Is she good-looking?" continued Miss Blake.

"I have rarely seen anyone so pretty."

"Indeed! What a strange thing that she should be hiding herself in this retired

place!"

"Do you think so? It seems to me to be just the spot a young lady might select, if obliged to live apart for a time from her husband."

"Of course, there's something in that," conceded Miss Blake. "Does she visit at all in the neighbourhood?"

"I think not. I am sure not. If she did I should see her go in and out. She takes a walk occasionally, and sometimes goes to church on Sundays. But she mostly keeps in her shell, guarded by her two old domestics."

In talking, they had crossed the road, and now halted again at the little gate of Clematis Cottage. Miss Blake asked if he knew anything about the ruins she had noticed further up: and Mr. Smith (who had introduced himself to her by name in a light, gentlemanly manner) said he did not, but he had a book of the locality indoors which he would refer to, if she would do him the honour of stepping into his little drawing-room.

Rather fascinated by his courteous attentions, Miss Blake did so: and thought what a bright-looking, pretty drawing-room it was. The gentleman took off his green glasses (casually mentioning that he wore them out of doors as a protection against the sun, for his eyes were not strong) and searched for the guidebook. The book, however, proved to be chiefly a book of roads, and said very little more of the monastery and the ruins than Miss Blake had heard from Tom Pepp.

"You have hurt your arm," she at length ventured to observe, as he slowly drew it once or twice out of the sling, and seemed to use it with trouble. "Any accident?"

"An accident of long standing, madam. But the wrist continues weak, and always will continue so, next door to useless; and I wear the sling for protection."

Miss Blake took her departure; the gentleman escorting her to the garden gate with much ceremony. In fact, it almost seemed as though he wished to make a favourable impression on her.

"He is a gallant man," was Miss Blake's mental comment--"and a

well-informed and pleasant one. I wonder who he is?"

But her thoughts, veering round to many other matters, at length settled themselves upon the Maze and its young lady inmate. They quite took hold of her mind and held possession of it, even to the partial exclusion of Mr. Cattacomb and the promising ruins.

In later days, Miss Blake said this must have been nothing less than instinct.

CHAPTER XII.

Taking an Evening Stroll

Miss Blake carried her point. In a very short space of time the little way-side room in the ruins--call it chapel, school-room, barn, what you will--was converted into a church and styled "St. Jerome." Setting to work at once with a will, Miss Blake had left not a stone unturned to accomplish her purpose. She pressed several of the young ladies in the village into the service. Nothing loth, they. Having heard of the divers merits of the Reverend Guy Cattacomb, they could but be desirous so shining a light should be secured amidst them. Miss Blake herself brought all her rare energy, her unflagging perseverance to the task. When she took a cause to heart, no woman was so indomitable as she. As may readily be supposed, a good deal had to be done to the room before it could be made what was wanted; but contrivance worked wonders. All the money Miss Blake could spare she freely applied: it was not sufficient, and she wrote to sundry friends, begging contributions. She next went, with Miss St. Henry and Miss Moore, to some of the houses in the vicinity, to every one where it might be safe to go, asking for aid. This personal canvass was not always successful. Some professed not to understand why a second church was required, and gave shillings instead of pounds. One old lady, however, had her generous instincts so worked upon by the eloquence of Miss Blake (as much as she could hear of it, for she was very deaf, and her companion declared afterwards that she believed

all the while she was giving to a new industrial school possessing a resident chaplain) that she handed over a cheque for fifty guineas. Miss Blake could not believe her eyes when she saw it: and she assured the old lady that every blessing of heaven would be showered down on her in return. Miss Blake's personal friends also contributed well--and the matter was accomplished. Not only was the chapel itself set up, but the stipend of Mr. Cattacomb assured for the first few months. To do Miss Blake justice, she wished all things to be religiously right, and she never entertained a doubt that the place had once been duly consecrated. Her whole heart was in the work--always excepting a slight small corner of it that was still filled with her wrongs and Karl Andinnian.

The early afternoon sun shone down on the bright flowers, the well kept lawns of Foxwood Court, as Miss Blake stepped out of one of its windows, her walking costume perfect. She was always well dressed: but to-day her toilet was more elaborate than usual. Standing for a moment to look round at the beautiful place, at its complete order, there rose up in her heart one wild, angry thought--"But for Lucy, this would have been my own." A very mistaken assumption on Miss Blake's part, but who was to convince her of that? Banishing the thought resolutely, she walked along at a brisk pace, as if running a race with time. It was a great day this. Two events were coming off in it that stirred Miss Blake to the core. The Reverend Mr. Cattacomb was expected by the four o'clock train; and Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian would arrive at home for dinner.

Miss Blake took the way to St. Jerome's Church, a very choice bouquet of hothouse flowers in her hand. Glancing at the gate of the Maze--in regard to which place her interest had not in the least abated--she bore onwards, and soon joined some groups of ladies, who were advancing to St. Jerome's by the more direct route from the village. They had appointed to meet that afternoon and put the finishing touches to the room ere it should be seen by its pastor-- if indeed any touches remained to be done. A matter such as this could not but have excited much comment at Foxwood ever since the first day that Miss Blake took it in hand. Prudent mothers, full of occupation themselves, warned their daughters against being "led away." The daughters, whose hands were idle, rushed to the new attraction, stealthily at first, openly afterwards. They grew to be as energetic as Miss Blake herself, and were in a fervour of eagerness for the arrival of Mr. Cattacomb.

Miss Blake opened the door and allowed the rest to file in. She stayed looking at something that did not please her--a wheel-barrow full of earth lodging right

against St. Jerome's outside walls.

"I should not wonder but it's that Tom Pepp who has left it there!" said Miss Blake severely. "The boy is for ever dodging about here--and brings other boys in his train. When Mr. Cattacomb----"

"Good afternoon, madam!"

Miss Blake turned at the address, and recognized Mr. Smith--his green spectacles on and his arm in a sling as usual. She had seen him once or twice since that first meeting, but he had only bowed in passing.

"May I be permitted to enter?" he asked, waving his hand at the church door.

"Oh, certainly," she replied. "Indeed I hope you will become one of St. Jerome's constant worshippers." So he went in with the crowd of ladies.

It certainly looked a sweet little place--as Jane St. Henry remarked aloud. Candles, flowers, crosses, scrolls--for Miss Blake knew exactly what would please Mr. Cattacomb. The common whitewashed walls were nearly hidden: mottoes, a painting or two, and prints lay thickly on them, all of course of a sacred character. The plain, straw-seated chairs stood pretty thickly. The other arrangements were as good as funds, time, and space had allowed. Leading off on one side at the upper end, was a small vestry; with a sort of corner box in it that was to serve as a confessional. This vestry--which used to be the place where The school children put their hats and bonnets--had an objectionable, modern window in it; before which was hung a blind of printed calico, securing the vestry's privacy from sun and gazers.

Mr. Smith might have been a travelled man, but in all his travels he had seen no place of worship like unto this. He was saying so to himself as he turned and gazed about through his green glasses. He took them off and gazed again.

"Is it not charming, sir?" asked Jane St. Henry.

"It is rather small," was the response.

"Oh, that's the worst," said the young lady. "One cannot have everything at the beginning: there must always be some drawbacks. I know a church in London, not very much larger than this, where there are three sweet little private

sanctuaries: here we have only one."

"Sanctuaries?" repeated the agent, evidently not understanding.

"Confessionals. For confession, you know. We have only one here, and that is obliged to be in the vestry."

"Oh, then the place *is* Roman Catholic!" said Mr. Smith, quietly. "I thought so."

He had no intention to offend: it was simply what he inferred: but Miss St. Henry gave a little shriek and put her two hands to her ears. Martha Sumnor, a free, showy girl, stepped up.

"For goodness' sake don't call it that," she said. "Papa would go on at us, for coming here, worse than he does."

Mr. Smith bowed and begged pardon. He could not help thinking this was a daughter of the vicar of the old church, but was not sure: and he wondered much.

Even so. The two daughters of Mr. Sumnor had joined St. Jerome's. They and their mother had long set the vicar at defiance.

Foxwood was deemed to be a particularly healthy place; in the summer months, invalids were wont to resort to it from the neighbouring town of Basham. To meet requirements, lodgings being scarce, a row of houses had been run up in the heart of the village, near where the old pound used to stand. They were called Paradise Row. Very pretty to look at; perhaps not quite so good to wear; stuccoed white fronts outside, lath and plaster within. If the door of one banged, the whole of the houses shook; and the ringing of a sitting-room bell was heard right and left throughout the Row.

It was in the middle house of these favoured dwellings, No. 5, kept by Mrs. Jinks, that the ladies had secured apartments for the Reverend Guy Cattacomb. The bow-windowed front parlour, and the bedroom behind it. Mrs. Jinks, familiarly called by her neighbours and friends the Widow Jinks, was beyond the middle age--to speak politely--with a huge widow's cap nearly as black as the chimney, and a huge black bonnet generally tilted on the top of it. She had deemed herself very lucky to find her rooms taken by the ladies for the new clergyman, boasting to her neighbours that it was of course a "permanent let:"

but before the clergyman arrived, she had grown somewhat out of conceit of the "let," so worried was she by the young ladies. Parties of them were always calling, bringing this, that, and the other for the comfort of their expected pastor, and calling the Widow Jinks to the door a dozen times in a day.

Upon leaving St. Jerome's this afternoon, the ladies went in a body to Paradise Row, intending to await the advent of the Reverend Guy, and to see that butter and other essentials had been got in for him. Miss Blake could have dispensed with so large a party--but what was she to do?--There they were, and stuck to her. All the way to the house they had been talking of Mr. Smith; wondering who he was and why he had come to live at Foxwood. Miss St. Henry at length remembered to have heard he was a friend of the Andinnian family, and had been looking after things as agent during the absence of Sir Karl.

"An agent!" exclaimed Miss Blake, drawing herself up.

"Not a common agent, of course. Does what he does out of friendship. Here we are."

"Oh, that's very different," returned Miss Blake, giving a loud, long, important knock at the Widow Jinks's door.

"Well, that *is* a shame of old Jinks!" cried Jemima Moore, in an undertone to the rest as they got admittance and went into the parlour.

For the Widow Jinks had not deemed it necessary to smarten herself up to receive her new lodger. She answered the door in her ordinary working costume: rusty black gown, huge cap, and bonnet. Her face and hands were black too, as if she had been disturbed in cleaning the pots and kettles.

"She ought to be told of it. And did you see how sour she looked?"

Miss Blake put the beautiful bouquet of hothouse flowers--which she had been guarding carefully--into a vase of water, for it was for Mr. Cattacomb they had been destined. Some light refreshment in the shape of wine and cake stood ready on the table; and Mrs. Jinks was examined as to other preparations. All was in readiness, and the ladies waited with impatience.

An impatience that at length subsided into doubt, and that into disappointment. The clock had gone ticking on; the train must have been in long

ago, and it became evident Mr. Cattacomb had not come. Miss Blake walked home slightly vexed: and there she found Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian.

Things often go cross and contrary. *They* had not been expected until later, and Miss Blake had intended to preside--if it may be called so--at both arrivals. As it happened, she had presided at neither. It was in crossing the lawn, that Lucy, radiant, blooming, joyous, ran out to meet her.

"Good gracious!" cried Miss Blake.

"Oh, Theresa, how beautiful and happy everything is!" cried the young wife, pushing back her bonnet to give and take the kiss of greeting. "Karl has been showing me the rooms. Hewitt said you would not be long."

"But when did you come, Lucy?"

"We came in by the four o'clock train, and took a fly. Here's my husband. Karl, do you see Theresa?"

Karl was coming down the terrace steps to greet her. Miss Blake advanced coldly.

"How do you do, Sir Karl?" and the hand she put into his seemed limp and cold. *He* did not look blooming; but worn, ill, and depressed.

They entered the hall together, the rays from the coloured windows shining on them and on the tesselated floor, lighting all up with a cheerful brightness. The reception-rooms were on either side the hall: they were what Sir Karl had been showing to his wife. Lucy declared it was the prettiest house she was ever in.

"I like this room better than any of the grand ones," spoke Miss Blake, leading to the little north room she generally sat in, where we saw her breakfasting with Mrs. Cleeve.

"It shall be called your room then, Theresa," said Lucy. "Oh yes, it is very pretty," she continued, looking at the light paper, flecked with gold, the light furniture with its crimson satin coverings, the various tasty objects scattered about, and the glass doors, wide open to the terrace, to the sweet flowers, and to the smooth lawn beyond.

"I believe this was the late Lady Andinnian's favourite room," observed Karl.

"Let me see," said Lucy, stepping outside, "this must look towards the railway station. Oh yes; and Foxwood lies the other way."

Opposite to this window some steps descended to the lawn from the terrace. In very lightness of heart, she ran down and up them. Karl was talking to Miss Blake.

"There's a room answering to this in size and position on the other side the house; as of course you know," he observed. "Sir Joseph, I hear, made it his business room."

"Hewitt calls it Sir Karl's room, now," interrupted Miss Blake. "You smoke in it, don't you, Sir Karl?"

"I did smoke in it once or twice when I was staying down here during the time of my mother's illness," he replied. "But I am not a great smoker. Just one cigar at night: and not always that."

"Did I see that room, Karl?" asked his wife.

"No, Lucy. It was hardly worth showing you."

"Oh, but I shall like it better than all the rest, if it's yours."

"Come and see it then."

She put her arm within his, and he looked down on her with a smile as they went through the house. Miss Blake walked behind with drawn-in lips. Sir Karl was greatly altered in manner, she thought; all his life and spirits had left him: and he did not seem in the least glad to see *her*.

The room on the other side had grey walls and looked altogether rather dowdy. Books and maps were on the shelves, a large inkstand stood on the table, and the chimney-piece was ornamented with a huge Chinese tobacco-box.

"Now, Karl, that great arm-chair shall be yours, and this little one mine," said Lucy. "And you must let me come in when I please--although I can see it is to be your business room, just as it was Sir Joseph's."

"As often as you will, my darling."

He threw open the glass doors as he spoke, stepped across the terrace, and down the steps to the lawn--for this room answered in every respect to the other. This room faced the south; the front of the house the west, and Miss Blake's favourite room the north. The sun came slantwise across the flower beds. Sir Karl plucked one of the sweetest roses, and brought it to his wife. Lucy said nothing as she took it; but Miss Blake, observant Miss Blake, saw the lingering touch of their hands; the loving glance from Lucy's eyes to his.

"Shall I show you your rooms upstairs, Lady Andinnian? If you have not been up."

"Thank you, I'll take Lucy myself," said Karl. "No, we have not been up."

The rooms they were to occupy lay in front, towards the northern end of the corridor. The bedroom was large and beautifully fitted up. Just now Aglaé had it in confusion, unpacking. Two dressing-rooms opened from it. Sir Karl's on the right--the last room at that end; Lucy's on the left: and beyond Lucy's was another bedroom. These four rooms all communicated with each other: when their doors stood open you might see straight through all of them: each one could also be entered from the corridor.

"But what do we want with this second bedroom?" asked Lucy, as she stood in it with her husband.

A full minute elapsed before he answered her, for it was the room where that strange communication, which was o'ershadowing his life, had been made to him by his mother. The remembrance of the turbulent night and its startling disclosures was very present with him, and he turned to the window, and put his head out, as though gasping for a breath of air.

"They have not made any change, you see, Lucy: I did not give orders: It was my mother's chamber during her short span of residence here. The next, that little dressing-room of yours, she made her upstairs sitting-room. Perhaps you would like to have this made into a
sitting-room for yourself."

"Nay, Karl, if I want to sit upstairs, there's my dressing-room. We will let this be as it is. Is that Foxwood?" she added, pointing to the roofs of houses and a

church-spire in the distance.

"Yes, that's Foxwood."

"And what are all those trees over the way?" turning her finger rather towards the right: in fact to the Maze. "There are some chimneys amidst them. Is it a house?"

"Yes."

"A gentleman's house? It must be pleasant to have neighbours so near, if they are nice people. Is it occupied, Karl!"

"I--I fancy so. The truth is, Lucy,"--breaking into rather a forced laugh--"that I am as yet almost as much a a stranger here as yourself. Shall I call Aglaé? I'm sure you must want to get your bonnet off."

"Aglaé's there, you know; I am going to her. But first of all"--clasping her arms fondly round him and lifting her sweet face to his--"let me thank you for this beautiful home. Oh, Karl! how happy we shall be in it."

"God willing!" he answered in a beseeching tone of exquisite pain. And, as he held her to him in the moment's tenderness, his chest heaved with a strange emotion.

"How he loves me," thought Lucy, passing to her own rooms. For she put the emotion down to that. "I wonder if there ever was such love before in the world as his and mine? Aglaé, I must wear white to-day."

She went down to dinner in white muslin and white ribbons, with a lily in her hair, a very bride to look at. Poor girl! it was a gala-day with her, this coming home, almost like her wedding day. Poor wife!

The only one to talk much at dinner was Lucy. Miss Blake was not in one of her amiable moods: Sir Karl and Lucy had both dressed for dinner: she had not, not supposing they would, and that helped to put her out. In this retired spot, and with her head filled with Mr. Cattacomb and St. Jerome's, Miss Blake had been almost forgetting that there existed such a thing as dressing for dinner. Karl was silent and grave as usual, just like a man preoccupied. His wife had become used to his air of sadness. She set it down, partly to the cause of the mysterious

communication he had made to her the night before their marriage, and which had never since been mentioned between them, and partly to his ill-fated brother's trouble and shocking death. Therefore Lucy took the sadness as a matter of course, and never would appear to notice it.

Miss Blake began to converse at last. She spoke of St. Jerome's: telling with much exultation all that had been done. But Sir Karl looked grave. The good sound doctrines and worship of what used to be called High-Church were his own: but he did not like these new and extreme movements that caused scandal.

"You say that this St. Jerome's is on my land, Miss Blake?"

"On your land, Sir Karl: but in Farmer Truefit's occupation. The consent lay with him and he gave it."

"Well, I hope you will have the good sense not to go too far."

Miss Blake lifted her head, and asked Hewitt for some bread. Lucy's pretty face had flushed, and she glanced timidly at her husband. Remembering past days, she had not much faith in Theresa's moderation.

"When Mrs. Cleeve, knowing Lucy's inexperience and youth, suggested that I should stay here for some time after her return home, Sir Karl, if agreeable to you and to her, and I acquiesced, wishing to be useful to both of you in any way that might be, I had no conception there was not a church open for daily worship in the place. I must go to daily worship, Sir Karl. It is as essential to me as my bread and cheese."

"I'm sure I can say nothing against daily worship--to those who have the time for it," rejoined Karl. "It is not *that* I fear, Miss Blake; think how beautiful the daily service was in Winchester Cathedral!"

"Oh, of course; yes," replied Miss Blake, in a slighting tone; "the cathedral service was very well as far as it went. But you need not fear, Sir Karl."

"Thank you," he replied; "I am glad to hear you say so." And the subject dropped.

The two ladies were alone for a few minutes after dinner in the North room. Lucy was standing at the open window.

"Of course you know all about the place by this time, Theresa," she suddenly said. "There's a house over there amidst those trees: who lives in it?"

"Some lady, I believe, who chooses to keep herself very retired," replied Miss Blake.

"Oh, I asked Karl, but he could not tell me: he says he is nearly as much a stranger here as I am. Theresa! I do think that's a nightingale! Listen."

"Yes we have nightingales here," said Miss Blake, indifferently.

Lucy crossed the lawn, and paced before the clusters of trees. The bird was just beginning its sweet notes. Karl came out, drew her hand within his arm, and walked with her until Miss Blake called out that the tea was waiting.

But Lucy yet was not very strong. She began to feel tired, and a sudden headache came on. When tea was over Karl said she must go to bed.

"I think I will," she answered, rising. "If you will pardon my leaving you, Theresa. Good night."

Karl went up with her and stayed a few minutes talking. In coming down he went straight to his smoking-room and shut the door.

"Very polite, I'm sure!" thought Miss Blake, resentfully.

But the next moment she heard him leave it and come towards the sitting-room.

"I will wish you good night too, Miss Blake," he said, offering his hand. "Pray ring for anything you may require; you are more at home, you know, than we are," he concluded with a slight laugh.

"Are you going to bed also, Sir Karl?"

"I? Oh no. I am going into my smoking-room. I have a letter to write."

Now Miss Blake resented this frightfully. Lucy might go to bed; it was best for her as she was fatigued; but that Sir Karl should thus unceremoniously leave her to her own company at nine o'clock, she could not pardon. As to letter writing, the post had gone out. It was evident he thought nothing of her, even as a friend; nothing.

Dropping her forehead upon her hands, she sat there she knew not how long. When she looked up it was nearly dark. Her thoughts had wandered to Mr. Cattacomb, and she wondered whether he would be arriving by the last train.

Throwing a shawl over her shoulders, Miss Blake went into the garden, and thence by one of the small private gates into the lonely road. It was still and solitary. The nightingales were singing now, and she paced along, lost in thought, past the Maze and onwards.

She had reached nearly as far as the road to Foxwood, not having met a soul, when the advance of two or three passengers from the station told her the train was in. They turned off to the village, walking rapidly: but neither of them was the expected clergyman.

"What can have kept him?" she murmured, as she retraced her steps.

There was no moon, but the summer sky was light: not much of it, however,

penetrated to the sides of the road through the overshadowing trees. Miss Blake had nearly gained the Maze when she heard the approach of footsteps. Not caring to be seen out so late alone, she drew back between the hedge and the clump of trees at the gate, and waited.

To her vexation, peeping forth from her place of shelter, she recognised Sir Karl Andinnian. He was stealing along under shadow of the hedge too--*stealing* along, as it seemed to Miss Blake, covertly and quietly. When he reached the gate he looked up the road and down the road, apparently to make sure that no one was within sight or hearing: then he took a small key from his pocket, unlocked the strong gate with it, entered, locked it after him again, and disappeared within the trees of the veritable maze.

To say that Miss Blake was struck with amazement would be saying little. What could it mean? What could Sir Karl want there? He had told his wife he knew not who lived in it. And yet he carried a private key to the place, and covertly stole into it on this the first night of his return! The queer ideas that floated through Miss Blake's mind, rapidly chasing each other, three parts bewildered her. They culminated in one emphatically spoken sentence.

"I should like to get inside too!"

Softly making her way across the road to enter the Court's grounds by the nearest gate, she chanced to lift her eyes to Clematis Cottage. The venetian shutters were closed. But, peering through one of them from the dark room, was a face that she was sure was Mr. Smith's. It looked just as though he had been watching Sir Karl Andinnian.

CHAPTER XIII.

Miss Blake gets in

Still no signs of the Rev. Guy Cattacomb. The morning following the night told of in the last chapter rose bright and sunny. Miss Blake rose with it, her energetic mind full of thought.

"I wonder how I am to begin to keep house?" said Lucy with a laugh, when she got up from the breakfast table, her cheeks as bright as the pink summer muslin she wore. "Do I go into the kitchen, Theresa?"

"You go with the cook to the larder," replied Theresa, gravely. "See what provisions remain in it from yesterday, and give your orders accordingly. Shall I go with you this morning, Lady Andinnian?"

"I wish you would! I wish you'd put me in the way of it. In Paris, when I was going to be married, mamma regretted she had not shown me more of housekeeping at home."

"You have, I believe, a careful and honest cook: and that is a great thing for an inexperienced mistress," said Miss Blake.

"As if cooks were ever dishonest in the country!" cried Sir Karl, laughing--and it was the first laugh Miss Blake had heard from his lips. "You must go to your grand London servants for that--making their perquisites out of everything, and feeding their friends and the policeman!"

"And then, Karl, when I come back, you will take me about everywhere, won't you?" whispered Lucy, leaning fondly over his shoulder as Miss Blake went on. "I want to see all about the grounds."

He nodded and let his cheek rest for a moment against hers. "Go and order your roast beef. And--Lucy!"

His manner had changed to seriousness. He turned in his chair to face her, his brow flushing as he took her hands.

"You will not be extravagant, Lucy--" his voice sinking to a whisper lower than hers. "When I told you of that--that trouble, which had fallen upon me and might fall deeper, I said that it would cost me a large portion of my income. You remember?"

"Oh Karl! do you think I could forget? We will live as quietly and simply as

you please. It is all the same to me."

"Thank you, my dear wife."

Theresa stood at the open hall door, looking from it while she waited. "I was thinking," she said, when Lady Andinnian's step was heard, "that it really might be cheaper in the end if you took a regular housekeeper, Lucy, as you are so inexperienced. It would save you a great deal of trouble."

"The trouble's nothing, Theresa; and I should like to learn. I would not think of a housekeeper. I should be afraid of her."

"Oh, very well. As you please, of course. But when you get your whole staff of servants, the house full of them, the controlling of the supplies for so many will very much embarrass you."

"But we don't mean to have our house full of servants, Theresa. We do not care to set up on a grand scale, either of us. Just about as papa and mamma live, will be enough for us indoors."

"Nonsense," said Miss Blake.

"We must have a coachman--Karl thinks he shall take on Sir Joseph's; the man has asked to come--and, I suppose, one footman to help Hewitt, and a groom. That's all. I think we have enough maids now."

"You should consider that Sir Karl's income is a large one, Lucy," spoke Miss Blake in a tone of lofty reproach. "It is absurd to take your papa's scale of living as a guide for yours."

"But Sir Karl does not mean to spend his income: he has a reason for saving it."

"Oh that's another thing," said Miss Blake. "What is his reason?"

The young Lady Andinnian could have punished her rebellious tongue. She had spoken the hasty words "he has a reason for saving it" in the heat of argument, without thought. What right, either as a wife or a prudent woman, had she to allow allusion to it to escape her lips? Her rejoinder was given slowly and calmly.

"My husband is quite right not to begin by spending all his income, Theresa. We should both of us think it needless extravagance. Is this the kitchen? Let us go in here first. I must get acquainted with all my places and people."

The business transacted, Lucy went out with Karl. Theresa watched them on to the lawn and thence round the house, Lucy in her broad-brimmed straw hat, and her arm within her husband's. Miss Blake then dressed herself and walked rapidly to St. Jerome's. Some faint hope animated her that Mr. Cattacomb might have arrived, and be already inaugurating the morning service. But no. St. Jerome's was closely shut, and no Mr. Cattacomb was there.

She retraced her steps, lingering to rob the hedges of a wild honeysuckle or a dog-rose. This non-arrival of Mr. Cattacomb began to trouble her, and she could not imagine why, if he were prevented coming, he had not written to say so. Reaching the Maze, Miss Blake woke up from these thoughts with quite a start of surprise: for the gate was open and a woman servant stood there, holding colloquy with the butcher's boy on horseback: a young man in a blue frock, no hat, and a basket on his arm. A middle-aged and very respectable looking servant, but somewhat old-fashioned in her appearance: a spare figure straight up and down, in a black-and-white cotton gown and white muslin cap tied with black ribbon strings. In her hand was a dish with some meat on it, which she had just received from the basket, and she appeared to be reproaching the boy on the score of the last joint's toughness.

"This hot weather one can't keep nothing properly," said the boy, in apology. "I was to ask for the book, please, ma'am."

"The book!" returned the woman. "Why I meant to have brought it out. Wait there, and I'll get it."

The boy, having perhaps the spirit of restlessness upon him, backed his steed, and turned him round and round in the road like a horse in a mill. Miss Blake saw her opportunity and slipped in unseen. Gliding along the path, she concealed herself behind a huge tree-trunk near the hedge, until the servant should have come and gone again. Miss Blake soon caught sight of her skirts amid the trees of the maze.

"Here's the book," said she to the boy. "Ask your master to make it up for the month, and I'll pay." And shutting and locking the gate, she retreated into the

maze again and disappeared.

When people do covert things in a hurry, they can't expect to have all their senses about them, and Miss Blake had probably forgotten that she should be locked in. However--here she was in the position, and must make the best of it.

First of all, she went round the path, intending to see where it led to. It was fenced in by the garden wall, the high hedge and shrubs on one side, by the trees of the maze on the other. Suddenly she came to what looked like a low vaulted passage built in the maze, which probably communicated with the house: but she could not tell. Its door was fast, and Miss Blake could see nothing.

Pursuing her way along the walk, it brought her round to the entrance gate again, and she remembered Tom Pepp's words about the path going round and round and leading to nowhere. Miss Blake was not one to be daunted. She had come in to look about her, and she meant to do it. She plunged into the maze.

Again had she cause to recall Master Pepp's account,--"Once get into that there maze and you'd never get out again without the clue." Miss Blake began to fear there was only too much truth in it. For a full hour in reality, and it seemed to her like two hours, did she wander about and wander again. She was in the maze and could not get out of it.

She stood against the back of a tree, her face turning hot and cold. It took a great deal to excite that young woman's pulses: but she did not like the position in which she had placed herself.

She must try again. Forward thither, backward hither, round and about, in and out. No; no escape; no clue; no opening: nothing but the same interminable trees and the narrow paths so exactly like one another.

"What will become of me?" gasped Miss Blake.

At that moment a voice very near rose upon her ear--the voice of the servant she had seen. "Yes, ma'am, I'll do it after dinner."

Unconsciously Miss Blake had wandered to the confines of the maze that were close on the house. A few steps further and she could peep out of her imprisonment.

A small, low, pretty-gabled house of red brick. A sitting-room window, large and thrown open, faced Miss Blake; the porch entrance, of which she could get a slanting glimpse, fronted a grass-plat, surrounded by most beautiful flower-beds, with a greenhouse at the end. It was a snug, compact spot, the whole shut in by a high laurel hedge. On the grass stood the woman servant, spreading some bits of linen to dry: Miss Blake made them out to be cambric handkerchiefs: her mistress had probably been speaking to her from the porch, and the answer was what she heard. An old man, with either a slight hump on his back or a dreadful stoop, was bending over a distant flower-bed. He wore a wide, yellow straw hat, and a smock-frock similar to that of the butcher's boy, only the latter's was blue and the old man's white. His hair was grey and he appeared to be toothless: but in his prime he must have been tall and powerful. Miss Blake made her comments.

"What an extraordinary solitude for a young person to live in! But what choice flowers those look to be! That toothless old man must be the gardener! he looks too aged and infirm for his work. *Why*
does she live here? There must be more in it than meets the eye. Perhaps----"

The soliloquy was arrested. The door of the sitting-room opened, and a young lady entered. Crossing to the window, she stood looking at something on the table underneath, in full view of Miss Blake. A fair girl, with a delicate face, soft damask cheeks, blue eyes, and hair that gleamed like threads of light gold.

"Good gracious! how lovely she is!" was Miss Blake's involuntary thought. Could this young girl be Mrs. Grey?

The young lady left the window again. The next minute the keys of a piano were touched. A prelude was played softly, and then there rose a verse of those lines in the "Vicar of Wakefield" that you all know so well, the voice of the singer exceedingly melodious and simple:

"When lovely woman stoops to folly,
And finds too late that men betray----"

Miss Blake had never in her life cared for the song, but it bore now a singular charm. Every word was distinct, and she listened to the end. A curious

speculation crossed her.

Was this young girl singing the lines in character? "Heaven help her then!" cried Miss Blake--for she was not all hardness.

But how was she, herself, to get away? She might remain there unsought for ever. There was nothing for it but boldly showing herself. And, as the servant was then coming back across the lawn with some herbs which she had apparently been to gather, Miss Blake wound out of the maze, and presented herself before the woman's astonished eyes.

She made the best excuse she could. Had wandered inside the gate, attracted by the mass of beautiful trees, and lost herself amidst them. After a pause of wondering consideration, the servant understood how it must have been--that she had got in during her temporary absence from the gate when she went to fetch the butcher's book; and she knew what a long while she must have been there.

"I'll let you out," she said. "It's a pity you came in."

Very rapidly the woman walked on through the maze, Miss Blake following her. There were turnings and twistings, amid which the latter strove to catch some clue to the route. In vain. One turning, one path seemed just like another.

"Does your mistress live quite alone here?" she asked of the servant.

"Yes, ma'am," was the reply, more civilly spoken--for, that the servant had been at first much put out by the occurrence, her manner testified. "She's all alone, except for me and my old man."

"Your old man?" exclaimed Miss Blake questioningly.

"My husband," explained the woman, perceiving she was not understood. "He's the gardener."

"Oh, I saw him," said Miss Blake. "But he looks quite too old and infirm to do much."

"He's not as old as he looks--and he has a good deal of work in him still. Of course when a man gets rheumatics, he can't be as active as before."

"How very dull your mistress must be!"

"Not at all, ma'am. She has her birds, and flowers, and music, and work. And the garden she's very fond of: she'll spend hours in the greenhouse over the plants."

"Mrs. Grey, I think I have heard her called."

"Yes, Mrs. Grey."

"Well now--where's her husband?"

"She's not got a hus-- At least,--her husband's not here."

The first part of the answer was begun in a fierce, resentful tone: but at the break the woman seemed to recollect herself, and calmed down. Miss Blake was silently observant, pondering all in her inquisitive mind.

"Mr. Grey is travelling abroad just now," continued the woman. "Here we are."

Yes, there they were escaped from the maze, the iron gate before them. The woman took a key from her pocket and unlocked it--just as Sir Karl had taken a key from his pocket the previous night. Miss Blake saw now what a small key it was, to undo so large a gate.

"Good morning," she said. "Thank you very much. It was exceedingly thoughtless of me to stroll in."

"Good day to you, ma'am."

Very busy was Miss Blake's brain as she went home. The Maze puzzled her. That this young and pretty woman should be living alone in that perfect seclusion with only two servants to take care of her, one of them at least old and decrepid, was the very oddest thing she had ever met with. Miss Blake knew the world tolerably well; and, so far as her experience went, a man whose wife was so young and so lovely as this wife, would wish to take her travelling with him. Altogether, it seemed very singular: and more singular still seemed the stealthy and familiar entrance, that she had witnessed, of Sir Karl Andinnian.

Meanwhile, during this bold escapade of Miss Blake's, Lady Andinnian had gone out on a very different expedition. It could not be said that Lucy had no acquaintance whatever at Foxwood before she came to it. She knew the vicar's eldest daughter, Margaret, who had occasionally stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Blake at Winchester: the two clergymen were acquainted, having been at college together. On this morning Lucy had started to see Miss Sumnor; walking alone, for Karl was busy. The church, a very pretty one, with a tapering spire, stood in its churchyard, just through the village. The vicarage joined it: a nice house, with a verandah running along the front; a good garden and some glebe land.

On a couch in a shaded room, lay a lady of some thirty, or more, years of age; her face thin, with upright lines between the eyebrows, telling of long-standing trouble or pain, perhaps of both; her hands busy with some needle-work. Lady Andinnian, who had not given her name, but simply asked to see Miss Sumnor, was shown in. She did not recognize her at the first moment.

"Margaret! It cannot be you."

Margaret Sumnor smiled her sweet, patient smile, and held Lady Andinnian's hand in hers. "Yes it is, Lucy--if I may presume still to call you so. You find me changed. Worn and aged."

"It is true," candidly avowed Lucy, in the shock to her feelings. "You look altogether different. And yet, it is not three years since we parted. Mrs. Blake used to tell me you were ill, and had to lie down a great deal."

"I lie here always, Lucy. Getting off only at night to go to my bed in the next room. Now and then, if I am particularly well, they draw me across the garden to church in a hand-chair: but that is very seldom. Sit down. Here, close to me."

"And what is the matter with you?"

"It has to do with the spine, my dear. A bright young girl like you need not be troubled with the complication of particulars. The worst of it is, Lucy, that I shall be as I am for life."

"Oh Margaret!"

Miss Sumnor raised her work again and set a few stitches, as if determined not to give way to any kind of emotion. Lady Andinnian's face wore quite a

frightened look.

" *Surely* not for always, Margaret!"

"I believe so. The doctors say so. Papa went to the expense of having a very clever man down from London; but he only confirmed what Mr. Moore had feared."

"Then, Margaret, I think it was a cruel thing to let you know it. Hope and good spirits go so far to help recovery, no matter what the illness may be. Did the doctors tell you?"

"They told my father, not me. I learnt it through--through a sort of accident, Lucy," added Miss Sumnor: who would not explain that it was through the carelessness--to call it by a light name--of her stepmother. "After all, it is best that I should know it. I see it is now, if I did not at the time."

"How it must have tried you!"

"Oh it did; it did. What I felt for months, Lucy, I cannot describe. I had grown to be so useful to my dear father: he had begun to need me so very much; to depend upon me for so many things: and to find that I was suddenly cut off from being of any help to him, to be instead only a burden!--even now I cannot bear to recall it. It was that that changed me, Lucy: in a short while I had gone in looks from a young woman into an aged one."

"No, no, not that. And you have to bear it always!"

"The bearing is light now," said Miss Sumnor, looking up with a happy smile. "One day, Lucy, when I was in a sad mood of distress and inward repining, papa came in. He saw a little of what I felt; he saw my tears, for he had come upon me quickly. Down he sat in that very chair that you are sitting in now. 'Margaret, are you realizing that this calamity has come upon you from God--that it is His will?' he asked: and he talked to me as he had never talked before. That night, as I lay awake thinking, the new light seemed to dawn upon me. 'It is,
it is God's will,' I said; 'why should I repine in misery?' Bit by bit, Lucy, after that, the light grew greater. I gained--oh such comfort!--in a few weeks more I seemed to lie right under God's protection; to be, as it were, always in His sheltering Arms: and my life is happier now than I can tell you of, in spite of very many and constant trials."

"And you manage to amuse yourself, I see," resumed Lucy, breaking the pause that had ensued.

"Amuse myself! I can assure you my days are quite busy and useful ones. I sew--as you perceive, resting my elbows on the board; see, this is a pillowcase that I am darning. I read, and can even write a note; I manage the housekeeping; and I have my class of poor children here, and teach them as before. They are ten times more obedient and considerate, seeing me as I am, than when I was in health."

Lucy could readily believe it. "And now tell me, Margaret, what brought this illness on?"

"Nothing in particular. It must have been coming on for years, only we did not suspect it. Do you remember that when at the rectory I never used to run or walk much, but always wanted to sit still, and dear Mrs. Blake would call me idle? It was coming on then. But now, Lucy, let me hear about yourself. I need not ask if you are happy."

Lucy blushed rosy red: she was only too happy: and gave an account of her marriage and sojourn abroad, promising to bring her husband some day soon to see Miss Sumnor. Next, they spoke of the new place--St. Jerome's, and the invalid's brow wore a look of pain.

"It has so grieved papa, Lucy. Indeed, there's no want of another church in the place; even if it were a proper church, there's no one to attend it: our own is too large for the population. Papa is grieved at the movement, and at the way it is being done; it is anything but orthodox. And to think that it should be Theresa Blake who has put it forward!"

"The excuse she makes to us is that she wanted a daily service."

"A year ago papa took to hold daily service, and he had to discontinue it, for no one attended. Very often there would be only himself and the clerk."

"I do not suppose this affair of Theresa's will last," said Lucy, kindly, as she took her leave, and went home.

Karl was out at luncheon, but they all three met at dinner: he, Lucy, and Miss Blake. Lucy told him of her visit to Margaret Sumnor, and asked him to go there

with her on his return from London, whither he was proceeding on the morrow. Miss Blake had not heard of the intention before, and inquired of Sir Karl whether he was going for long.

"For a couple of days; perhaps three," he answered. "I have several matters of business to attend to."

"I think I might as well have gone with you, Karl," said his wife.

"Not this time, Lucy. You have only just come home from travelling, you know, and need repose."

Miss Blake, having previously taken her determination to do it, mentioned, in a casual, airy kind of way, her adventure of the morning: not however giving to the intrusion quite its true aspect, and not saying that she had seen the young lady. She had "strolled accidentally" into the place called the Maze, she said, seeing the gate open, and lost herself. A woman servant came to her assistance and let her out again; but not before she had caught a glimpse of the interior: the pretty house and lawn and flowers, and the infirm old gardener.

To Miss Blake's surprise--or, rather, perhaps not to her surprise--Sir Karl's pale face turned to a burning red. He made her no answer, but whisked his head round to the butler, who stood behind him.

"Hewitt," he cried sharply, "this is not the same hock that we had yesterday."

"Yes, Sir Karl, it is. At least I--I believe it is."

Hewitt took up the bottle on the sideboard and examined it. Miss Blake thought he looked as confused as his master. "He plays tricks with the wine," was the mental conclusion she drew.

Hewitt came round, grave as ever, and filled up the glasses again. Karl began talking to him, about the wine in the cellar: but Miss Blake was not going to let her subject drop.

"Do you know this place that they call the Maze, Sir Karl?"

"Scarcely."

"Or its mistress, Mrs. Grey?"

"I have seen her," shortly replied Karl.

"Oh, have you! When?"

"She wrote me a note relative to some repairs that were required, and I went over."

"Since you were back this time, do you mean?"

"Oh no. It was just after my mother's death."

"Don't you think it very singular that so young a woman should be living there alone?"

"I suppose she likes it. The husband is said to be abroad."

"You have no acquaintance with the people?" persisted Miss Blake.

"Oh dear no."

"And going in with a key from his own pocket!" thought Miss Blake, as she drew in her lips.

"Foxwood and its inhabitants, as I told Lucy, are tolerably strange to me," added Sir Karl. "Lucy, you were talking of Margaret Sumnor. What age is she?"

He was resolute in turning the conversation from the Maze: as Miss Blake saw. What was his motive? All kinds of comical ideas were in her mind, not all of them good ones.

"I'll watch," she mentally said. "In the interests of religion, to say nothing of respectability, *I'll watch*."

CHAPTER XIV.

Miss Blake on the Watch

"Lucy, you will come with me to the opening service?"

Lady Andinnian shook her head. "I think not, Theresa."

"Why, it would be quite a distraction for you," urged Miss Blake, using the word in the French sense.

Sir Karl had been in London some three or four days now; and Lucy, all aweary without him, was longing and looking for his return every hour of the live-long summer's day. But she was proof against this offered temptation.

"I don't think Karl would like me to go to St. Jerome's, Theresa. Thank you all the same."

"Do you mean to make Sir Karl your guide and model through life, Lucy?"--and Lady Andinnian, sincere and simple herself, detected not the covert sarcasm.

"I hope I shall never do, or wish to do anything that he would object to," was her answer, a sweet blush dyeing her cheeks.

"Well, if you won't appear at church, will you attend the kettledrum afterwards, Lucy?"

"The kettledrum?" echoed Lucy. "What kettledrum?"

"We are going to hold one at Mrs. Jinks's--that is, in Mr. Cattacomb's rooms--for the purpose of introducing him to some of his friends, and to organize the parish work."

Lady Andinnian looked up in surprise. "The parish work? What can you be talking of, Theresa?"

"Oh, there will be district visiting, and that. It must all be arranged and organized."

"Will it not be interfering with Mr. Sumnor?" Lucy ventured to ask, after a pause of silence.

"Not at all," was the answer, given loftily. "Shall I come round this way and call for you as we return from the service?"

"Thank you, no, Theresa; I would rather not. I do not think I should myself much care for the kettledrum."

"Very well," coolly replied Miss Blake. "As you please, of course, Lady Andinnian."

The service at St. Jerome's was at length about to be inaugurated: for the Reverend Guy Cattacomb had duly appeared after a few days' delay, for which he satisfactorily accounted. It was to be held in the afternoon, this afternoon, he having arrived in the morning; and Miss Blake, while talking to Lady Andinnian, was already dressed for it. She started forth alone: just as other eager young women, mostly young, some middle-aged, were starting for it, and flocking into St. Jerome's.

Much inward speculation had existed as to what the new parson would be like; and the ladies looked at him eagerly when he entered from the vestry to commence the service. They saw a tall young man in a narrow surplice, with a sheep-skin tippet worn hind before, and a cross at the back in the opening: spectacles; no hair on his face, and not over much on his head, a few tufts of it only standing up like young carrots; eyes very much turned up. Certainly, in regard to personal beauty, the new pastor could not boast great things; but he made up for it in zeal, and--if such a thing may be said of a clergyman--in vanity; for that he was upon remarkably good terms with himself and his looks, every tone and gesture betrayed. It was rather a novel service, but a very attractive one. Mr. Cattacomb had a good sonorous voice--though it was marred by an affected accent and a drawling kind of delivery that savoured of insincerity and was most objectionably out of place. Miss Jane St. Henry played the harmonium; the ladies sang: and their singing, so far as it went, was good, but men's voices were much wanted. There was a short sermon, very rapidly delivered, and not to be understood--quite after a new fashion of the day. During its progress, little Miss Etheridge happened to look round, and saw Mr. Moore, the surgeon, at the back of the room.

"If you'll believe me, old Moore's here!" she whispered to Mary St. Henry.

Yes, the surgeon was there. He had laughed a little over this curious new place that was being called a church, and said at home that day that he should look in and see what its services were to be like. He was more surprised than pleased. Just as Mr. Smith, the agent, asked, Is it Roman Catholic or Protestant? so did Mr. Moore mentally ask the question now. The place was pretty full. Some few people had come over from Basham to be present. Mr. Moore's eyes went ranging amid the chairs, scanning the congregation. His daughters were not there. They are too sensible, thought the doctor: though he did not give them credit for overmuch sense in general. The fact was, the Misses Moore had been afraid to come. Hearing their father say he should look in, they deemed it wise to keep away--and did so, to their own deep mortification and disappointment. Mr. Moore was an easy-tempered man, and an indulgent father; but if once in a way he did by chance issue an edict, they knew it might not be disobeyed--and had he seen them there with his own eyes, he might have prohibited their going for the future. So they allowed policy to prevail, and stayed at home.

What with the opening service, and what with the coming party at Mrs. Jinks's, Foxwood was that day stirred to its centre. The preparations for the kettledrum were on an exhaustive scale, the different ladies having vied with each other in sending in supplies. Butter, cream, delicate bread and cakes, jam, marmalade, choice fruit, biscuits, and other things too numerous to mention. Miss Blake had taken a huge packet of tea, and some beautiful flowers, the latter offering cajoled out of old Maclean, the head gardener at the Court.

The walk to St. Jerome's and back, together with the excitement of the new service, had made them thirsty, and it was universally agreed to take tea first, though only four o'clock, and proceed to business afterwards. The table groaned under the weight of good things on it, and Miss Blake was president-in-chief. The room was too small for the company, who sat or stood as they could, elbowing each other, and making much of Mr. Cattacomb. Tongues were going fast, Mr. Cattacomb's amidst them, and Miss Blake was getting hot with the work of incessantly filling cups from the tea-pots, when a loud knock, announcing further visitors, shook the street door and Paradise Row.

"Who can it be? I'm sure we have no room for more!"

Mrs. Jinks went to see. Throwing open the front door, there stood the Misses

Moore. Though debarred of the opening service, they would not be done out of the kettledrum.

"Are they here yet, Mrs. Jinks?" cried the young ladies eagerly.

"Yes, they are here," replied the Widow Jinks, her cap (clean for the occasion, and no bonnet) trembling with suppressed wrath.

"Oh dear! Has tea begun?"

"Begun, Miss Jemima! it's to be hoped it's three-parts over. I'll tell you what it is, young ladies: when I agreed to let my parlours to the Reverend Cattakin, I didn't bargain to keep the whole parish in kettledrumming. Leastways, not to wait on 'em; and bile kettles for 'em, and toast muffins for 'em by the hour at a stretch. I thought what a nice quiet lodger I should have--a single man, and him a minister! Instead of which I might just as well keep an inn."

The young ladies walked on, wisely giving no answer, and entered the parlour. There they were presented to Mr. Cattacomb, and joined the tea-table.

Kettledrums, as we are all aware, cannot last for ever, and before six o'clock Miss Blake was on her way back to Foxwood Court. The discussion as to district visiting and other matters was postponed to another day, Mr. Cattacomb pleading fatigue (and no wonder); and Miss Blake--who was in point of fact the prime mover and prop and stay of it all--inwardly thinking that a less crowded meeting would be more conducive to business. As she was nearing the gate at Foxwood Court, she met Mr. Smith sauntering along, apparently out for an airing.

"Good afternoon, madam!"

He would have passed with the words, but she stopped to talk with him. The truth was, Miss Blake had taken, she knew not why or wherefore, a liking for Mr. Smith. From the first moment she saw him he had possessed a kind of attraction for her. It must be said that she believed him to be a gentleman.

"You were not at the opening service at St. Jerome's this afternoon, Mr. Smith?" she said, half-reproachfully.

"Well, to tell you the truth, I thought I should be out of place there, as the

congregation was comprised only of ladies," was his reply. "Happening to be walking that way, I saw lots of them go in."

"Foxwood cannot boast of gentlemen in the middle of the day; the few who reside here are off to Basham for their different occupations. But you are an idle man, Mr. Smith."

"I am not always idle, I assure you, Miss Blake. I have Sir Karl Andinnian's interests to look after."

"Oh, indeed! As a friend, I presume?"

"Just so."

"Well, you would not have been quite solitary if you had come into the church. Mr. Moore was there."

"Ay. He looked in for five minutes, and came out laughing. I don't know what amused him, unless it was to see the Misses Sumnor there."

"I think you must have been watching us all--all who went in, and all who came out," said Miss Blake. The agent smiled as he disclaimed the imputation: and with that they parted.

"Those flowers were so much admired and appreciated, Maclean," said Miss Blake to the gardener as she passed the lodge--where he sat at tea with his wife--the door open. "There are no such hothouse flowers anywhere as yours."

Maclean rose and thanked her for the compliment. She passed rapidly on, and entered the house by the window of the North room.

"I wonder where Lucy is?--Dressing, perhaps; or seated at the window looking out for her husband. Foolish child! Does he deserve that love?"

Treading softly on the carpeted staircase, her knock at Lady Andinnian's door and her entrance were simultaneous. Lucy, in her white morning dress with its blue ribbons, was standing up beside her husband. His arm was round her waist, her face lay upon his breast, his own bent down upon it.

It was an awkward moment for Miss Blake; she bit her lips as she stammered

an apology. Lucy, blushing and laughing, drew away. Karl stood his ground, laughing too.

"I did not know you had returned, Sir Karl."

"I have just come; three minutes ago," he said, holding out his hand. "Lucy was telling me you had gone to a kettledrum, and I saucily assured her she must have dreamt it. Fancy kettledrums at Foxwood!"

They separated for the purpose of dressing, Miss Blake biting her lips still as she went to her room. The little matter had turned her hot and cold. Do as she would, she could not get rid entirely of her love for Karl Andinnian, in spite of the chronic resentment she indulged towards him.

"If this is jealousy," she murmured, sitting down to think, and undoing her veil with fingers that thrilled to their extreme ends, "I must indeed school myself. I thought I had learned to bear calmly."

At dinner Sir Karl seemed in better spirits than usual. He told them he had been to the Opera to hear the new singer, Ilma di Murska, in "Robert le Diable."

"Oh, Karl!--and not to have had me with you!" cried Lucy.

"I will take you up on purpose, Lucy. You must hear her. In the song 'Robert, toi que j'aime' she electrified us all. I never heard anything like it in my life. And she is most elegant on the stage. Her dresses are splendid."

"Was anyone there that you knew?"

"I hardly looked at the house at all. I was in the stalls. The Prince and Princess of Wales were in the royal box."

"I am sure, Karl, it is a wonder to hear that you went!"

"True, Lucy; but my evenings hung heavily on my hands. What with Plunkett and Plunkett and other business matters, the days were busy enough: I used to wish the evenings were. I felt very dull."

"Just as I have been feeling here, Karl, without you."

His answer to his wife was but a look; but Miss Blake wished she had not caught it. What had she done, that his love should have missed her to be lavished on this girl-child?

"Sir Karl," she cried somewhat abruptly, "who is Mr. Smith?"

"I don't know," carelessly replied Sir Karl, whose thoughts were preoccupied.

"Not know! but is he not your agent?--and a friend also?"

Sir Karl was fully aroused now. "Know who Mr. Smith is?" he repeated--and he wished to heaven in his secret heart that he did know. "How do you mean, Miss Blake? He is Mr. Smith, and--yes--a kind of agent to me on the estate."

The latter part of the answer was given lightly, half merrily, as if he would pass it off with a laugh. Miss Blake resumed.

"Is he not an old friend of the Andinnian family?"

"Of some of them, I believe. I did not know him myself."

"Who gave him his appointment?"

"My mother. She considered it well to have some responsible person here to look after my interests, as I was living abroad."

"Do you not intend, Sir Karl, to make an acquaintance of him?--a friend?"

For a moment Sir Karl's brows were heavily knitted. "I do not suppose I shall," he quietly said.

"He seems a well-informed, agreeable man; and is, I conclude, a gentleman," returned Miss Blake, quite in a tone of remonstrance.

"I am glad to hear it," replied Sir Karl, his manner somewhat freezing. "And so, Lucy, you have had some of the neighbours calling here?" he continued, addressing his wife and turning the conversation.

"Oh, Karl, yes! And you were not here to help me; and I did not know them,

and confused their names hopelessly with one another."

"I should not have known them either," laughed Sir Karl.

Miss Blake had some letters to write, and got to them after dinner: she had been too much engaged with other things during the day. Tea was taken in early to the drawing-room, and afterwards she went back early to her own room, the North room, to finish her writing by what little light remained. She saw Sir Karl and Lucy in the garden arm-in-arm, conversing together in low, confidential tones. Evidently they were all-sufficient for each other and did not miss her.

Say what we will, it could but seem to Miss Blake a neglect and something worse, looking upon past matters in her own light; and it told upon her cruelly.

The evening dusk drew on. She heard Lucy at the piano in the drawing-room, seemingly alone, trying a bit of one song and a bit of, another. There was no doubt that Lucy thought Theresa was still busy and would not interrupt her. Miss Blake put up her desk and sat at the open window. By and by, when it was nearly dark, she threw a shawl on her shoulders, stepped out, crossed the lawn, and lost herself amidst the opposite trees. Miss Blake was that night in no mood for companionship: she preferred her own company to that of Lucy or her husband. As we say by the cross little children, the black dog was on her back; she did not listen even to the sweet melody of the nightingales.

"But for St. Jerome's I would not stay another day here," ran her thoughts. "I almost wish now I had not stirred in the church matter, but let the benighted place alone. As it is--and Mr. Cattacomb's come--why, I must make the best of it, and do my duty. Stay! stay, Theresa Blake!" she broke off in self-soliloquising sternness. "Is this fulfilling your good resolution--to give up all and bear all? Let me put away these most evil thoughts and work bravely on, and stay here cheerfully for Lucy's sake. It may be that she will want a friend, and I--Oh, there he is!"

The last sentence related to Karl. She had gradually got round the house to the other side, which brought her in face of Sir Karl's room. The doors of the window stood wide open; a lamp was on the table, by the light of which he seemed to be reading a note and talking to Hewitt, who stood near. Crossing over on the soft grass she drew within ear-shot, not really with any intention of listening, but in her mind's abstraction--what was there likely to pass between Sir

Karl and his servant that concerned her to hear? With the bright lamp inside and the darkness out, they could not see her.

"You must be very cautious, Hewitt," Sir Karl was saying. "Implicitly silent."

"I have been, sir, and shall be," was the answer. "There's no fear of *me*. I have not had the interests of the family at heart all these years, Sir Karl, to compromise them now."

"I know, I know, Hewitt. Well, that's all, I think, for to-night."

Miss Blake passed back again out of hearing, very slowly and thoughtfully. She had heard the words, and was dissecting them: it almost sounded as though Sir Karl and his man had some secret together. Stepping on to the terrace, she was about to go in, when she heard Sir Karl enter the drawing-room and speak to his wife.

"I think I shall take a bit of a stroll, Lucy."

"To smoke your cigar? Do so, Karl."

"I--wonder--whether it is an excuse to go where he went the other night?" thought Miss Blake, the idea striking her like a flash of lightning. "I'll watch him. I will. I said I would, and I will. His family may have interests of their own, but Lucy and her family have theirs, and for her sake I'll watch."

Drawing the shawl over her head, she passed out at one of the small gates, crossed the road, and glided along under cover of the opposite hedge as far as the Maze. There she stood, back amidst the trees, and sheltered from observation. The dress she wore happened to be black, for it was one of St. Jerome's fast-days, the shawl was black, and she could not be seen in the shade.

It was a still night. The dew was rising, and there seemed to be some damp exhaled from the trees. The time passed, ever so many minutes, and she began to think she had come on a fruitless errand. Or was it that Sir Karl was only lingering with his wife?

"Good gracious! What was that?"

A shrill shriek right over Miss Blake's head had caused the words and the

start. It must have been only a night bird; but her nerves--what few she had--were on the tension, and she began to tremble slightly. It was not a pleasant position, and she wished herself away.

"I'll go," she mentally cried. "I wish I had not come. I--hope--Mr. Smith's--not looking out, or he will see me!" she added, slowly and dubiously.

The doubt caused her to stay where she was and strain her eyes at the opposite cottage. Was it fancy? One of the windows stood open, and she thought she saw a head and eyes peeping from it. Peeping, not openly looking.

"He must have seen me come!" decided Miss Blake. "But surely he'd not know me, wrapped up like this! Hark!"

A very slight sound had dawned upon her ear. Was it Sir Karl advancing? Surely the sound was that of footsteps! At the same moment, there arose another and separate sound; and that was close to her, inside the gates by which she stood.

"Some one must be coming out!" breathed Miss Blake. "It's getting complicated. I wish I was safe away. Two pairs of eyes may see what one would not."

Sir Karl Andinnian--for the footsteps were his--advanced. Very quietly and cautiously. Miss Blake could see that he had changed his dress coat for another, which he had buttoned round him, though the night was close. Halting at the gate he drew the key from his pocket as before, unlocked it, and passed in. Some one met him.

"Karl! I am so glad you have come! I thought you would! I knew you had returned."

It was a soft, sweet voice: the same voice, Miss Blake could have laid a wager on it, that had sung "When lovely woman stoops to folly." Their hands met: she was sure of that. Perhaps their lips also: but she could not see.

"Why, how did you know I was back?" he asked. "Oh, Ann came to the gate to answer a ring, and saw you pass by from the station."

"Why are you out here!" he resumed. "Is it prudent!"

"I was restless, expecting you. I have so much to say; and, do you know, Karl----"

The voice sank into too low a tone to be audible to the thirsty ears outside. Both had spoken but in whispers. Miss Blake cautiously stretched forth her head, so as to get a glimpse through the
closely-barred gate. Yes: it was the lovely girl she had seen during that stealthy visit of hers: and she had taken Sir Karl's arm while she talked to him. Another minute, and they both disappeared within the trees of the maze.

Whether Miss Blake was glued to the trunk of the tree she stood at, or whether it was glued to her, remains a problem to be solved. It was one of the two. There she stood; and leave it she could not. That the flood-gates of a full tide of iniquity had suddenly been opened upon her was as clear to her mind as the light of day. Much that had been incomprehensible in the Maze and its inmates admitted of no doubt now. An instinct of this had been playing in her fancy previously: but she had driven it away as fancy, and would not allow herself to dwell on it. And now--it seemed as though she stood at the edge of a yawning precipice looking down on a gulf of almost unnatural evil, from the midst of which Sir Karl Andinnian shone prominently out, the incarnation of all that was wicked and false and treacherous. But for the necessity of stillness and silence, Miss Blake could have groaned aloud.

A few minutes, and she stole away. There was nothing to wait or watch for: she knew all. Forgetting about Clematis Cottage and the eyes that might be peeping from it, she got back into the grounds of Foxwood and sat down on the bare terrace in the night to commune with herself. What should her course be? Surely she ought to impart the secret to that poor girl, Lucy, whom the man had dared to make his wife.

Let us render justice to Miss Blake. Hard though she was by nature, she strove to do her duty in all conscientiousness at all times and in all places. Sin she detested, no matter of what nature; detested it both as sin and for its offence against God. That Sir Karl Andinnian was living in secret, if not open sin, and was cruelly deceiving his innocent and unsuspicious wife, was clearly indisputable. It must not be allowed to go on--at least so far as Lucy was concerned. To allow her to remain the loving and unsuspicious partner of this man would be almost like making her a third in the wickedness, was what Miss Blake thought in her anger. And she decided on her course.

"And I--if I did not enlighten her, knowing what I know--should be countenancing and administering to the sin," she said aloud. "Good heavens! what a pit seems to be around us! may I be helped to do right!"

Rising, and shaking the night dew from her hair, she passed upstairs to her own chamber. Lady Andinnian was moving about her dressing-room. Impulse induced Miss Blake to knock at the door. Not that she intended to speak then.

"Are you undressing, Lucy?" she asked, an unconscious pity in her voice for the poor young wife.

"Not yet, Theresa. Aglaé's coming up, though, I think. It was dull downstairs by myself, and I thought I might as well come on. I could not find you anywhere. I thought you must have gone to bed."

"I was out of doors."

"Were you? I called to you outside on the terrace, but no one answered."

"Sir Karl is out, then?"

"He is strolling about somewhere," replied Lucy. "He does not sleep well, and likes to take half an hour's stroll the last thing. It strikes me sometimes that Karl's not strong, Theresa: but I try to throw the fear off."

Miss Blake drew in her lips, biting them to an enforced silence. She was burning to say what she could say, but knew it would be premature.

"I will wish you goodnight, Lucy, my dear. I am tired, and--and out of sorts."

"Good night, Theresa: dormez bien," was the gay answer.

"To waste her love and solicitude upon *him!*" thought Miss Blake, as she stepped along the corridor with erect head and haughty brow. "I told Colonel Cleeve before the marriage that he was wild--little Dennet had said so--but I was put down. No wonder Sir Karl cannot spend his income on his home! he has other ways and means for it. Oh, how true are the words of holy writ! 'The heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.'"

CHAPTER XV.

Revealed to Lady Andinnian

The morning sun had chased away the dew on the grass, but the hedge-rows were giving out their fragrance, and the lark and blackbird sang in the trees. Miss Blake was returning from early service at St. Jerome's; or, as St. Jerome people called it, Matins.

In spite of the nearly sleepless night she had passed, Miss Blake looked well. Her superabundance of hair, freshly washed up with its cunning cosmetics and adorned to perfection, gleamed as if so many golden particles of dust were shining on it: her morning robe was of light muslin, and becoming as fashion could make it. It was very unusual for Miss Blake to get little sleep: she was of too equable a temperament to lie awake: but the previous night's revelation of iniquity had disturbed her in no common degree, and her head had ached when she rose. The headache was passing now, and she felt quite ready for breakfast. A task lay before her that day: the disclosure to Lady Andinnian. It was all cut and dried: how she should make it and when she should make it: even the very words of it were already framed.

She would not so much as turn her eyes on the gate of the Maze: had she been on that side of the road she would have caught up her flounces as she passed it. Never, willingly, would she soil her shoes with that side of the way again by choice--the place had a brand on it. It was quite refreshing to turn her eyes on Clematis Cottage, sheltering the respectable single bachelor who lived there.

Turning her eyes on the cottage, she turned them on the bachelor as well. Mr. Smith in a light morning coat, and his arm as usual in a black sling, was out of doors amidst the rose trees on the little lawn, gazing at one of them through his green spectacles. Miss Blake stopped as he saluted her, and good mornings were exchanged.

"I am no judge of flowers," he said, "have not lived among them enough for that; but it appears to me that this rose, just come out, is a very rare and beautiful specimen."

Obeying the evident wish--given in manner alone, not in words--that she should go in and look at the rose, Miss Blake entered. It was a tea-rose of exquisite tint and sweetness. Miss Blake was warm in her admiration; she had not noticed any exactly like it at the Court. Before she could stop the sacrilege Mr. Smith had opened his penknife, cut off the rose, and was presenting it to her.

"Oh, how could you!" she exclaimed. "It was so beautiful here, in your garden."

"Madam, it will be more beautiful there," he rejoined, as she began to put it in her waistband.

"I should be very sorry, but that I see other buds will soon be out."

"Yes, by to-morrow. Earth dots not deal out her flowers to us with a niggardly hand."

Accompanying the resolution Miss Blake had come to the previous evening and perfected in the night--in her eyes a very righteous and proper resolution; namely, to disclose what she knew to Lady Andinnian--accompanying this, I say, was an undercurrent of determination to discover as many particulars of the ill-savoured matter as she possibly could discover. Standing at this moment on Mr. Smith's grass-plat, that gentleman beside her and the gates of the Maze in full view opposite, an idea struck Miss Blake that perhaps he knew something of the affair.

She began to question him. Lightly and apparently carelessly, interspersed with observations about the flowers, she turned the conversation on the Maze, asking this, and remarking that.

"Lonely it must be for Mrs. Grey? Oh, yes. How long has she lived there, Mr. Smith?"

"She came--let me see. Shortly, I think, before Mrs. Andinnian's death."

"Ah, yes. At the time Sir Karl was staying here."

"Was Sir Karl staying here? By the way, yes, I think he was."

Miss Blake, toying with a spray of the flourishing clematis, happened to look suddenly at Mr. Smith as he gave the answer, and saw his glance turned covertly on her through his green glasses. "He knows all about it," she thought, "and is screening Sir Karl. That last answer, the pretended non-remembrance, was an evasion. Men invariably hold by one another in matters of this kind. Just for a moment there was a silence.

"Mr. Smith, you may trust me," she then said in a low tone. "I fancy that you and I both know pretty well who it was brought the lady here and why she lives in that seclusion. But I could never have believed it of Sir Karl Andinnian."

Mr. Smith in his surprise--and it looked like very genuine surprise--took off his glasses and gazed at Miss Blake without them. He had rather fine brown eyes, she noticed. Not a word spoke he.

"You wonder that I should speak of this, Mr. Smith--I see that."

"I don't understand you, ma'am, and that's the truth."

"Oh, well, I suppose you will not understand. Sir Karl ought to be ashamed of himself."

Whether it was her tart tone that suddenly enlightened Mr. Smith, or whether he had but been pretending before, there could be no mistake that he caught her meaning now. He put on his green spectacles with a conscious laugh.

"Hush," said he, making believe playfully to hide his face. "We are content, you know, Miss Blake, to ignore these things."

"Yes, I do know it, dear sir: it is the way of the world. But they cannot be ignored in the sight of Heaven."

The striking of nine o'clock inside the house reminded Miss Blake that the morning was getting on, and that she had best make haste if she wanted any breakfast. Mr. Smith held the gate open for her, and shook her offered hand. She stepped onwards, feeling that a mutual, if silent, understanding had been established between them--that they shared the disgraceful secret.

Had Miss Blake wanted confirmation in her belief, this admission of Mr. Smith's would have established it. But she did not. She was as sure of the fact as though an angel had revealed it to her. The sight of her own good eyes, the hearing of her true ears, and the exercise of her keen common sense had established it too surely.

"My task lies all plain before me," she murmured. "It is a disagreeable one, and may prove a thankless one, but I will not shrink from it. Who am I that I should turn aside from an appointed duty? That it *has* been appointed me, events show. I have been guided in this by a higher power than my own."

An appointed duty! Perhaps Miss Blake thought she had been "appointed" to watch the Maze gates in the shade of the dark night, to track the private steps of her unsuspicious host, Karl Andinnian! There is no sophistry in this world like self-sophistry; nothing else so deceives the human heart: more especially when it is hidden under a guise of piety.

Miss Blake found her opportunity in the course of the morning. A shade of pity crossed her for the happiness she was about to mar, as she saw the husband and wife out together after breakfast, amid the flowers. Now Lucy's arm entwined fondly in his, now tripping by his side, now calling his attention to some rare or sweet blossom, as Mr. Smith had called Miss Blake's in the morning, went they. In Lucy's bright face, as she glanced perpetually at her lord and husband, there was so much of love, so much of trust: and in his, Sir Karl's, there was a whole depth of apparent tenderness for her.

"Men were deceivers ever," angrily cried Miss Blake, recalling a line of the old ballad. "It's enough to make one sick. But I am sorry for Lucy; it will be a dreadful blow. How I wish it could be inflicted on him instead of her! In a measure it will fall on him--for of course Lucy will take active steps."

Later, when Sir Karl, as it chanced, had gone over to Basham, and Lucy was in her pretty little dressing room, writing to some girl friend, Miss Blake seized on the opportunity. Shutting herself in with Lady Andinnian, she made the communication to her. She told it with as much gentle consideration as possible, very delicately, and, in fact, rather obscurely. At first Lady Andinnian did not understand, could not understand; and when she was made to understand, her burning face flashed forth its indignation, and she utterly refused to believe.

Miss Blake only expected this. She was very soothing and tender.

"Sit down, Lucy," she said. "Listen. On my word of honour, I would not have imparted this miserable tale to inflict on you pain so bitter, but that I saw it *must* be done. For your sake, and in the interests of everything that's right and just and seemly, it would not have done to suffer you to remain in ignorance, a blind victim to the dastardly deceit practised on you by your husband."

"He could not so deceive me, Theresa; he could not deceive any one," she burst forth passionately.

"My dear, I only ask you to listen. You can then judge for yourself. Do not take my word that it is, or must be, so. Hear the facts, and then use your own common sense. Alas, Lucy, there can be no mistake: but for knowing that, should I have spoken, think you? It is, unfortunately, as true as heaven."

From the beginning to the end, Miss Blake told her tale. She spoke out without reticence now. Sitting beside Lucy on the sofa, and holding her hands in hers with a warm and loving clasp, she went over it all. The mystery that appeared to encompass this young lady, living alone at the Maze in strict seclusion with her two old servants, who were man and wife, she spoke of first as an introduction. She said how curiously it had attracted her attention, unaccountably to herself at the time, but that *now* she knew a divine inspiration had guided her to the instinct. She avowed how she had got in, and that it was done purposely; and that she had seen the girl, who was called Mrs. Grey, and was "beautiful as an angel," and heard her sing the characteristic song (which might well indeed have been written of *her*), "When lovely woman stoops to folly." Next, she described Sir Karl's secret visits; the key he let himself in with, taken from his pocket; the familiar and affectionate words interchanged between him and the girl, who on the second occasion had come to the gate to wait for him. She told Lucy that she had afterwards had corroborative evidence from Mr. Smith, the agent: he appeared to know all about it, to take it as a common matter of course, and to be content to ignore it after the custom of the world. She said that Sir Karl had brought Mrs. Grey to the Maze during the time he was staying at Foxwood in attendance on his sick mother: and she asked Lucy to recall the fact of his prolonged sojourn here, of his unwillingness to leave it and rejoin her, his wife; and of the very evident desire he had had to keep her altogether from Foxwood. In short, as Miss Blake put the matter--and every syllable she spoke did she believe to be strictly true and unexaggerated--it was simply impossible

for the most unwilling listener not to be convinced.

Lady Andinnian was satisfied: and it was as her death-blow. Truth itself could not have appeared more plain and certain. After the first outburst of indignation, she had sat very calm and quiet, listening silently. Trifles excite the best of us, but in a great calamity heart and self alike shrink into stillness. Save that she had turned pale as death, there was no sign.

"Lucy, my poor Lucy, forgive me! I would have spared you if I could: but I believe the task of telling you was *laid* on me."

"Thank you, yes; I suppose it was right to tell me, Theresa," came the mechanical answer from the quivering lips.

"My dear, what will be your course? You cannot remain here, his wife."

"Would you please let me be alone, now, Theresa? I do not seem to be able to think yet collectedly."

The door closed on Miss Blake, and Lady Andinnian bolted it after her. She bolted the other two doors, so as to make sure of being alone. Then the abandonment began. Kneeling on the carpet, her head buried on the sofa pillow, she lay realizing the full sense of the awful shock. It shook her to the centre. Oh, how dreadful it was! She had so loved Karl, so believed in him: she had believed that man rarely loved a maiden and then a wife as Karl had loved her. This, then, must have been the secret trouble that was upon him!--which had all but induced him to break off his marriage! So she reasoned, and supposed she reasoned correctly. All parts of the supposition, had she thought them well out, might not perhaps have fitted-in to one another: but in a distress such as this, no woman--no, nor man either--is capable of working out problems logically. She assumed that the intimacy must have been going on for years: in all probability long before he knew her.

An hour or so of this painful indulgence, and then Lady Andinnian rose from the floor and sat down to think, as well as she could think, what her course should be. *She* was truly religious, though perhaps she knew it not. Theresa Blake was ostensibly so, and very much so in her own belief: but the difference was wide. The one had the real gold, the other but the base coin washed over. She, Lucy, strove to think and to see what would be right and best to do; for herself, for her misguided husband, and in the sight of God.

She sat and thought it out, perhaps for another hour. Aglaé came to the door to say luncheon was served, but Lady Andinnian said Miss Blake was to be told that she had a headache and should not take any. To make a scandal and leave her husband's home--as Theresa seemed to have hinted--would have gone well nigh to kill her with the shame and anguish it would entail. And oh, she hoped, she trusted, that her good father and mother, who had yielded to her love for Karl and so sanctioned the marriage, might never, never know of this. She lifted her imploring eyes and hands to Heaven in prayer that it might be kept from them. She prayed that she might be enabled to do what was right, and to *bear*: to bear silently and patiently, no living being, save Sir Karl, knowing what she had to endure.

For, while she was praying for the way to be made clear before her and for strength to walk in it, however thorny it might be, an idea had dawned upon her that this matter might possibly be kept from the world,--might be held sacred between herself and Sir Karl. *Could* she? could she continue to live on at the Court, bearing in patient silence--nay, in impatient--the cruel torment, the sense of insult? And yet, if she did not remain, how would it be possible to conceal it all from her father and mother? The very indecision seemed well nigh to kill her.

Visitors drove up to the house in the course of the afternoon--the county families were beginning to call--and Lady Andinnian had to go down. Miss Blake was off to one of St. Jerome's services--of which the Reverend Guy Cattacomb was establishing several daily. Sir Karl came home while the visitors were there. After their departure, when he came to look round for his wife, he was told she had hastily thrown on bonnet and mantle and gone out. Sir Karl rather wondered.

Not only to avoid her husband, but also because she wanted to see Margaret Sumnor, and perhaps gain from her a crumb of comfort in her utter wretchedness, had Lady Andinnian run forth to gain the vicarage. Margaret was lying as before, on her hard couch, or board; doing, for a wonder, nothing. Her hands were clasped meekly before her on her white wrapper, her eyelids seemed heavy with crying. But the eyes smiled a cheerful greeting to Lady Andinnian.

"Is anything the matter, Margaret?"

It was but the old story, the old grievance; Margaret Sumnor was pained by it, more or less, nearly every day of her life--the home treatment of her father: the

contempt shown to him by his second family; ay, and by his wife.

"It is a thing I cannot talk of much, Lucy. I should not speak of it at all, but that it is well known to Foxwood, and commented on openly. Caroline and Martha set papa at naught in all ways: the insolence of their answers to him, both in words and manner, brings the blush of pain and shame to his face. This time the trouble was about that new place of Miss Blake's, St. Jerome's. Papa forbid them to frequent it; but it was just as though he had spoken to a stone--in fact, worse; for they retorted and set him at defiance. They wanted daily service, they said, and should go where it was held. So now papa, I believe, thinks of resuming his daily services here, at Trinity, hoping it may counteract the other. There, that's enough of home and my red eyes, Lucy. You don't look well."

Lady Andinnian drew her chair quite close to the invalid, so that she might let her hand rest in the one held out for her. "I have a trouble too, Margaret," she whispered. "A dreadful, sudden trouble, a blow; and I think it has nearly broken my heart. I cannot tell you what it is; I cannot tell any one in the world----"

"Except your husband," interposed Miss Sumnor. "Never have any concealments from him, Lucy."

Lady Andinnian's face turned red and white with embarrassment. "Yes, him; I shall have to speak to him," she said, in some hesitation: and Miss Sumnor's deep insight into others' hearts enabled her to guess that the trouble had something to do with Sir Karl. She suspected it was that painful thing to a young wife--a first quarrel.

"I am not like you, Margaret--ever patient, ever good," faltered poor Lady Andinnian. "I seem to be nearly torn apart with conflicting thoughts--perhaps I ought to say passions--and I thought I would come to you for a word of advice and comfort. There are two ways in which I can act in this dreadful matter; and indeed that word is no exaggeration, for it is very dreadful. The one would be to make a stir in it, take a high tone, and set forth my wrongs; that would be revenge, just revenge; but I hardly know whether it would be right, or bring right. The other would be to put up with the evil in silence, and *bear*; and leave the future to God. Which must I do?"

Margaret Sumnor turned as much as she could turn without assistance, and laid both her hands imploringly on Lady Andinnian's.

"Lucy! Lucy! choose the latter. I have seen, oh, so much of this revenge, and of how it has worked. My dear, I believe in my honest heart that this revenge was never yet taken but it was repented of in the end. However grave the justifying cause and cruel the provocation, the time would come when it was heartily and bitterly regretted, when its actor would say, Oh that I had not done as I did, that I had chosen the merciful part!"

There was a brief silence. Miss Sumnor resumed.

"'Vengeance is mine; I will repay;' you know who says that, Lucy: but you cannot know what I have seen and marked so often--that when that vengeance is taken into human hands, it somehow defeats itself. It may inflict confusion and ruin on the adversary; but it never fails to tell in some way on the inflictor. It may be only in mental regret: regret that may not set in until after long years; but, rely upon it, he never fails, in his remorseful heart, to wish the past could be undone. A regret, such as this, we have to carry with us to the grave; for it can never be remedied, the revengeful act cannot be blotted out. It has been done;

and it stands with its consequences for ever: consequences, perhaps, that we never could have foreseen."

Lady Andinnian sat listening with drooping face. A softer expression stole over it.

"There is one thing we never can repent of, Lucy; and that is, of choosing the path of mercy--of leniency. It brings a balm with it to the sorely-chafed spirit, and heals in time. Do *you* choose it, my dear. I urge it on you with my whole heart."

"I think I will, Margaret; I think I will," she answered, raising for a moment her wet eyes. "It will mortify my pride and my self-esteem: be always mortifying them; and I shall need a great deal of patience to bear."

"But you will be able to bear; to bear all; you know where to go for help. Do this, Lucy; and see if in the future you do not find your reward. In after years, it may be that your heart will go up with, a great bound of joy and thankfulness. 'I did as Margaret told me,' you will say, 'and bore.' Oh, if men and women did but know the future that they lay up for themselves according as their acts shall be!--the remorse or the peace."

Lucy rose and kissed her. "It shall be so, Margaret," she whispered. And she went away without another word.

She strove to keep the best side uppermost in her mind as she went home. Her resolution was taken; and, perhaps because it was taken, the temptation to act otherwise and to choose revenge, rose up in all manner of attractive colours. She could abandon her ill-doing husband and start, even that night, for her parents' home; reveal the whole, and claim their protection against him. This would be to uphold her pride and her womanly self-respect: but oh, how it would pain them! And they had given their consent to the marriage against their better judgment for her sake; so to say, against their own will. No; she could not, for very shame, tell them, and she prayed again that they might never know it.

"I *can* take all the pain upon myself, and bear it without sign for their sakes," she mentally cried. "Oh yes, and for mine, for the exposure would kill me. I *can* bear this; I must take it up as my daily and nightly cross; but I could not bear that my own dear father and mother, or the dear friends of my girlhood, should know he is faithless to me--that he never could have loved me. Theresa, the only one

cognisant of it, will be silent for my sake."

Bitter though the decision was, Lucy could but choose it. She had believed Karl Andinnian to be one of the few good men of the earth; she had made him her idol; all had seen it. To let them know that the idol had fallen from his pedestal, and *so* fallen, would reflect its slighting disgrace on her, and be more than human nature could encounter.

Her interview with Sir Karl took place that evening. She had managed, save at dinner, to avoid his presence until then. It was held in her dressing-room at the dusk hour. He came up to know why she stayed there alone and what she was doing. In truth, she had been schooling herself for this very interview, which had to be got over before she went to rest. The uncertainty of what she could say was troubling her, even the very words she should use caused her perplexity. In her innate purity, her sensitively refined nature, she could not bring herself to speak openly to her husband upon topics of this unpleasant kind. That fact rendered the explanation more incomplete and complicated than it would otherwise have been. He had come up, and she nerved herself to the task. As good enter on it now as an hour later.

"I--I want to speak to you, Sir Karl."

He was standing by the open window, and turned his head quickly. Sir Karl! "What's amiss, Lucy?" he asked.

"I--I--I know all about your secret at the Maze," she said with a great burst of emotion, her chest heaving, her breath coming in gasps.

Sir Karl started as though he had been shot. His very lips turned of an ashy whiteness.

"Lucy! You cannot know it!"

"Heaven knows I do," she answered. "I have learnt it all this day. Oh, how could you so deceive me?"

Sir Karl's first act was to dart to the door that opened on the corridor and bolt it. He then opened the two doors leading to the chambers on either side, looked to see that no one was in either of them, shut the doors again, and bolted them.

"Sir Karl, this has nearly killed me."

"Hush!" he breathed. "Don't talk of it aloud, for the love of God!"

"Why did you marry me?" she asked.

"Why, indeed," he retorted, his voice one of sad pain. "I have reproached myself enough for it since, Lucy."

She was silent. The answer angered her; and she had need of all her best strength, the strength she had so prayed for, to keep her lips from a cruel answer. She sat in her low dressing-chair, gazing at him with reproachful eyes.

He said no more just then. Well-nigh overwhelmed with the blow, he stood back against the window-frame, his arms folded, his face one of pitiful anguish. Lucy, his wife, had got hold of the dreadful secret that was destroying his own peace, and that he had been so cunningly planning to conceal.

"How did you learn it?" he asked.

"I shall never tell you," she answered with quiet firmness, resolved not to make mischief by betraying Theresa. "I know it, and that is enough. Put it down, if you choose, that it was revealed to me by accident--or that I guessed at."

"But, Lucy, it is necessary I should know."

"I have spoken, Sir Karl. I will never tell you." The evening breeze came wafting into that room of pain; cooling, it might be, their fevered brows, though they were not conscious of it. Lady Andinnian resumed.

"The unpardonable deceit you practised on my father and mother----"

Sir Karl's start of something like horror interrupted her. "They must never know it, Lucy. In mercy to us all, you must join with me in concealing it from them."

"It was very wicked in you to have concealed it from them at all. At least, to have married me *with* such a secret--for I conclude you could not have really dared to tell them. They deserved better at your hands. I was their only daughter: all they had to love."

"Yes, it was wrong. I have reproached myself since worse than you can reproach me. But I did not know the worst then."

She turned from him proudly. "I--I wanted to tell you, Sir Karl, that I for one will never forgive or forget your falsehood and deceit; and, what I am about to say, I say for my father and mother's sake. I will keep it from them, always if I can; I will bury it within my own breast, and remain on here in your home, your ostensible wife. I had thought of leaving your house for theirs, never to return; but the exposure it would bring frightened me; and, in truth, I shrink from the scandal."

"What do you mean?" he exclaimed. "My 'ostensible' wife?"

"I shall never be your wife again in reality. That can be your room"--pointing to the one they had jointly occupied; "this one is mine," indicating the chamber on the other hand. "Aglaé has already taken my things into it."

Sir Karl stood gazing at her, lost in surprise.

"No one but ourselves need know of this," she resumed, her eyes dropping before the tender, pitiful gaze of his. "The arrangements are looked upon by Aglaé as a mere matter of convenience in the hot weather; the servants will understand it as such. I would spare us both gossip. For your sake and for mine I am proposing this medium course--to avoid the scandal that otherwise must ensue. I shall have to bear, Karl--to bear----" her heart nearly failed her in its bitter grief--"but it will be better than a public separation."

"You *cannot* mean what you say," he exclaimed. "Live apart from me! The cause cannot justify it."

"It scarcely becomes you to say this. Have you forgotten the sin?" she added, in a whisper.

"The sin? Well, of course it was sin--crime, rather. But that is of the past."

She thought she understood what he wished to imply, and bit her lips to keep down their bitter words.

He was surely treating her as the veriest child, striving to hoodwink her still!

That he was agitated almost beyond control, she saw: and did not wonder at.

"The sin is past," he repeated. "No need to recall it or talk of it."

"Be it so," she scornfully said. "Its results remain. *This*, I presume, was the great secret you spoke of the night before our marriage."

"It was. And you see now, Lucy, why I did not dare to speak more openly. I grant that it would have been enough to prevent our marriage, had you then so willed it: but, being my wife, it is not any sufficient cause for you to separate yourself from me."

And, in answer to a question of mine, he could boast that night of his innocence! ran her indignant thoughts.

"I am the best judge of that," she said aloud, in answer. "Not sufficient cause! I wonder you dare say it. It is an outrage on all the proprieties of life. You must bring--them--to the Maze here, close to your roof, and mine!"

In her shrinking reticence, she would not mention to him the girl in plain words; she would not even say "her," but substituted the term "them," as though speaking of Mrs. Grey and her servants collectively. Sir Karl's answer was a hasty one.

"That was not my doing. The coming to the Maze was the greatest mistake ever made. I was powerless to help it."

Again she believed she understood. That when Sir Karl had wished to shake off certain trammels, he found himself not his own master in the matter, and could not.

"And so you submitted?" she scornfully said.

"I had no other choice, Lucy."

"And you pay your visits there!"

"Occasionally. I cannot do otherwise."

"Does it never occur to you to see that public exposure may come? she

continued, in the same contemptuous tone. For the time, Lucy Andinnian's sweet nature seemed wholly changed. Every feeling she possessed had risen up against the bitter insult thrust upon her--and Sir Karl seemed to be meeting it in a coolly insulting spirit.

"The fear of exposure is killing me, Lucy," he breathed, his chest heaving with its painful emotion. "I have been less to blame than you imagine. Let me tell you the story from the beginning, and you will see that----"

"I will not hear a word of it," burst forth Lucy. "It is not a thing that should be told to me. At any rate, I will not hear it."

"As you please, of course; I cannot force it on you. My life was thorny enough before: I never thought that, even if the matter came to your knowledge, you would take it up in this cruel manner, and add to my pain and perplexity."

"It is for the Maze that we have to be economical here!" she rejoined, partly as a question, her hand laid on her rebellious bosom.

"Yes, yes. You see, Lucy, in point of fact----"

"I see nothing but what I do see. I wish to see no further."

Sir Karl looked searchingly at her, as though he could not understand. Could this be his own loving, gentle Lucy? It was indeed difficult to think so.

"In a day or two when you shall have had time to recover from the blow, Lucy--and a blow I acknowledge it to be--you will, I hope, judge me more leniently. You are my wife and I will not give you up: there is no real cause for it. When you shall be calmer you may feel sorry for some things you have said now."

"Sir Karl, listen: and take your choice. I will stay on in your home on the terms I have mentioned, and they shall be perfectly understood and agreed to by both of us; or I will leave it for the protection of my father's home. In the latter case I shall have to tell him why. It is for you to choose."

`"Have you well weighed what your telling would involve?"

"Yes; exposure: and it is that I wish to avoid. If it has to come, it will be your

fault. The choice lies with you. My decision is unalterable."

Sir Karl Andinnian wiped his brow of the fever-drops gathered there. It was a bitter moment: and he considered that his wife was acting with most bitter harshness. But no alternative was left him, for he dared not risk exposure and its awful consequences.

And so, that was the decision. They were to live on, enemies, under the same roof-top: or at best, not friends. The interview lasted longer; but no more explicit explanation took place between them: and when they parted they parted under a mutual and total misapprehension which neither of the two knew or suspected. Misapprehension had existed throughout the interview--and was to exist. It was one of those miserable cases that now and then occur in the world--a mutual misunderstanding, for which no one is to blame. Sometimes it is never set right on this side the grave.

Her heart was aching just as much as his. She loved him passionately, and she was calming down from her anger to a softer mood, such as parting always brings. "Will you not send the--the people away?" she whispered in a last word, and with a burst of grief.

"If I can I will," was his answer. "I am hemmed in, Lucy, by all kinds of untoward perplexities, and I cannot do as I would. Goodnight. I never could have believed you would take it up like this."

They shook hands and parted. The affair had been at last amicably arranged, so to say: and the separation was begun.

And so Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian were henceforth divided, and the household knew it not.

Miss Blake did not suspect a word of it. She saw no signs of any change--for outwardly Karl and his wife were civil and courteous to each other as usual; meeting at meals, present together in daily intercourse. After a few days Miss Blake questioned Lady Andinnian.

"Surely you have not been so foolishly soft as to condone that matter, Lucy?"

But Lucy wholly refused to satisfy her. Nay, she smiled, and as good as tacitly let Miss Blake suppose that she might have been soft and foolish. Not even to

her, or to any other living being, would Lucy betray what was sacred between herself and her husband.

"I am content to let it rest, Theresa: and I must request that you will do the same. Sir Karl and I both wish it."

Miss Blake caught the smile and the gently evasive words, and was struck mute at Lucy's sin and folly. She quite thought she ought to have an atonement offered up for her at St. Jerome's. Surely Eve was not half so frail and foolish when she took the apple!

CHAPTER XVI.

A Night at the Maze

The Maze was an old-fashioned, curious house inside, full of angles and passages and nooks and corners. Its rooms were small, and not many in number, the principal ones being fitted up with dark mahogany wainscoting. The windows were all casement windows with the exception of two: into those, modern sashes of good size had been placed by the late owner and occupant, Mr. Throcton. At Mr. Throcton's death the property was put up for sale and was bought by Sir Joseph Andinnian, furniture and all, just as it stood. Or, it may rather be said, was bought by Lady Andinnian; for the whim to buy it was hers. Just after the purchase had been entirely completed Lady Andinnian sickened and died. Sir Joseph, ill at the time, did nothing whatever with the new place; so that on his death it came into the possession of his heirs in exactly the same state as when it was purchased. They let it be also, and it remained shut up. According to what Mr. Smith informed Miss Blake--and he was in the main correct, though not quite--Mrs. Grey had come to it and taken possession while Mrs. Andinnian lay ill at Foxwood and her son Karl was in attendance on her. But the little fable the agent had made use of--that he had gone over to the Maze to receive the premium from Mrs. Grey on taking possession--had no foundation in fact. He

had certainly gone to the Maze and seen the lady called Mrs. Grey, but not to receive a premium, for she paid none.

The two rooms into which sash windows had been placed were--the one that faced Miss Blake when she had penetrated to the confines of the Maze on that unlucky day, and within which she had seen the unconscious Mrs. Grey; and the one above it. They were at the end of the house, looking towards the entrance gates. Into this upper room the reader must pay a night visit. It was used as a sitting-room. The same dark mahogany wainscoting lined the walls as in the room below, the furniture was dark and heavy-looking; and, in spite of the sultry heat of the night, the shutters were closed before the window and dull crimson curtains of damask wool were drawn across them. There was nothing bright in the appendages of the room, save the lighted lamp on the table and a crystal vase of hothouse flowers.

Seated at the table at work--the making of an infant's frock--was Mrs. Grey. Opposite to her, in the space between the table and the fire-place, sat Sir Karl; and by her side, facing him--Adam Andinnian.

It is more than probable that this will be no surprise; that the reader has already divined the truth of the secret, and all the miserable complication it had brought and was bringing in its train. It was not Adam Andinnian who had died in that fatal scuffle off Portland Island--or more strictly speaking, off Weymouth--but one of the others who had been concerned in it.

Yes, there he sat, in life and in health; his speech as free, his white and beautiful teeth not less conspicuous than of yore--Sir Adam Andinnian. Karl, sitting opposite with his grave, sad face, was not in reality Sir Karl and never had been.

But Adam Andinnian was altered. The once fine black hair, which it had used to please him to wear long in the neck, was now short, scanty, and turned to grey; his once fine fresh colour had given place to pallor, and he was growing a beard that looked grey and stubbly. Decidedly old-looking now, as compared with the past, was Adam Andinnian. He wore evening dress: just as though he had been attired for a dinner party--say--at Foxwood Court. Mrs. Grey--as she was called, though she was in reality Lady Andinnian wore a summer dress of clear white muslin, through which might be seen her white neck and arms. It was the pleasure of her husband, Sir Adam, that in the evening, when only he dared

to come out of his hiding-shell, they should keep up, in attire at least, some semblance of the state that ought to have been theirs.

"I can tell you, Karl, that I don't approve of it," Sir Adam was saying, with all his old haughty bearing and manner. "It's a regular scandal. What business has any one to set up such a thing on my land?"

"It's Truefit's land for the time being, you know, Adam. He gave the consent."

"A parcel of foolish people--be-vanitied boys of self-called priests, and be-fooled girls, running and racing to the place four or five times a day under pretence of worship!" continued Sir Adam, getting up to pace the room in his excitement, as though he would have burst through its small confines. "I won't permit it, Karl."

He seemed to have got somewhat shorter, and his walk had a limp in it. But he was the same hasty, fiery, Adam Andinnian. A man cannot well change his nature.

"I do not see how it is to be prevented," was Karl's answer. "It will not do in our position, to raise a stir over anything, or to make enemies. I daresay it will bring itself to an end some way or other."

"The whole parish is making fun of it, I find: Ann hears it talked of when she goes on errands. And it is a downright insult on Mr. Sumnor. What a curious-minded person that Miss Blake must be! Rose"--Sir Adam halted close to his wife--"if ever you put your foot inside this St. Jerome's I'll not forgive you."

She lifted her eyes to his from the baby's frock. "I am not likely to go to it, Adam."

"The empty-headed creatures that girls are, now-a-days! If
bull-baiting came up, they'd run off to it, just as readily as the good girls of former days would run from any approach of evil to take shelter under their mother's wing. Does your wife frequent St. Jerome's, Karl?"

"Oh no."

"She shows her sense."

Karl Andinnian smiled. "You have not lost the old habit, Adam--the putting yourself into a heat for nothing. I came over this evening to have some serious talk with you. Do sit down."

"Yes do, Adam," added his wife, turning to him; "you will get the pain in your hip again. Do you wish me to go away?" she added to Karl, as she prepared to gather up her working materials.

"No, no, Rose: it's only the old story, I know--the wanting to get rid of me," interposed Sir Adam, sitting down himself. "Stay where you are, wife. Now for it, Karl.--Wait a moment, though" he added, ringing the bell.

It was answered by the same staid, respectable-looking servant seen by Miss Blake; the same confidential woman who had lived with Mrs. Andinnian at Weymouth--Ann Hopley.

"Ann, I am as thirsty as a fish," said her master. "Bring up a bottle of soda-water and a dash of brandy."

"Yes, sir," she replied--not daring now or at any other time to give him his title.

He opened the soda-water himself when it was brought, put in the brandy, drank it, and sat down again. Karl Andinnian began to speak, feeling an innate certainty that his words would be wasted ones.

But some explanation of the past is necessary, and it may as well be given here.

When Karl Andinnian went down from London to Weymouth upon the news of his brother's attempted escape and death, he found his mother in a dreadful state of distress--as already related. This distress was not put on: indeed such distress it would not be possible to assume: for Mrs. Andinnian believed the public accounts--that Adam was dead. *After* she had despatched Karl to Foxwood to make arrangements for the interment, the truth was disclosed to her, Sir Adam had escaped with life, and was lying concealed in Weymouth; but he had been terribly knocked about in the scuffle, and in fact had been considered dead. By the careless stupidity of one of the warders, or else by his connivance, Mrs. Andinnian never entirely knew which, he was reported at the prison as being dead--and perhaps the prison thought itself well rid of so obstreperous an

inmate. The warders had said one to another from the time he was first put there, that that Andinnian gentleman had "mischief" in him. Further explanation may be given later on in the story: at present it is enough to say that Adam Andinnian escaped.

When Mrs. Andinnian arrived with the body (supposed to be her son's) at Foxwood, she then knew the truth. Adam was not dead. He was lying somewhere in great danger; they would not, from motives Of prudence, allow her to know where; but, dead he was not. Not a hint did she disclose of this to Karl; and he stood by her side over the grave, believing it was his brother that was placed in it. She called him Sir Karl; she never gave him a hint that his succession to the title and estates was but a pseudo one; she suffered him to depart in the false belief. Perhaps she did not dare to speak of it, even to him. Karl went abroad, re-met Lucy Cleeve, and became engaged to her. He caused the marriage settlements to be drawn up and signed, still never dreaming that he had no legal right to settle, that the revenues were not his. Only when he went down to Foxwood, a day or two before his marriage, did he become acquainted with the truth.

That was the dread secret disclosed to him by his mother; that, in her fear, she had made him take an oath to keep--"Adam is not dead." Just at the first moment Karl thought her intellects must be wandering: but as she proceeded in a few rapid words to tell of his escape, of his dangerous illness, of his lying even then, hidden away from the terrors of the law, all the dreadful position of his ill-fated brother rushed over Karl as in one long agony. He saw in vivid colours the hazard Adam was running--and must ever run, until either death or recapture should overtake him; he saw as if portrayed in a mirror the miserable future that lay before him, the lonely fugitive he must be.

To Karl Andinnian's mind, no fate in this world could be so miserable. Even death on the scaffold would to himself have been preferable to this lifetime of living dread. He had loved his brother with a keen love; and he felt this almost as a death-blow: he could have died in his love and pity, if by that means his brother might be saved. Mingling with this regret had come the thought of his own changed position, and that he ought not to marry.

This he said. But Mrs. Andinnian pointed out to him that his position would not be so very materially altered. Such was her conviction. That she herself, by connivance with one of the warders, had mainly contributed to the step Adam

had taken, that she had been the first to put it into his head, and set him on to attempt it, she was all too remorsefully conscious of. Now that he had escaped, and was entered in the prison rolls as dead, and lay hidden away in some hole or corner, not daring to come out of it, or to let into it the light of day, she saw what she had done. Not even to her might his hiding-place be disclosed. She saw that his future life must be, at the very best, that of a nameless exile--if, by good fortune, he could make his escape from his own land. If? His person was rather a remarkable one, and well known to his enemies the police force. Not one, perhaps, but had his photograph. A fugitive in some barren desert, unfrequented by man, where he must drag on a solitary life of expatriation! Not much of his income would be needed for this.

"You will have to occupy Foxwood as its master; you must be Sir Karl to the world as you are now," spoke Mrs. Andinnian; "and it is your children who will inherit after you. There is no reason whatever for breaking off your marriage, or for altering any of the arrangements. You will have to pay a certain sum yearly to Adam out of the estate. He will not need it long, poor fellow; a man's life, banned to the extent his will be, eats itself away soon."

Hemmed in by perplexities of all kinds, Karl's interview with his mother ended, and he went forth with his care and trouble. His own trouble would have been enough, but it was as nothing to that felt for his brother. He dared not tell the truth to Colonel Cleeve or to Lucy, or impart the slightest hint that his brother was alive; he almost as little dared, for Lucy's sake, to break off the marriage. And so it took place.

After that, he heard no more until he was again at Foxwood, summoned thither by his mother's illness. Mrs. Andinnian had fretted herself sick. Night and day, night and day was the fear of her son's discovery ever before her mind; she would see the recapture in her dreams: remorse wore her out, and fever supervened. She would have given all she possessed in the world could he be safely back at Portland Island without having attempted to quit it. Karl, on his arrival, found her in this sad state: and it was then she disclosed to him a further complication in the case, which she had but recently learnt herself. Sir Adam Andinnian was married.

It may be remembered that he was for a few days absent from his home in Northamptonshire, returning to it only on the eve of the day that news came of Sir Joseph's death, the fatal day when he killed Martin Scott. He had left home

for the purpose of marrying Rose Turner, who was staying in Birmingham, a measure which had previously been planned between them. But for his mother's prejudices--as he called them--he would have married the young lady in the face of day; but he knew she would never consent, and he did not care openly to set her at naught. "We will be married in private, Rose," he decided, "and I will feel my way afterwards to disclose it to my mother." And Miss Rose Turner cared for him too much to make any objection. Alas, the time never came for him to disclose it. On the very day after his return to his home, the young lady returning to hers, to her unsuspicious friends, he was thrown into prison on the charge of murder. It was not a time to speak; he wished to spare comment and annoyance to her; and she gave evidence at the trial--which she could 'not have done had she been his acknowledged wife. All this had been disclosed to Mrs. Andinnian the day after Karl left to celebrate his marriage. The stranger, Mr. Smith, spoken of by Hewitt as presenting himself again that day at Foxwood, and demanding an interview with its mistress, told her of it then. It was another bitter blow for Mrs. Andinnian, and the distress of mind it induced no doubt helped to bring on the fever. This, in her turn, she disclosed to Karl later from her
sick-bed; and for him it made the complication ten times worse. Had he known his brother had a wife, nothing would have induced him to marry Lucy. Mrs. Andinnian told him more; that Adam had escaped safely to London, where he then lay hidden, and where his wife had joined him; and that they were coming to inhabit the Maze at Foxwood. The last bit of news nearly struck Karl dumb.

"Is Adam mad?" he asked.

"No, very sane," replied Mrs. Andinnian. "He wants to be at least on his own grounds: and we all think--he and I and--no matter--that he may be safer here than anywhere. Even were there a suspicion abroad that he is alive--which there is not, and I trust never will be,--his own place is the very last place that people would look into for him. Besides, there will be precautions used--and the Maze is favourable for concealment."

"It will be utter madness," spoke Karl. "It will be putting himself into the lion's mouth.'

"It will be nothing of the sort--or Mr. Smith would not approve of it," retorted Mrs. Andinnian. "I must see my son, Karl: and how else am I to see him? I may not go to him where he is: it might bring suspicion on him; but I can go over to the Maze."

"Who is Mr. Smith?--and what has he to do with Adam?--and how comes he in the secret?" reiterated Karl.

But to this he could get no answer. Whether Mrs. Andinnian knew, or whether she did not know, she would not say. The one fact--that Mr. Smith held the dangerous secret, and must be conciliated, was quite enough, she said, for Karl Mr. Smith had Adam's safety and interest at heart, she went on to state; he wished to be near the Maze to watch over him; and she had given him the pretty cottage opposite the Maze gates to live in, calling him Sir Karl's agent, and appointing him to collect a few rents, so as to give a colouring of ostensibility to the neighbourhood. In vain Karl remonstrated. It was useless. The ground seemed slipping from under all their feet, but he could do nothing.

After all, poor Mrs. Andinnian did not live to see her most beloved son. Anxiety, torment, restlessness, proved too much for her, and brought on the crisis sooner than was expected. On the very day after she died, the tenants came to the Maze--at least, all the tenants who would be seen openly, or be suspected of inhabiting it. They arrived by the last evening train; Mrs. Grey and her attendants, the Hopleys; and took two flies, which were waiting in readiness, on to the Maze; the lady occupying one, Hopley and his wife the other. How Adam Andinnian reached the place, it is not convenient yet to state.

In the course of the next evening, Karl Andinnian went over to the Maze and saw his brother. Adam was much altered. In the fever, which had supervened on his injuries received at the escape, he had lost his hair and become pale and thin. But his spirits were undaunted. He should soon "pick up" now he was in the free open country air and on his own grounds, he said. As to danger, he seemed not to see it, and declared there was less risk of discovery there than anywhere else. Karl could play the grand man and the baronet for him at Foxwood--but he meant, for all that, to have a voice in the ruling of his own estate. Poor Karl Andinnian, on the contrary, saw the very greatest danger in the position of affairs. He would have preferred to shut up Foxwood, leaving only Hewitt to take care of it, that no chance of discovery should arise from either servants or other inhabitants there. But Sir Adam ruled it otherwise; saying he'd not have the Court left to stagnate. Hewitt was in the secret. It might have been neither expedient nor practicable to keep it from him: but the question was decided of itself. One evening just before Mrs. Andinnian's death, when Hewitt had gone to her sick-room on some errand at the dusk hour, she mistook him for Karl; and spoke words which betrayed all. Karl was glad of it: it seemed a protection to

Adam, rather than not, that his tried old servant should be cognizant of the truth. So Karl went abroad again with his wife, and stayed until his keeping aloof from Foxwood began to excite comment in his wife's family; when he deemed it more expedient to return to it.

And now does the reader perceive all the difficulties of Karl Andinnian? There he was, in a false position: making believe to be a baronet of the realm, and a wealthy man, and the owner of Foxwood: and obliged to make believe. A hint to the contrary, a word that he was not in his right place, might have set suspicion afloat--and Heaven alone knew what would then be the ending. For Adam's sake he must be wary and cunning; he must play, so to say, the knave's part and deceive the world. But the dread of his brother's discovery lay upon him night and day, with a very-present awful dread: it was as a burning brand eating away his heart.

And again--you, my reader, can now understand the complication between Karl and his wife. He believed she had discovered the fact that Adam was alive and living concealed at the Maze; *she*, relying on Miss Blake's information, put down the Maze mystery to something of a very different nature. How could he suppose she meant anything but the dangerous truth? How could she imagine that the secret was any other than Miss Blake had so clearly and convincingly disclosed to her? In Lucy's still almost maidenly sensitiveness, she could not bring her lips to allude openly to the nature of her charge: and there was no necessity: she assumed that Karl knew it even better than she did. In his reluctance to pronounce his brother's name or hint at the secret, lest even the very air should be treacherous and carry it abroad, he was perhaps less open than he might have been. When he offered to relate to her the whole story, she stopped him and refused to listen: and so closed up the explanation that would have set the cruel doubt right and her heart at rest.

Sitting there with Adam to-night, in that closely curtained room, Karl entered upon the matter he had come to urge--that his brother should get away from the Maze into some safer place. It was, as Sir Adam expressed it, but the old story--for Karl had never ceased to urge it from the first--and he wholly refused to listen. There was no risk, he said, no fear of discovery, and he should not go away from his own land. Either from this little particular spot of land which was individually his, or from the land of his birth. It was waste of words in Karl to speak further. Adam had always been of the most obstinate possible temperament. But the (supposed) discovery of his wife had frightened Karl

worse than ever. He did not mention it to them, since he was not able to say how Lucy had made it.

"As sure as you are living, Adam, you will some day find the place entered by the officers of justice!" he exclaimed in pain.

"Let them enter it," recklessly answered Sir Adam. "They'll not find me."

"Oh, Adam, you don't know. They are lynx-eyed and crafty men."

"No doubt. I am all safe, Karl."

Karl had been there longer than usual, and he rose to say good night. Mrs. Grey--for convenience sake we must continue to call her by that name, and Lucy Lady Andinnian--folded up her work and went downstairs with him. She was changed too; but for the better. The very pretty, blooming-faced Rose Turner had come in for her share of the world's bitter trouble, and it had spiritualized her. The once round face was oval now, the lovely features were refined, the damask cheeks were a shade more delicate, the soft blue eyes had a sad light in them. Miss Blake's words were not misapplied to her--"beautiful as an angel."

"Karl," she whispered, "the dread of discovery is wearing me out. If we could but get away from England!"

"I am sure it will wear out me," was Karl's answer.

"Adam is afraid of Mr. Smith, I am sure. He thinks Smith would stop his going. Karl, I fully believe, as truly as I ever believed any great truth in my life, that Mr. Smith is keeping us here and will not let us go. Mr. Smith may appear to be a friend outwardly, but I fear he is an inward enemy. Oh, dear! it is altogether a dreadful situation."

Karl went on home, his brain active, his heart sinking. The manner in which his wife had taken up the matter, distressed him greatly. He supposed she was resenting it chiefly on the score of her father and mother. The colonel had told him that they would rather have followed Lucy to the grave than see her his wife had Sir Adam lived.

"I wonder how she discovered it?" ran his thoughts--but in truth the fact did not excite so much speculation in his mind, because he was hourly living in the

apprehension that people must suspect it. When we hold a dangerous secret, this is sure to be the case. "Perhaps Hewitt let drop an incautious word," he went on musing, "and Lucy caught it up, and guessed the rest. Or--perhaps I dropped one in my sleep."

Crossing the lawn of the Court, he entered by the little smoking-room, his hand pressed upon his aching brow. No wonder that people found fault with the looks of Sir Karl Andinnian! He was wearing to a skeleton. Just as his mother, when she was dying, used to see the
recapture of Adam in her dreams, so did Karl see it in his. Night after night would he wake up from one of the dreadful visions. Adam, the retaken convict, held fast by a heap of scowling, threatening warders, and a frightful scaffold conspicuous in the distance. He would start up in bed in horror, believing it all real, his heart quivering, and once or twice he knew that he had cried out aloud.

"Yes, yes, that's how it must have been," he said, the mystery becoming apparently clear to his eyes as the light of day. "Hewitt is too cautious and true. I have betrayed it in my sleep. Oh, my brother! May Heaven help and save him!"

CHAPTER XVII.

Before the World

Foxwood court was alive with gaiety. At least, what stood for gaiety in that inwardly sad and sober house. Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve had come for a fortnight's stay. Visits were being exchanged with the neighbours; dinner parties reigned. It was not possible for Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian to accept hospitality and not return it: and--at any rate during the sojourn of the Colonel and his wife--Sir Karl dared not shut themselves up as hermits lest comment should be excited. So the Court held its receptions, and went out to other people's: and Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian dressed, and talked, and comported themselves just as though there was no shadow between them.

Lady Andinnian was growing graver day by day: her very heart seemed to be withering. That Sir Karl paid his secret visits to the Maze at night two or three times a week, she knew only too well. One of the most innocent and naturally unsuspicious persons in the world was she: but, now that her eyes had been opened, she saw all clearly. Without watching and tracking the movements of her husband as Miss Blake had tracked them; in her guileless honour she could never have done that; Lady Andinnian was only too fully awake now to the nightly strolls abroad of her husband, and instinct told her for what purpose they were taken.

Life for her at this present time seemed very hard to bear. The task she had imposed on herself--to endure in patience and silence--seemed well nigh an impracticable one. The daily cross that she had apportioned herself to take up felt too heavy for mortal frame to carry. Humiliation, jealousy, love, waged war with each other within her, and rendered her very wretched. It needed all the good and gentle and patient principles instilled into her from early childhood, it needed all the strength she was ever praying for, to hold on perseveringly in her bitter path, and make no sign. At times she thought that the silence to which she was condemned must eat away her heart; but a chance occurrence or two showed her that silence was not the worst phase she might have to bear.

On the day after Mrs. Cleeve's arrival, she was upstairs in her daughter's chamber. Miss Blake was also there. Lucy had come in, hot and tired, from at afternoon walk to Margaret Sumnor's, and Aglaé had been summoned to help her to change her silk dress for an unpretending muslin.

"I did not know it was so hot before I went out, or I would not have put on the silk," observed Lucy, "Sitting so quietly with you all the morning, mamma, in that cool drawing-room, talking of old times, I forgot the heat."

Mrs. Cleeve made no particular reply. She was looking about her; taking silent notice. The doors of communication to the further chamber stood open, as was usual during the day: Lucy took care of that, to keep down suspicion in the house of there being any estrangement between herself and her husband.

"And you have made this your sleeping room, Lucy, my dear?" observed Mrs. Cleeve.

"Yes, mamma."

"And that further one is Sir Karl's! Well, I'm sure you are getting quite a fashionable couple--to have separate rooms. I and your papa never had such a thing in our lives, Lucy."

Lucy Andinnian grew crimson; as if a flush of the summer heat were settling in her face. She murmured, in reference to the remarks, some words about the nights being so very hot, and that she had felt a sort of fever upon her. The very consciousness of having the truth to conceal caused her to be more urgent in rendering some plea of excuse. Aglaé, whose national prejudice had been particularly gratified at the alteration, and who had lived too long in Mrs. Cleeve's service to keep in whatever opinion might rise to her tongue's end, hastened to speak.

"But, and is it not the most sensible arrangement, madame, that my lady and Sir Karl could have made, when the summer is like an Afric summer for the hotness? Mademoiselle here knows that."

"Don't appeal to me, Aglaé," cried Miss Blake, in a frozen tone.

"Yes, yes, Aglaé; I say the fashion is coming up in England; and perhaps it induces to comfort," said Mrs. Cleeve.

"But certainly. And, as madame sees"--pointing through the little sitting-room to the further chamber--"it is but like the same chamber. When Sir Karl is in that and my lady in this, they can look straight at one another."

"Aglaé, see to these shoulder-knots," sharply interposed Lady Andinnian. "You have not put them on evenly."

"And talk to each other too, if they please," persisted Aglaé, ignoring the ribbons to uphold her opinion. "Madame ought to see that the arrangement is good."

"At any rate, Lucy, I think you should have kept to the large room yourself, and Sir Karl have come to the smaller one," said Mrs. Cleeve.

"It's the very remark I made to my lady," cried Aglaé, turning at length to regard the ribbons with a critical eye. "But my lady chose herself this. It is commodious; I say nothing to the contrary; but it is not as large as the other."

Oh how Lucy wished they would be silent. Her poor flushed face knew not where to hide itself; her head and heart were aching with all kinds of perplexity. Taking up the eau-de-cologne flask, she saturated her handkerchief and passed it over her brow.

"Has my lady got ache to her head!"

"Yes. A little. Alter these ribbons, Aglaé, and let me go."

"It is because of this marvellous heat," commented Aglaé. "Paris this summer would not be bearable."

Aglaé was right in the main; for it was an unusually hot summer. The intense heat began with Easter, and lasted late into autumn. In one sense it was favourable to Lucy, for it upheld her given excuse in regard to the sleeping arrangements.

Miss Blake had stood all the while with in-drawn lips. It was a habit of hers to show it in her lips when displeased. Seeing always the doors open in the day-time, no suspicion of the truth crossed her. She believed that what she had disclosed to Lucy was no more to her than the idle wind, once Sir Karl had made good his own false cause.

A question was running through Miss Blake's mind now--had been in it more or less since Mrs. Cleeve came: should she, or should she not, tell that lady what she knew' She had deliberated upon it; she had set herself to argue the point, for and against; and yet, down deep in her heart from the first had laid the innate conviction that she should tell. In the interests of religion and morality, she told herself that she ought not to keep silence; for the suppression of iniquity and deceit, she was bound to speak. Had Lucy but taken up the matter rightly, there would have been no necessity for her to have again interfered: neither should she have done it. But Lucy had set her communication at naught: and therefore, in Miss Blake's judgment, the obligation was laid upon her. Why--how could she, who was only second to the Rev. Guy Cattacomb in the management and worship at St. Jerome's, and might have been called his lay curate; who prostrated herself there in prayer ever so many times a day, to the edification and example of Foxwood--how could she dare to hold cognizance of a mine of evil, and not strive to put an end to it, and bring it home to its enactors? Every time she went to that holy shrine, St. Jerome's, every time she came back from it, its

sacred dust, as may be said, hallowing her shoes, she had to pass those iniquitous gates, and was forced into the undesirable thoughts connected with them!

If Miss Blake had wavered before, she fully made her mind up now; now, as she stood there in the chamber, the conversation dying away on her ears. Aglaé was attending to the shoulder-knots; Lucy was passive under the maid's hands; and Mrs. Cleeve had wandered into the little intermediate sitting-room. No longer a dressing-room; Lucy had given it up as such when she changed her chamber. She had some books and work and her desk there now, and sat there whenever she could. Miss Blake stood on, gazing from the window and perfecting her resolution. She thought she was but acting in the strict line of wholesome duty, just as disinterestedly as the Archbishop of Canterbury might have done: and she would have been very much shocked had anybody told her she was only actuated by a desire of taking vengeance on Karl Andinnian. She wanted to bring home a little confusion to him; she hoped to see the young lady at the Maze turned out of the village amidst an escorting flourish of ironical drums and shrieking fifes, leaving Foxwood Court to its peace. But Miss Blake was in no hurry to speak: she must watch her opportunity.

They were engaged to dine the following day at a distance, four or five miles off; a ball was to follow it. When the time came, Lady Andinnian, radiant in her white silk bridal dress, entered the reception-room leaning on the arm of her good-looking husband. Who could have dreamt that they were living on ill terms, seeing them now? In public they were both cautiously courteous to each other, observing every little obligation of society: and in truth Karl at all times, at home and out, was in manner affectionate to his wife.

Two carriages had conveyed them: and, in going, Lucy had occupied one with her father; Karl, Mrs. Cleeve, and Miss Blake the other. Lucy had intended to return in the same order, but found she could not. Colonel Cleeve, unconscious of doing wrong, entered the carriage with his wife and Miss Blake: Lucy and her husband had to sit together. The summer's night was giving place to dawn.

"I fear you are tired, Lucy," he kindly said, as they drove off.

"Yes, very. I wish I was at home."

She drew her elegant white cloak about her with its silken tassels, gathered herself into the corner of the carriage, and shut her eyes, seemingly intending to

go to sleep. Sleep! her heart was beating too wildly for that. But she kept them resolutely closed, making no sign; and never another word was spoken all the way. Sir Karl helped her out: the others had already arrived.

"Good night," she whispered to him, preparing to run up the stairs.

"Good night, Lucy."

But, in spite of Lady Andinnian's efforts to make the best of things and show no sign, a mother's eye could not be deceived; and before Mrs. Cleeve had been many days in the house, she was struck with the underlying aspect of sadness that seemed to pervade Lucy. Her cheerfulness appeared to be often forced; this hidden sadness was real. Unsuspecting Mrs. Cleeve could come to but one conclusion--her daughter's health must be deranged.

"Since when have you not felt well, Lucy?" she asked her confidentially one day, when they were alone in Lucy's little
sitting-room.

Lucy, buried in a reverie, woke up with a start at the question. "I am very well, mamma. Why should you think I am not?"

"Your spirits are unequal, Lucy, and you certainly do not look well; neither do you eat as you ought. My dear, I think--I hope--there must be a cause for it."

"What cause?" returned Lucy, not taking her meaning.

"We should be so pleased to welcome a little heir, my dear. Is it so?"

Lucy--she had just dressed for dinner, and dismissed Aglaé--coloured painfully. Mrs. Cleeve smiled.

"No, mamma, I think there is no cause of that kind," she answered, in a low, nervous tone. And only herself knew the bitter pang that pierced her as she remembered how certain it was that there could be no such cause for the future.

But Mrs. Cleeve held to her own private opinion. "The child is shy in these early days, even with me," she thought. "I'll say no more."

One morning during this time, Karl was sitting alone in his room, when

Hewitt came to him to say Smith the agent was asking to see him. Karl did not like Smith the agent: he doubted, dreaded, and did not comprehend him.

"Will you see him, sir?" asked Hewitt, in a low tone, perceiving the lines on his master's brow.

"I suppose I must see him, Hewitt," was the reply--and the confidential, faithful servant well understood the force of the must. "Show him in."

"Beg pardon for disturbing you so early, Sir Karl," said the agent, as Hewitt brought him in and placed a chair. "There's one of your small tenants dropping into a mess, I fancy. He has got the brokers in for taxes, or something of that kind. I thought I'd better let you know at once."

Hewitt shut the door, and Karl pushed away the old letters he had been sorting. Sir Joseph's papers and effects had never been examined yet; but Karl was settling to the work now. That Mr. Smith had spoken in an unusually loud and careless tone, he noticed: and therefore judged that this was but the ostensible plea for his calling, given lest any ears should be about.

"Which of my tenants is it, Mr. Smith!" he quietly asked.

Mr. Smith looked round to be sure that the door was closed, and then asked Sir Karl if he'd mind having the window shut; he felt a bit of a draught. And he shut the glass doors himself with his one hand, before Karl could assent to the proposal, or rise to do it himself.

"It is Seaford the miller," he answered. "And"--dropping his voice to the lowest and most cautious tone--"it is a fact that he has the brokers in for some arrears of Queen's rates. But the man has satisfied me that it is but a temporary embarrassment; and I think, Sir Karl, your rent is in no danger. Still it was right that you should know of it; and it has served, just in the nick of time, to account for my object in coming."

"What is the real object?" inquired Karl, in a voice as cautious as the other voice.

Mr. Smith took a newspaper out of the pocket of his light summer coat; borrowed his disabled hand from the sling to help unfold it, and then, pointed to a small paragraph. It ran as follows:--

"Curious rumours are afloat connected with a recorded attempt at escape from Portland Island, in which the unfortunate malefactor met his death. A mysterious whisper has arisen, we know not how or whence, that the death was but a fiction, and that the man is at large."

"What paper is it?" cried Karl, trying to force some colour into his white lips.

"Only one in which all kinds of stories are got up," rejoined Mr. Smith, showing the title of a sensational weekly paper. "The paragraph may have resulted from nothing but the imagination of some penny-a-liner, Sir Karl, at fault for real matter."

"I don't like it," observed Karl, after a pause. "Assume that it may be as you suggest, and nothing more, this very announcement will be the means of drawing people's thoughts towards it."

"Not it," spoke Mr. Smith. "And if it does?--nobody will think it points to Sir Adam Andinnian. Another prisoner has been killed since then, trying to escape."

"How do you know that?"

"I *do* know it," replied Mr. Smith, emphatically. But he advanced no further proof. "It was a curious thing, my getting this paper," he continued. "Yesterday I was over at Basham, mistook the time of the returning train, and found when I reached the station that I had to wait three-quarters of an hour. The only newspapers on the stand were these weekly ones; I bought this to while away the time, and saw the paragraph."

"These events, looked upon as chances and errors, are in reality ordained," spoke Karl dreamily. "What can be done, Mr. Smith?"

"Nothing; nothing, Sir Karl. There's nothing to do. He is safe enough where he is--even if the rumour did come to be looked into by the law's authorities. Rely upon it, the Maze will never be suspected."

"I wish to heaven he had never come to the Maze!" was Karl Andinnian's pained rejoinder.

"It might be better on the whole that he had not," acknowledged Mr. Smith. "The plan originated with himself and with the late Mrs. Andinnian--and they carried it out."

"I wish," said Karl, speaking upon sudden impulse, "that you would allow me to know how you became connected with this affair of my unfortunate brother--and what you still have to do with it."

"How I became connected with it does not signify," was the short and ready answer. "As to what I have to do with it still, you know as well as I. I just watch over him--or rather the place that contains him--
and if danger should arise I shall be at hand to, I hope, give him warning and to protect him from it."

"He ought to be got away from the Maze," persisted Karl.

"He'd never get away in safety. Especially if there's anything in this"--striking his hand on the newspaper paragraph. "With my consent, he will never try to."

Karl did not answer; but he thought the more. That this man was the true impediment to his brother's escape; that he was in fact keeping him where he was, he believed with his whole heart. Once Sir Adam could be safe away from the kingdom, Mr. Smith no doubt foresaw that he might no longer enjoy Clematis Cottage to live in, or the handsome sum which he received quarterly. A sum that Mrs. Andinnian had commenced to pay, and Karl did not dare to discontinue. The words were but a confirmation of his opinion. Mr. Smith was Adam's enemy, not friend; he was keeping him there for his own self-interest: and Karl feared that if Adam attempted to get away in spite of him, he might in revenge deliver him up to justice. In dangers of this secret kind, fear has no limit.

"He could not be as safe anywhere in England as here," concluded Mr. Smith, as if he divined Karl's thoughts. "The police would suspect every hole and corner of the country, every town, little and big, before they would suspect his own home. As to the sailing away for another land, the danger of his recognition would be too great both on the voyage and on embarking for it, for him to dare it. He'd be discovered as sure as apple-trees grow apples."

"Will it be better to tell him of this!" cried Karl, alluding to the newspaper.

"I think not. Just as you please, though, Sir Karl. Rely upon it, it is only what I

suggest--an emanation from some penny-a-liner's inventive brain."

"The paper had better be burnt," suggested Karl.

"The very instant I get home," said Mr. Smith, putting the paper in his pocket and taking his hat from the table. "I wish I could burn the whole impression--already gone forth to the world. I'll go out this way, Sir Karl, if you will allow me."

Opening the glass doors again, he stepped across the terrace to the lawn, talking still, as though continuing the conversation. Other windows stood open, and the agent was cautious.

"I'll be sure to see Seaford in the course of the day. You may trust to me not to let any of them get behind-hand with their rents. Good morning, Sir Karl."

The agent, however, did not turn into his house. Deep in thought, he strolled on, up the road, his free hand in his light coat pocket, his head bent in meditation. He wished he could obtain some little light as to this mysterious announcement; he fancied he might be able to. On he strolled, unthinkingly, until he came to St. Jerome's, the entrance door of which edifice was ajar.

"Holding one of their services," thought the agent. "I'll have a look in, and see Cattacomb surrounded by his flock of lambs."

Mr. Smith was disappointed: for the reverend gentleman was not there. It appeared to be the hour for cleaning the room, instead of one for holding service. Four or five young ladies, their gowns turned up round their waists and some old gloves on, were dusting, sweeping, and brushing with all their might and main; Miss Blake presiding as high priestess of the ceremonies.

"They'd not do such a thing in their own homes to save their lives," laughed the agent, coming softly out again unseen. "Cattacomb must be in clover among 'em!"

He went home then, looked attentively once more at the alarming paragraph, and burnt the newspaper. After that, he paced his little garden, as if in a fit of restlessness, and then leaned over the gate, lost in reflection. The trees of the Maze were perfectly still in the hot summer air; the road was dusty and not a single passenger to be seen on it.

A few minutes, and footsteps broke upon his ear. They were Miss Blake's, bringing her home from St. Jerome's. She stopped to shake hands.

"Well," said he, with a laugh, "all the scrubbing done?"

"How do you know anything about the scrubbing?" returned Miss Blake.

"I looked in just now, and saw you all at it, dusting and brushing, and thought what an enviable young priest that Cattacomb must be. Now, my lad! don't ride over us if you can help it."

The very same butcher-boy, in the same blue frock, had come galloping up to the Maze gate, rung the bell, and was now prancing backwards across the road on his horse, which was very restive. Something appeared to have startled the animal; and it was to the boy the last remark had been addressed. Miss Blake stepped inside the garden gate, held open for her--for the horse seemed to think the path his own ground as well as the highway.

"He have been shoed this morning, and he's always in this dratted temper after it," spoke the boy gratuitously.

The woman-servant came out with her dish, received some meat, and disappeared again, taking care to lock the gate after her. She had never left it unlocked since the unlucky day when Miss Blake got in. Glancing over the road, she saw the lady and the agent watching her, and no doubt recognized the former.

"Looks like a faithful servant, that," remarked Mr. Smith.

"Faithful," echoed Miss Blake--"well yes, she does. But to what a mistress! Fidelity to such a person does her no credit."

Mr. Smith turned as grave as a judge. "Hush!" said he, impressively. "Unless one has sure and good ground to go upon, it is better not to assume evil."

"No ground was ever surer than this."

"My dear young lady, you may be utterly mistaken."

She liked the style of address from him--my dear *young* lady: it flattered her

vanity. But she would not give way.

"I have seen what I have seen, Mr. Smith. Sir Karl Andinnian would not be stealing in there at night, if it were proper for him to be going in the open day."

"Never speak of it," cried Mr. Smith, his tone one of sharp, strong command. "What could you prove? I ask, Miss Blake, what you could prove--if put to it?"

She did not answer.

"Why, nothing, madam. Absolutely *nothing*. How could you?"

Miss Blake considered. "I think there's a good deal of negative proof," she said, at length.

"Moonshine," cried Mr. Smith. "Negative proof in a case of this kind always is moonshine. Listen, my dear Miss Blake, for I am advising you now as a good friend. Never breathe a word of this matter to living soul. You don't know what the consequences to yourself might be."

"Consequences to myself!"

"To yourself, of course: there's no one else in question--at least in my mind. You might be sued for libel, and get sentenced to pay heavy damages and to a term of imprisonment besides. For goodness sake, be cautious! Remember Jane Shore! She had to stand in the pillory in a white sheet in the face and eyes of a gaping multitude, a lighted taper in her hand."

"Jane Shore!" cried Miss Blake, who at the above suggestion had begun to go as pale as she could well go. "Jane Shore! But that was not for libel. It was for--for--"

Miss Blake broke down.

"Shoreditch is named after her, you know," put in Mr. Smith. "Poor thing! she was very lovely: raven hair and eyes of a violet blue, say the old chronicles. Keep your own counsel, young lady, implicitly--and be silent for your own sake."

Miss Blake said good morning, and walked away. The prospect suggested to

her, as to the fine and imprisonment, looked anything but a pleasant one. She resolved henceforth to *be* silent; to Mrs. Cleeve and to all else: and, under the influence of this new and disagreeable suggestion, she wished to her heart she had never opened her lips to Lady Andinnian.

"Meddlesome tabby cat," aspirated the gallant Mr. Smith. "She might play up Old Beans with her tongue. Women are the very deuce for being ill-natured to one another."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A Night Alarm

Colonel and Mrs. Cleeve had departed again, and the time went on. Foxwood Court was comparatively quiet. The opening visits on all sides had been paid and returned, and there was a lull in the dinner parties. The weather continued most intensely hot; and people were glad to be still.

Never had poor Lucy Andinnian felt the estrangement from her husband so cruelly as now. At first the excitement of resentment had kept her up, and the sojourn of her father and mother, together with the almost daily gaiety, had served to take her out of herself: it was only at night during the lonely hours, when trouble prevented sleep, that she had felt its keenest sting. But now: now when she and Karl were alone, save for Miss Blake: when she sat in her lonely room hour after hour, and had leisure to realize her true position, Lucy gave way to all the abandonment of grief her trial brought. It was indeed a bitter one; a fiery trial: and when she looked back to it in after days, she could never imagine how she had contrived to bear it.

Love is an all-powerful master: an overfilling tyrant. In the first torments of awakened jealousy, it is all very well to take refuge in revengeful anger, and snap our fingers metaphorically at the beloved one, and say he may go

promener. The reaction comes. Jealousy, alas, does not tend to extinguish love, but rather to increase it. Lucy Andinnian found it so to her cost. Her love for Karl had in no whit abated: and the very fact of knowing he paid these stolen night visits to the Maze, while it tortured her jealousy, in no way diminished her love. She was growing pale and thin; she questioned whether she had done wisely in undertaking this most cruel task of bearing in silence and patience, hoping it might bring him back to his true allegiance; for she knew not whether she could endure on to the end.

There were moments when in her desolation she almost wished she was reconciled to her husband on any terms, even to the extent of condoning the wrong and the evil. The strict reader must pardon her, for she was very desolate. The idea always went away at once, and she would arouse herself with a shiver. Perhaps, of all phases of the affair, the one that told most upon her, that she felt to be more humiliating than the rest, was the fact of its having been brought close to her home, to its very gates: and a thousand times she asked herself the ambiguous question--Why could not Sir Karl rid the Maze of its inmates, and convey them to a distance?

She might have schooled her heart to care for Karl less had they been separated: he at the North Pole, say: she at the South. But they were living under the same roof, and met hourly. They went to church together, and paid visits with each other, and sat at the same breakfast and dinner tables. For their public intercourse was so conducted that no suspicion of the truth should get abroad, within doors or without. As to Karl, he was waiting on his side with what patience he might until his wife's mood should alter; in fact, he had no other alternative; but he treated her with the most anxious kindness and consideration. That she had taken the matter up with unjustifiable harshness, he thought; but he excused it, knowing himself to be the real culprit for having married her. And thus they went on; Lucy's spirit wounded to the core, and her anguished heart pining for the love that she believed was not hers.

She was sitting one Saturday evening under the acacia tree, in the delicate muslin she had worn in the day, when Karl came down from his dressing-room ready for dinner, and crossed the lawn to her. He had been to Basham, and she had not seen him since the morning.

"You are very pale, Lucy."

"My head aches badly: and it was so pleasant to remain here in the cool that I did not go in to dress," she said to him in a tone of apology.

"And why should you?" returned Karl. "That is as pretty a dress as any you have. What has given you the headache?"

"I--always have it now, more or less," had been on the tip of her tongue; but she broke off in time. "The heat, I think. I got very hot to-day, walking to Margaret Sumnor's."

"It is too hot for walking, Lucy. You should take the carriage."

"I don't like the parade of the carriage when I go to Margaret's."

"Would you like a little pony-chaise? I will buy you one if you----"

"No, thank you," she interrupted hastily, her tone a cold one. "I prefer to walk when I go about Foxwood. The heat will pass away sometime."

"You were saying the other day, Lucy, to some one who called, that you would like to read that new book on the Laplanders. I have been getting it for you."

He had a white paper parcel in his hand, undid it, and gave her a handsomely-bound volume. She felt the kindness, and her sad face flushed slightly.

"Thank you; thank you very much. It was good of you to think of me."

"And I have been subscribing to the Basham library, Lucy, and brought home the first parcel of books. It may amuse you to read them."

"Yes, I think it will. Thank you, Sir Karl."

She had never called him "Karl" when they were alone, since the explosion. Now and then occasionally before people, she did, especially before her father and mother. But he understood quite well that it was only done for appearance' sake.

The dinner hour was at hand, and they went in. Very much to the surprise of both, Mr. Cattacomb was in the drawing-room with Miss Blake. Lucy had neither heard nor seen him: but the acacia tree was out of sight of the front entrance.

"I have been telling Mr. Cattacomb--he came to me in the heat, on business of St. Jerome's--that you will be charitable enough to give him some dinner," said Miss Blake, introducing Mr. Cattacomb to Sir Karl in form--for it was the first time he had met that reverend man. Of course Karl could only return a civil answer; but he had not been at all anxious for the acquaintanceship of Mr. Cattacomb, and was determined not to treat him precisely as though he had been an invited guest.

"I think you may perhaps prefer to take in your friend Miss Blake, as Lady Andinnian is a stranger to you," he said, when Hewitt announced dinner. "We are not on ceremony now."

And Sir Karl caught his wife's hand within his. "I was not going to leave you to *him*, Lucy," he whispered.

So they went parading in to dinner arm-in-arm, this estranged man and wife, brushing past Hewitt and the tall new footman, who wore powdered hair.

"It is just as though he did care for me!" thought Lucy, glancing at her husband as he placed her in her seat at the table's head.

Mr. Cattacomb and Miss Blake, seated opposite each other, talked a great deal, Karl scarcely at all. When alone, the dinners at the Court were simply served, Sir Karl carving. He was attentive to his impromptu guest, and sent him of the best: but he thought he had never in all his life been in company with so affected and vain a man as that belauded clergyman. Once, with the fish before him, Karl fell into a reverie. He woke up with a start, looking about him like a man bewildered.

"Some more fish, Lucy, my darling?"

Lucy's plate had gone away long before. They all saw that he had been, so to speak, unconscious of what he said. He rallied then; and did not lose himself again.

Dinner over, Mr. Cattacomb, making an apology, hurried away for some slight service at St. Jerome's, Miss Blake accompanying him as a matter of course. Lucy disappeared: and Karl, thus abandoned, went to his smoking-room. Not to smoke; but to muse upon the acute angles of his position--as he was too much given to do. Karl Andinnian was as a man in a net: as things looked at present, there seemed to be no chance of freedom from it, no hope of it at present or in the future. And his ill-fated brother again! The past night he, Karl, had dreamt one of those ugly dreams. He thought he saw Adam fleeing from his pursuers; a number of them, and they all looked like warders of Portland Prison. Panting, crying, Adam rushed in, seized hold of Karl, and begged him, as he valued salvation hereafter, to hide and save him. But the warders burst in and surrounded them. Poor Karl woke up as usual in fright and agony. This dream had been recurring to his mind all day: it was very vivid now in the silent evening hour after sunset.

"I'd give my life to place him in safety," ran his thoughts. "Not much of a gift, either, for I verily believe this constant, distressing suspense will kill me. If he were but safe in some distant land! He might--Why, what is Lucy doing?"

Opposite this south window there was a beautiful vista through the trees of the

grounds beyond. Sir Karl had seen his wife running swiftly from one walk to another, and suddenly stoop--as he fancied. Looking still, he found she did not get up again.

"She must have fallen," he exclaimed, and rushed out.

He was with her in a minute. She was getting up after her fall, but her ankle felt intolerably painful. Karl was very tender: he had her in his arms, and took her to a leafy arbour close by. There he put her to sit down, and held her to him for support.

"I have twisted my ankle," she said. "It's nothing."

But the tears of pain stood in her eyes. He soothed her as he would have soothed her in the bygone days; holding her in his firm protection, whispering terms of sweet endearment. What with the ankle's sharp twinges, what with his loving words, and what with her chronic state of utter wretchedness, poor Lucy burst into sobs, and sobbed them out upon his breast.

"My darling! The ankle is giving you pain."

"The ankle's nothing," she said. "It will soon be well." But she lay there still and sobbed pitiably. He waited in silence until she should grow calmer, his arm round her. A distant nightingale was singing its love-song.

"Lucy," began Karl, then, "I would ask you--now that we seem to be for the moment alone with the world and each other--whether there is any *sense* in living in the way we do? Is there any happiness for either of us? I want you to forgive all, and be reconciled: I want you to see the matter in its proper light, apart from prejudice. The past is past and cannot be recalled: but it leaves no just reason in the sight of God or man for our living in estrangement."

Her head was hidden against him still. She did not lift her eyes as she whispered her answer.

"Is there no reason for it now, Karl? Now, at the present time. None?"

"No. As I see it, NO; on my word of honour as a gentleman. The notion you have taken up is an unsound and utterly mistaken one. You had grave cause to complain: granted: to resent; I admit it all: but surely it was not enough to justify

the rending asunder of man and wife. The past cannot be undone--Heaven knows I would undo it if I could. But there is no just cause for your visiting the future upon me in this way, and making us both pay a heavy penalty. Won't you forgive and forget? Won't you be my own dear wife again? Oh, Lucy, I am full of trouble, and I want your sympathy to lighten it."

Her whole heart yearned to him. He drew her face to his and kissed her lips with the sweetest kisses. In the bliss and rest that the reconciliation brought to her spirit, Lucy momentarily forgot all else. Her kisses met his; her tears wet his cheeks. What with one emotion and another--pain, anguish, grief and bliss, the latter uppermost--poor Lucy felt faint. The bitter past was effaced from her memory: the change seemed like a glimpse of Paradise. It all passed in a moment, or so, of time.

"Oh, Karl, I should like to be your wife again!" she confessed. "The estrangement we are living in is more cruel for me than for you. Shall it be so?"

"Shall it!" repeated Karl. "Is there need to ask me, Lucy?"

"It lies with you."

"With me! Why, how? How does it lie with me? You know, my darling----"

A slight ruffle, as if some one were brushing past the shrubs in the opposite path, caused Sir Karl to withdraw his arm from his wife. Miss Blake came up: a note in her hand. Sir Karl politely, in thought, wished Miss Blake at York.

"As I was coming in, Sir Karl, I overtook a woman with this note, which she was bringing you. It was the servant at the Maze--or some one very like her."

Miss Blake looked full at Sir Karl as she spoke, wishing no doubt that looks were daggers. She had added the little bit of information, as to the messenger, for Lucy's especial benefit. Karl thanked her coolly, and crushed the note, unopened, into his pocket. Lucy, shy, timid Lucy, was limping away. Miss Blake saw something was wrong and held out her arm.

"What is the matter, Lucy? You are in pain! You have been crying!"

"I slipped and hurt my ankle, Theresa. It was foolish to cry, though. The pain is much less already."

Miss Blake helped her indoors in lofty silence. Anything like the contempt she felt for the weakness of Lucy Andinnian, she perhaps had never felt for any one before in all her life. Not for the weakness of crying at a hurt: though that was more befitting a child than a woman: but for the reprehensible weakness she was guilty of in living on terms of affection with her husband. "Must even sit in a garden arbour together hand in hand, listening to the nightingales," shrieked Miss Blake mentally, with rising hair. "And yet--she knows what I disclosed to her!"

The note was from Mrs. Grey. Had Miss Blake herself presided at its opening, she could not reasonably have found fault with it. Mrs. Grey presented her compliments to Sir Karl Andinnian, and would feel obliged by his calling to see her as soon as convenient, as she wished to speak with him on a little matter of business concerning the house.

There was nothing more. But Karl knew, by the fact of her venturing on the extreme step of writing to the Court, that he was wanted at the Maze for something urgent. It was several days since he had been there: for he could not divest himself of the feeling that some one of these nightly visits of his, more unlucky than the rest, might bring on suspicion and betrayal. To his uneasy mind there was danger in every surrounding object. The very sound of the wind in the trees seemed to whisper it to him as he passed; hovering shades of phantom shape glanced out to his fancy from the hedges.

He stayed a short while pacing his garden, and then went indoors. It was getting dusk. Miss Blake had her things off and was alone in the drawing-room. The tea waited on the table.

"Where's Lucy?" he asked.

"She went to her room to have her ankle seen to. I would have done anything for her, but she declined my services."

Karl knocked at his wife's little sitting-room door, and entered. She was leaning on the window-sill, and said her ankle felt much better
after the warm water, and since Aglaé had bound it up. Karl took her hand.

"We were interrupted, Lucy, when I was asking an important question," he began--"for indeed I think I must have misunderstood you. How does the putting an end to our estrangement lie with me?"

"It does lie with you, Karl," she answered, speaking feelingly and pleasantly, not in the cold tone of reserve she had of late maintained when they were alone. "The estrangement is miserable for me; you say it is for you; and the efforts we have to make, to keep up the farce before the household and the world, make it doubly miserable for both of us. We cannot undo our marriage: but to continue to live as we are living is most unsatisfactory and deplorable."

"But it is you who insisted on living so, Lucy--to my surprise and pain."

"Could I do otherwise?" she rejoined. "It is a most unhappy business altogether: and at times I am tempted to wish that it had been always kept from me. As you say--and I am willing to believe you, and do believe you--the past is past: but you know how much of the consequences remain. It seems to me that I must give way a little: perhaps, having taken my vows as your wife, it may be what I ought to do; a duty even in God's sight."

"Do you recollect your words to me on the eve of our wedding-day, Lucy, when I was speaking of the possibility that a deeper blow might fall: one that would dishonour us both in the world's eyes, myself primarily, you through me, and cause you to repent of our union? You should never repent, you said; you took me for richer for poorer, for better or for worse."

"But I did not know the blow would be of this kind," murmured Lucy. "Still, I will do as you wish me--forget and forgive. At least if I cannot literally forget, for that would not be practicable, it shall be as though I did, for I will never allude to it by word or deed. That will be my concession, Karl. You must make one on your side."

"Willingly. What is it?"

"Clear the Maze immediately of its tenants."

He gave a slight start, knitting his brow. Lucy saw the proposal was unpalatable.

"Their being there is an insult to me, Karl," she softly said, as if beseeching the boon. "You must get them away."

"I cannot, Lucy," he answered, his face wrung with pain. "I wish I could! Don't you understand that I have no control over this?"

"I think I understand," she said, her manner growing cold. "You have said as much before. Why can you not? It seems to me, if things be as you intimate, that the matter would be easily accomplished. You need only show firmness."

He thought haw little she understood. But he could not bear to enlarge upon it, and said nothing.

"There are houses enough, and to spare, in the world, Karl."

"Plenty of them."

"Then why not let the Maze be left?"

"More things than one are against it, Lucy. There are wheels within wheels," he added, thinking of Smith the mysterious agent. "One great element against it is the risk--the danger."

"Danger of exposure, do you mean?"

"Of discovery. Yes."

Never had Karl Andinnian and his wife been so near coming to an enlightenment on the misunderstanding that lay between them and their peace. It passed off--just as many another good word passes off, unsaid, in life.

"My hands are tied, Lucy. If wishing the Maze empty would effect it, it would be vacant to-morrow. I can do nothing."

"I understand," she said bitterly, even as she had said once before, all the old resentful indignation rising up within her. "I understand, Sir Karl. There are complications, entanglements; and you cannot free yourself from them."

"Precisely so."

" *Is* the sin of the past?" she asked with flashing eyes and a rising colour; her voice betraying her frame of mind. He gazed at her, unable to understand.

"Why of course it is past, Lucy. What can you mean?"

"Oh, you know, you know. Never mind. We must go on again as we have

been going on."

"No, Lucy."

"YES, Sir Karl. As long as those people remain in the Maze, tacitly to insult me, I will never be more to you than I am now."

It was a strangely harsh decision; and one he could not account for. He asked for her reasons in detail, but she would not give any. All she said further was, that if he felt dissatisfied, she could--and should--seek the protection of her father and declare the truth.

So they parted again as they had parted before. Hemmed in on all sides, afraid to move an inch to the left or the right, Karl could only submit; he could do nothing.

"I was charged by Miss Blake to tell you that tea is ready," he said, turning on his heel to quit the room.

"Ask her to send me a cup by Aglaé, please. I shall stay here to rest my ankle." And as Karl closed the door upon her, poor Lucy burst into a flood of tears, and sobbed as though her heart would break. Underlying all else in her mind was a keen sense of insult, of slight, of humiliation: and she asked herself whether she ought to bear it.

Pacing the gravel path round the trees of the Maze after dark had fallen--as much dark as a summer's night ever gives us--were Karl Andinnian and Mrs. Grey. She, expecting him, went to wait for him just within the gate: as she did the evening Miss Blake had the satisfaction of watching and seeing. It was a still, hot night, and Mrs. Grey proposed that they should walk round the outer circle once, before going in: for she had things to say to him.

"Why have you 'kept away these last few days, Karl?" she asked, taking the arm he offered her. "Adam has been so vexed and impatient over it: but I should not have ventured to write to you for only that--I hope you were not angry with me."

He told her he was not angry. He told her why he had kept away--that an instinct warned him it might be imprudent to come in too often. It seemed to

him, he added, that the very hedges had eyes to watch him. She shivered a little, as though some chill of damp had struck her; and proceeded to relate what she had to say.

By a somewhat singular coincidence, a copy of the same newspaper that contained the mysterious paragraph had been bought at the little newsvendor's in Foxwood by Ann Hopley, who was fond of reading the news when her day's work was over. She saw the paragraph, took alarm, and showed it to her master and mistress.

"It has nearly frightened me to death, Karl," said Mrs. Grey. "The paper was a week old when Ann bought it: and I am glad it was, or I should have been living upon thorns longer than I have been."

He told her that he had seen it. And he did what he could to reassure her, saying it was probably but an unmeaning assertion, put in from dearth of news.

"That is just what Mr. Smith says," she replied. "He thinks it is from the brain of some poor penny-a-liner."

"Mr. Smith!" exclaimed Karl. "How do you know?"

"Adam would see him about it, and I sent for him. He, Smith, says there's nothing for it now but staying here; and Adam seems to be of the same opinion."

"Were you present at their interview?"

"No. I never am. The man is keeping us here for purposes of his own. I feel sure of it. He has been a good friend to us in many ways: I don't know what we should have done without him; but it is his fault that we are staying on here."

"Undoubtedly it is."

"Adam is just as careless and gay as ever in manner, but I think the announcement in the newspaper has made him secretly uneasy. He is not well to-night."

"What is the matter with him?"

"It is some inward pain: he has complained of it more than once lately. And he has been angry and impatient of an evening because you did not come. It is so lonely for him, you know."

"I do know it, Rose. Nothing brings me here at all but that."

"It was he who at last made me write to you to-day. I was not sorry to do it, for I had wanted to see you myself and to talk to you. I think I have discovered something that may be useful; at least that we may turn to use. First of all--Do you remember a year or two ago there was a public stir about one Philip Salter?"

"No. Who is Philip Salter?"

"Philip Salter committed a great crime: forgery, I think: and he escaped from the hands of the police as they were bringing him to London by rail. I have nearly a perfect recollection of it," continued Mrs. Grey, "for my uncle and aunt took great interest in it, because they knew one of the people whom Salter had defrauded. He was never retaken. At least, I never heard of it."

"How long ago was this?"

"More than two years. It was in spring-time, I think."

Karl Andinnian threw his recollection back. The name, Philip Salter, certainly seemed to begin to strike on some remote chord of his memory; but he had completely forgotten its associations.

"What of him, Rose?" he asked.

"This," she answered, her voice taking even a lower tone: "I should not be surprised if this Mr. Smith is the escaped man, Philip Salter! I think he may be."

"This man, Smith, Philip Salter!" exclaimed Karl. "But what grounds have you for thinking it?"

"I will tell you. When Mr. Smith came over a day or two ago, it was in the evening, growing dusk. Adam saw him in the upstairs room. They stood at the window--perhaps for the sake of the light, and seemed to be looking over some memorandum paper. I was walking about outside, and saw them. All at once something fell down from the window. I ran to pick it up, and found it was a

pocket-book, lying open. Mr. Smith shouted out, 'Don't touch it, Mrs. Grey: don't trouble yourself,' and came rushing down the stairs. But I had picked it up, Karl; and I saw written inside it the name, Philip Salter. Without the least intention or thought of prying, I saw it: 'Philip Salter.' Mr. Smith was up with me the next moment, and I gave him the pocket-book, closed:"

"His Christian name is certainly Philip," observed Karl after a pause of thought. "I have seen his signature to receipts for rent--'Philip Smith.' This is a strange thing, Rose."

"Yes--if it be true. While he is planted here, spying upon Adam, he may be hiding from justice himself, a criminal."

Karl was in deep thought. "Was the name in the pocket-book on the fly-leaf, Rose--as though it were the owner's name?"

"I think so, but I cannot be sure. It was at the top of a leaf certainly. If we could but find it out--find that it is so, it might prove to be a way of release from him," she added; "I mean some way or other of release might come of it. Oh, and think of the blessing of feeling free! I am sure that, but for him, Adam would contrive to escape to a safer land."

There was no time to say more. The night was drawing on, and Karl had to go in to his impatient brother. Impatient! What should we have been in his place? Poor Adam Andinnian! In his banned, hidden, solitary days, what interlude had he to look forward to but these occasional visits from Karl?

"I will think it over, Rose, and try and find something out," said Karl as they went in. "Have you told Adam?"

"No. He is so hot and impulsive, you know. I thought it best to speak to you first."

"Quite right. Say nothing to him at present."

In quitting the Maze that evening, Adam, in spite of all Karl could say or do, would walk with him to the gate: only laughing when Karl called it dangerous recklessness. There were moments when the same doubt crossed Karl's mind that had been once suggested to him by Mr. Plunkett--Was Adam always and altogether sane? This moment, was one. He absolutely stood at the gate, talking

and laughing in an undertone, as Karl went through it.

"Rubbish, Karlo, old fellow," said he to the last remonstrance. "It's a dark night, and not a soul within miles of us. Besides, who knows me here?"

Karl had locked the gate and was putting the key in his pocket, when a sound smote his ear and he turned it to listen. The tramp, tramp, as of policemen walking with measured steps was heard, coming from the direction of the railway-station, and with it the scuffle and hum of a besetting crowd. It brought into his mind with a rush and a whirl that fatal night some twelve months before, when he had heard the tramp of policemen on the other side the hedge--and their prisoner, though he knew it not, was his brother, Adam Andinnian.

"Adam, do you hear!" he cried hoarsely. "For the love of heaven, hide yourself." And Sir Adam disappeared in the Maze.

What with the past recollection, what with his brother's near presence, what with the approach of these police--as he took them to be--what with the apprehension ever overlying his heart, Karl was seized with a panic of terror. Were they coming in search of Adam? He thought so: and all the agony that he often went over in his dreams, he suffered now in waking reality. The hubbub of exposure; the public disgrace; the renewed hard life for him at Portland Island; even perhaps--Karl's imagination was vivid just then--the scaffold in the distance as an ending! These visions surging through his brain, Karl flew to the other side of the road--lest his being on the side of the Maze might bring suspicion on it--and then walked quietly to his own entrance gates. There he stood, and turned to await the event, his head beating, his pulses leaping.

With a relief that no tongue could express, Karl saw them pass the Maze and come onwards. Presently, in the night's imperfect light, he distinguished a kind of covered stretcher, or hand-barrow, borne by a policeman and other men, a small mob following.

"Is anything amiss!" he asked, taking a few steps into the road, and speaking in the quietest tones he could just then command.

"It's poor Whittle, Sir Karl," replied the policeman--who knew him. There were a few scattered cottages skirting the wood beyond the Court, and Karl recognized the name, Whittle, as that of a man who lived in one of them and worked at the railway-station.

"Is he ill?" asked Karl.

"He is dead, Sir Karl. He was missed from his work in the middle of the afternoon and not found till an hour ago: there he was, stretched out in the field, dead. We got Mr. Moore round, and he thinks it must have been a sun-stroke."

"What a sad thing!" cried Karl, in his pitying accents. "Does his wife know?"

"We've sent on to prepare her, poor woman! There's four or five little children, Sir Karl, more's the pity!"

"Ay; I know there are some. Tell her I will come in and see her in the morning."

A murmur of approbation at the last words arose from the bystanders. It seemed to them an earnest that the new baronet, Sir Karl, would turn out to be a kind and considerate man; as good for them perhaps as Sir Joseph had been.

He listened to the tramp, tramp, until it had died away, and then turned in home with all his trouble and care: determined to search the newspapers--filed by Sir Joseph--before he went to rest, for some particulars of this Philip Salter.

"Oh that Adam were but safe in some less dangerous land!" was the refrain, ever eating itself into his brain.

CHAPTER XIX.

In the same Train

"You must step out sharp, Sir Karl. The train is on the move."

Sir Karl Andinnian had gone hastening into the railway-station, late, on Monday morning, to catch the eleven o'clock train, and was taking a ticket for

London. It was the station-master who had addressed him, as he handed him his ticket. One of the porters held open the door of a first-class compartment, and Sir Karl jumped in.

A lady was gathered into the corner beyond him, her veil down: there was no one else in the carriage. Karl did not look round at her until the train had left the station. And when he saw who it was, he thought his eyes must be playing him false.

"Why, Rose!" he exclaimed. "Can it be you?"

She smiled and threw her veil back, leaning towards him at the same moment to explain why she was there. The whistle set up a shriek at the time, and though Sir Karl, his ear bent close to her, no doubt heard the explanation, the air of the carriage did not. "Slight accident--last night--quite useless--would have me come--Rennet--" were all the disconnected words *that* caught.

"I quite shrunk from the journey at first," she said, when the whistle had subsided. "I feel always shy and timid now: but I am not sorry to go, for it will give me the opportunity of making some needful purchases. I would rather do it in London than Basham; in fact, I should not dare to go to Basham myself: and I did not care to trust Ann Hopley to buy these fine little things."

"Is Adam better?"

"Yes, I think so: he seemed pretty well yesterday. You did not come to the Maze last night, Karl. He was wishing for you."

Karl turned off the subject. The fright he had had, coming out on Saturday night, would serve to keep him away for some days to come. In his heart of hearts he believed that, in the interests of prudence, the less he went to the Maze the better: instinct was always telling him so.

"I suppose you will return to-night, Rose?"

"If I can," she answered. "It depends on Rennet. Should I be obliged to wait until to-morrow, I shall have to sleep at an hotel: Adam has directed me to one." And so the conversation innocently progressed, and the train went on.

But now, as capricious fortune had it, who should be in that self-same train

but Miss Blake! Miss Blake was going up to London en cachette. That is to say, she had not intended Sir Karl and Lady Andinnian to know of the journey. Some grand piece of work, involving choice silks and much embroidery, was being projected by Miss Blake for Mr. Cattacomb's use at St. Jerome's: she had determined to get the silks at first hand, which she could only do in London; and took the train this morning for the purpose. "If I am not in to luncheon, don't think anything of it: I can get a biscuit out," she said to Lucy: and Miss Blake's general out-of-door engagements appeared to be so numerous--what with the church services, and the hunting-up little ragamuffins from their mothers' cottages for instruction--that Lucy would have thought nothing of it had she been away all day long. Miss Blake, however, intended to get back in the afternoon.

Seated in her compartment, waiting for the train to start, she had seen Sir Karl Andinnian come running on to the platform; and she drew her face back out of sight. She saw him put into a carriage just behind her own: and she felts a little cross that he should be going to London at all.

"What is taking him, I wonder?" she thought. "He never said a word about it at breakfast. I don't believe Lucy knows it."

Arrived at the terminus, Miss Blake, knowing that gentlemen mostly leap out of a train before it has well stopped, held back herself. Cautiously peeping to see him pass and get fairly off, she saw what she had not expected to see--Sir Karl helping out a lady. They passed on quickly: Sir Karl carrying a large clasped reticule bag, and the lady clinging to his arm. She was closely veiled: but Miss Blake's keen eyes knew her through the veil for Mrs. Grey.

Miss Blake could have groaned the roof off the carriage. She was the only passenger left in it. "The deceitful villain!" she exclaimed: and then she burst on to the platform, and sheltered herself behind a projecting board to look after the criminals.

Sir Karl was putting Mrs. Grey into a four-wheeled cab. He handed in her reticule bag after her, shook hands, gave a direction to the driver, and the cab went off. Then he looked round for a hansom, and was driven away in his turn. Miss Blake, making good her own departure, believed she had not yet suspected half the tricks and turns there must be in this wicked world.

"Poor Lucy! poor wife!" she murmured, pityingly. "May Heaven look down

and shield her!"

Karl's errand in London was to find out what he could about Philip Salter. On the Saturday night, patiently searching the file of newspapers--the "Times"--he at length came upon the case. One Philip Salter had been manager to a financial firm in London, and for some years managed it honestly and very successfully. But he got speculating on his own account, lost and lost, and continued to lose, all the while using the funds, that were not his, to prop him up, and prevent exposure. To do this, unsuspected, he was forced to resort to forgery: to fabricate false bonds; to become, in short, one of the worst of felons. The day of discovery came; but Mr. Salter had not waited for it. He was off, and left no trace, as he thought, behind him. Some clue, however, fancied or real, was obtained by a clever ordinary police officer. He went down to Liverpool, seized Philip Salter on board an American vessel just about to steam out of port, and started with him for London at once by the night train, disguised as he was. Midway on the road, Salter did what only a desperate man, fighting for very life, would have dared to do--he jumped from the carriage and made his escape.

So much Karl read: but, though he searched onwards, he could see nothing else. Some of the newspapers were missing; had not been filed; and, it might be, that they were the very papers that spoke further. He then resolved to seek information elsewhere.

All day on the Sunday it had been floating through his mind. His wife's ankle was better. He walked to church with her as usual, sitting by her side in their conspicuous pew--placed sideways to the pulpit and exposed to the eyes of all the congregation. Throughout the service, throughout the sermon, Karl's mind was dwelling on the suspicion connecting Philip Smith with Philip Salter. Lucy thought him very still: as still and sad as herself. The only other conspicuous pew was opposite; it belonged to the vicarage. Margaret Sumnor was in it alone, in the half-reclining seat that had been made for her. Mrs. Sumnor rarely went to church in the morning: the younger daughters were of course at St. Jerome's.

"I will go to London to-morrow," decided Karl in his own mind that night. "Could Smith be got away from his post of espionage it might be Adam's salvation." And that's what brought him taking the eleven o'clock train on Monday morning.

His hansom cab conveyed him to Plunkett and Plunkett's. That he must

conduct this inquiry in the most cautiously delicate manner, he knew well; or he might only make bad worse, and bring the hornet's nest, that he was always dreading, about his brother's head. Once let
Smith--if he were really Salter--suspect that inquiries were being made about himself, and he might in revenge denounce Sir Adam.

Mr. Plunkett, with whom Karl as well as the rest of the family had always transacted business, was not in town. Mr. George Plunkett saw him, but he was to Karl comparatively a stranger. Even this seemed to fetter him and make him feel more uneasily, but without reason, the necessity of caution. In a decidedly hesitating way, he said that he had a reason for wishing to learn some particulars about a man who had cheated the community a year or two ago and had made his escape, one Philip Salter: he wanted to know whether he had been re-caught; or, if not, where he was now supposed to be. Mr. George Plunkett immediately asked--not supposing there was any reason why he should not be
told--for what purpose Sir Karl wished for the information. Was it that any of his friends had been sufferers and were hoping to get back what they had lost? And Karl contrived, without any distinct assertion, to leave this impression on the lawyer's mind. Mr. Plunkett, however, could give him no information about Salter, beyond the fact--or rather, opinion, for he was not sure--that he had never been retaken. The matter was not one they had any interest in, he observed; and he recommended Sir Karl to go to Scotland Yard.

"I will write a note of introduction for you to one of the head officers there, Sir Karl," he said. "It will insure you attention."

But Karl declined this. "If I went to Scotland Yard at all," he said, "it would be as an unknown, private individual, not as Sir Karl Andinnian. I don't much care to go to Scotland Yard."

"But why?" exclaimed Mr. George Plunkett. And then, all in a moment an idea flashed across him. He fancied that Sir Karl was shy of presenting himself there as the brother of the unfortunate man who had stood his trial for murder.

"I have reasons for not wishing it to be known that I am stirring in this," admitted Karl. "Grave reasons. At Scotland Yard they might recognize me, and perhaps put questions that at present I would rather not answer."

"Look here, then," said the lawyer. "I will give you a letter to one of the

private men connected with the force--a detective, in fact. You can see him at his own house. He is one of the cleverest men they have, and will be sure to be able to tell you everything you want to know. There's not the least necessity for me to mention your name to him, and he'll not seek to learn it. I shall say you are a client and friend of ours, and that will be sufficient."

"Thank you, that will be best," replied Karl.

Mr. George Plunkett wrote the note there and then, and gave it to Karl. It was addressed to Mr. Burtenshaw, Euston Road. He took a cab and found the house--a middling-sized house with buff-coloured blinds to the windows. A maid servant came to the door, and her cap flew off as she opened it.

"Can I see Mr. Burtenshaw?" asked Sir Karl

"Mr. Burtenshaw's out, sir," she replied, stooping to pick up the "cap,"--a piece of bordered net the size of a five-shilling piece. "He left word that he should be back at five o'clock."

"If I were a detective officer, my servants should wear caps on their heads," thought Karl, as he turned away, and went to get some dinner.

The church clocks were striking five when he was at the door again. Mr. Burtenshaw was at home; and Karl, declining to give his name, was shown to an upstairs room. A little man of middle age, with a sallow face and rather nice grey eyes, was standing by a table covered with papers. Karl bowed, and handed him Mr. George Plunkett's note.

"Take a seat, sir, pray, while I read it," said Mr. Burtenshaw, instinctively recognising Karl for a gentleman and a noble one. And Karl sat down near the window.

"Very good; I am at your service, sir," said the detective, drawing a chair opposite Karl's. "What can I do for you?"

With less hesitation than he had shown to Mr. George Plunkett, for he was gathering courage now the ice was broken, Karl frankly stated why he had come, and what he wanted--some information about the criminal, Philip Salter.

"Do you know much about the case?" continued Karl--for Mr. Burtenshaw

had made no immediate reply, but sat in silence.

"I believe I know all about it, sir. I was wondering whether you had unearthed him and were come to claim the reward."

"The reward! Is there an offered reward out against him?"

"Five hundred pounds. It was offered after he had made his desperate escape, and it stands still."

"He has not been retaken then?"

"No, never. We have failed in his case, I am ashamed to say. What particulars are they, sir, that you wish to hear of him? Those connected with his frauds and forgeries?"

"Not those: I have read of them in some of the old papers. I want to know where he is supposed to be; and what he is like in person."

"Our belief is that he is still in Great Britain; strange though it may sound to you to hear me say it. England or Scotland. After that escapade, all the ports were so thoroughly guarded and watched, that I don't think he could have escaped. We have a more especial reason, which I do not speak of, for suspecting that he is here still: at least that he was three months ago."

"There are a hundred places in England where he may be hiding," spoke Karl impulsively. "Where he may be living as an ordinary individual, just like the individuals about him."

"Exactly so."

"Living openly as may be said, but cautiously. Perhaps wearing a disguise."

"No doubt of the disguise. False hair and whiskers, spectacles, and all that."

Karl remembered Mr. Smith's green spectacles. His hair might not be his own: he wished he had taken better note of it.

"And in person? What is he like?"

"That I cannot tell you," said Mr. Burtenshaw. "I never saw him. Some of us know him well. Grimley especially does."

"Who is Grimley?"

"The man who let him escape. He has been under a cloud since with us. My wonder is that he was not dismissed."

"Then you don't know at all what Salter is like?"

"Are there no photographs?"

"I think not. I have seen none. Is it very essential your ascertaining this?"

"The most essential point of all. Is this Grimley to be got at? If I could see him to-day and get Salter's description from him, I should be more than glad."

Mr. Burtenshaw took some ivory tablets from his pocket and consulted them. "I will send for Grimley here, sir. Will eight o'clock be too late for you?"

"Not at all," replied Karl, thinking he could get away by the half-past nine train.

Mr. Burtenshaw escorted him to the head of the stairs, and watched him down, making his mental comments.

"I wonder who he is? He looks too full of care for his years. But he knows Salter's retreat as sure as a gun--or thinks he knows it. Won't denounce him till he's sure."

When Karl got back at eight o'clock, some disappointment was in store for him. Grimley was not there. The detective showed the scrap of message returned to him, scribbled in pencil on a loose bit of paper. Karl read as follows,

"Can't get to you before eleven: might be a little later. Suppose it's particular? Got a matter on hand, and have to leave for the country at five in the morning."

"Will you see him at that late hour, sir?"

Karl considered. It would involve his staying in town for the night, which he had not prepared for. But he was restlessly anxious to set the question at rest, and resolved upon waiting.

He walked away through the busy London streets, seemingly more crowded than usual that Monday evening, and sent a telegraphic message to his wife, saying he could not be home until the morrow. Then he went into the Charing Cross Hotel and engaged a bed. Before eleven he was back again at Mr. Burtenshaw's. Grimley came in about a quarter past: a powerful, tallish man with a rather jolly face, not dressed in
his official clothes as a policeman, but in an ordinary suit of pepper-and-salt.

"You remember Philip Salter, Grimley?" began the superior man at once, without any circumlocution or introduction.

"I ought to remember him, Mr. Burtenshaw."

"Just describe his person to this gentleman as accurately as you can."

"He's not dropped upon at last, is he?" returned the man, his whole face lighting up.

"No. Don't jump to conclusions, Grimley, but do as you are bid." Upon which rebuke Grimley turned to Sir Karl.

"He was about as tall as I am, sir, and not unlike me in shape: that is, strongly made, and very active. His real hair was dark brown, and almost, black--but goodness only knows what it's changed into now."

"And his face?" questioned Karl. As yet the description tallied.

"Well, his face was a fresh-coloured face, pleasant in look, and he was a free, pleasant man to talk to you. His eyes--I can't be sure, but I think they were dark brown: his eyebrows were thick and rather more arched than common. At that time his face was clean-shaved, whiskers and all: daresay it's covered with hair now."

"Was he gentlemanly in his look and manners?"

"Yes, sir, I should say so. A rather bustling, business-kind of gentleman: I

used to see him often before he turned rogue. Leastways before it was known. You'd never have thought it of him: you'd have trusted him through thick and thin."

Smith at Foxwood was not bustling in his manners: rather quiet. But, as Sir Karl's thoughts ran, there was nothing there for him to be bustling over: and, besides, the trouble might have tamed him. In other particulars the description might have well served for Smith himself, and Karl's hopes rose. Grimley watched him keenly.

"Have you a photograph of him?" asked Karl.

"No, sir. 'Twas a great pity one was never took. I might have had it done at Liverpool that day; but I thought I'd got himself safe, and it didn't occur to me. Ah! live and learn. I never was *done* before, and I've not been since."

"You let him escape you in the train?"

"I let him: yes, sir, that's the right word; as things turned out. 'Don't put the handcuffs on me, Grimley,' says he, when we were about to start for the up-night train. 'It's not pleasant to be seen in that condition by the passengers who sit opposite you. I'll not give you any trouble: you've got me, and I yield to it.' 'On your honour, sir?' says I. 'On my word and honour,' says he. 'To tell you the truth, Grimley,' he goes on, 'I've led such a life of fear and suspense lately that I'm not sorry it's ended.' Well, sir, I put faith in him: you've heard me say it, Mr. Burtenshaw: and we took our seats in the carriage, me on one side, my mate, Knowles, on the other, and Salter, unfettered, between us. He had got a great thick fluffy grey wrapper on, half coat, 'half cloak, with them wide hanging sleeves: we touched the sleeves on both sides, me and Knowles, with our arms and shoulders. There was one passenger besides; he sat opposite Knowles, and slept a good deal. Salter slept too--or seemed to sleep. Well, sir, we had got well on in our journey, when from some cause the lamp goes out. Soon after, the train shoots into a tunnel, and we were in utter darkness. Salter, apparently, was sleeping fast. A glimmer of light arose when we were half way through it, from some opening I suppose, and I saw the opposite passenger, as I thought, leaning out at the far window, the one next Knowles. The next minute there was a sound and a rush of air. Good heavens he has fell out, I says to Knowles: and Knowles--I say he had been asleep too--rouses up and says 'Why the door's open.' Sir, when we got out of the tunnel, the rays of the bright lamp at its opening shone

in; the opposite passenger was safe enough, his head nodding on his breast, but my prisoner was gone."

Karl caught up his breath; the tale excited him. "How could it have been done?" he exclaimed.

"The dickens knows. There was his thick rough coat again our arms, but his arms was out of it. How he had managed to slip 'em out and make no stir, and get off his seat to the door, I shall never guess. One thing is certain--he must have had a railway key hid about him somewhere and opened the door with it: he must have been opening it when I thought it was the passenger leaning out."

"What did you do?"

"We could do nothing, sir. Except shout to arouse the guard; we did enough of that, but the guard never heard us. When the next station was reached, a deal of good time had been lost. We told what had occurred, and got the tunnel searched. That Salter would be found dead, everybody thought. Instead of that he was not found at all; not a trace of him."

"He must have received injuries," exclaimed Karl.

"I should say so," returned Grimley. "Injuries that perhaps he carries from that day to this." And Karl half started as he remembered the arm always in a sling.

Just for a single moment the temptation to denounce this man came over him, in spite of his wish and will. Only for the moment: he remembered the danger to his brother. Besides, he would not have betrayed Smith for the world.

"What age is Salter?" he resumed.

"He must be about five-and-thirty now, sir. He was said to be three-and-thirty when it happened."

That was the first check. Smith must be quite forty. "Did Salter look older than his years?" he asked.

"No, I think not. Ah, he was a cunning fox," continued Mr. Grimley, grating his teeth at the remembrance. "I've known since then what it is to trust to the word and honour of a thief. Can you tell me where to find him, sir?" he suddenly

cried, after a pause. "To retake that man would be the most satisfactory piece of work I've got left to me in life."

"No, I cannot," replied Karl, gravely: which Mr. Grimley did not appear to like at all. So the interview came to an end without much result; and Karl departed for his hotel. Both Grimley and Mr. Burtenshaw, bowing him out, remained, firmly persuaded in their own minds that this unknown gentleman, who did not give his name, possessed some clue or other to the criminal, Salter.

We must return for a few minutes to Foxwood Court. Miss Blake got back by an early afternoon train as she had intended, and found some visitors with Lady Andinnian. It was old General Lloyd from Basham with two of his daughters. They were asking Lady Andinnian to take luncheon with them on the morrow, and accompany them afterwards to the flower-show that was to be held at the Guildhall. Sir Karl and Miss Blake were included in the invitation. Lucy promised: she seemed worn and weary with her solitude, and she loved flowers greatly. For Sir Karl she said she could not answer: he was in London for the day: but she thought it likely he would be able to accompany her. Miss Blake left it an open question: St. Jerome's was paramount just now, and to-morrow was one of its festival-days.

They dined alone, those two, Sir Karl not having returned for it: and, in spite of troubles, it seemed very dull to Lucy without her husband.

"Did you know Sir Karl was going to London?" asked Miss Blake.

"Yes," said Lucy; "he told me this morning. He had business with Plunkett and Plunkett."

Miss Blake suddenly pushed her hair from her forehead as if it troubled her, and bit her lips to enforce them to silence.

After dinner Miss Blake went out. Tom Pepp, who was appointed bell-ringer to St. Jerome's, in his intervals of work, had played truant at Matins in the morning and wanted looking up; so she went to do it. This bell was a new feature at St. Jerome's, and caused much talk. It was hung over the entrance-door, communicating with a stout string inside: which string Tom Pepp had to pull--to his intense delight.

When Miss Blake got back, Lucy was still alone. The evening passed on, and

Sir Karl did not come. Soon after nine o'clock a telegraphic dispatch arrived from him, addressed to Lady Andinnian. Her heart beat a little faster as she opened and read it.

"I cannot get my business done to-night, and must sleep in town. Shall be home to-morrow."

"I wonder what business it is that is detaining him?" spoke Lucy, mechanically, after handing the dispatch to Theresa, her thoughts bent upon her absent husband.

Theresa Blake was trembling to her fingers' ends. She flung down the dispatch after reading it, and flung after it a contemptuous word. The action and the word quite startled Lady Andinnian.

"I'll tell you, Lucy; I'll tell you because you ought to know it," she cried, scattering prudence to the winds in her righteous indignation; scattering even all consideration touching Jane Shore, the pillory, the white sheet, and the lighted taper. "The plea of business is good to assume: very convenient! Sir Karl did not go to London alone this morning. That girl was with him."

"What girl?" faltered Lucy.

"She at the Maze. She with the angel face." Lucy slightly shivered. For a moment she made no comment. Her face turned ghastly.

"Oh, Lucy, my dear, forgive me!" cried Miss Blake. "Perhaps I have been wrong to tell you; but I cannot bear that you should be so deceived. I went up to London myself this morning after some embroidery silks that I could not get at Basham. Sir Karl and she were in the same train. I saw them get out together at the terminus."

It was cruel to hear and to have to bear; but Lucy said never a word. Her tell-tale face had betrayed her emotion, but she would not let anything else betray it.

"Perhaps both happened to have business in London," she quietly said, when she could trust her voice to be steady. "I am sure Karl went up to go to Plunkett and Plunkett's."

And not another allusion did she make to it. Ringing for Hewitt, she calmly told him his master would not be home: and after that talked cheerfully to Theresa until the evening was over. Miss Blake wondered at her.

Calm before *her* and the world. But when she got upstairs and was alone in her chamber, all the pent-up anguish broke forth. Her heart seemed breaking; her sense of wrong well nigh overmastered her.

"And it was only on Saturday he vowed to me the sin was all of the past!" she cried. And she lay in torment through the live-long summer's night.

CHAPTER XX.

Only one Fly at the Station

The railway station at Basham seemed to be never free from bustle. Besides pertaining to Basham proper, it was the junction for other places. Various lines crossed each other; empty carriages and trolleys of coal stood near; porters and others were always running about.

Four o'clock on the Tuesday afternoon, and the train momentarily expected in from London. A few people had collected on the platform: waiting for friends who were coming by it, or else intending to go on by it themselves. Amidst them was a young and lovely lady, who attracted some attention. Strangers wondered who she was: one or two knew her for the lady of Foxwood Court, wife of Sir Karl Andinnian.

There had been a flower-show at Basham that day: and Lady Andinnian, as may be remembered, had promised to attend it with the family of General Lloyd, taking luncheon with them first. But when the morning came, she heartily wished she had not made the engagement. Sir Karl had not returned to accompany her. Miss Blake declared that she could not spare the time for it: for

it happened to be a Saint's Day, and services prevailed at St. Jerome's. Another check arose: news was brought in from the coachman that one of the horses had been slightly hurt in shoeing, and the carriage could not be used that day.

Upon that, Lady Andinnian said she must go by train: for it would never have occurred to her to break her promise.

"I think, Theresa, you might manage to go with me," she said.

Miss Blake, calculating her hours, found she had two or three to spare in the middle of the day, and agreed to do so: provided she might be allowed to leave Mrs. Lloyd's when luncheon was over and not be expected to go to the town-hall. "You will only be alone in returning, for just the few minutes that you are in the train, Lucy," she said. "The Lloyds will see you into it, and your servants can have a fly waiting for you at Foxwood Station." This programme had been carried out: and here was Lucy waiting for the four o'clock train at Basham, surrounded by General Lloyd and part of his family.

It came steaming slowly in. Adieux were interchanged, and Lucy was put into what is called the ladies' carriage. Only one lady was in it besides herself; some one travelling from London. They looked at each other with some curiosity, sitting face to face. It was but natural; both were young, both were beautiful.

"What lovely hair! and what charming blue eyes! and what a bright delicate complexion!" thought Lucy. "I wonder who she is."

"I have never in all my life seen so sweet a face!" thought the other traveller. "Her eyes are beautiful: and there's, such a loving sadness in them! And what a handsome dress!--what style altogether!"

Lucy's dress was a rich silk, pearl grey in colour; her bonnet white; her small parasol was grey, covered with lace, its handle of carved ivory. She looked not unlike a bride. The other lady wore black silk, a straw bonnet, and black lace veil thickly studded with spots; which veil she had put back as if for air, just after quitting Basham; and she had with her several small parcels. Why or wherefore neither of them knew, but each felt instinctively attracted by the appearance of the other.

They were nearing Foxwood Station--it was but about eight minutes' distance from Basham--when Lucy, in changing her position, happened to throw down a

reticule bag which had lain beside her. Both of them stooped to pick it up.

"Oh, I beg your pardon! I ought to have moved it when you got in," said the stranger, placing it on her own side amidst her parcels. And Lucy, on her part, apologised for having thrown it down.

It served to break the ice of reserve: and for the next remaining minute or two they talked together. By the stranger beginning to gather together her parcels, Lucy saw she was preparing to get out at Foxwood.

"Are you about to make a stay in this neighbourhood?" she asked.

"For the present."

"It is a very charming spot. We hear the nightingales every evening."

"You are staying in it too, then?"

"Yes. It is my home."

The train came to a stand-still, and they got out. Foxwood station, after the manner of some other small rural stations, had its few buildings on one side only: the other was open to the high road, and to the fields beyond. In this road, drawn up close to the station, was a waiting fly, its door already open. The stranger, carrying some of her parcels, went straight up to it, supposing it was there for hire, and was about to get in.

"Beg pardon, ma'am," said the driver, "this here fly's engaged."

She, seemed vexed, disappointed: and looked up at him. "Are you sure?" she asked. Lucy was standing close by and heard.

"It's brought here, ma'am, for the Lady Andinnian."

"For whom?" she cried, her voice turning to sharpness with its haste; her face, through her veil, changing to a ghastly white.

The driver stared at her: he thought it was all temper. Lucy looked, too, unable to understand, and slightly coloured.

"For whom did you say the fly was brought?" the lady repeated.

"For Lady Andinnian of Foxwood Court," explained the man in full. "I shouldn't go to tell a untruth about it."

"Oh I--I misunderstood," she said, her voice dropping, her look becoming suddenly timid as a hare's: and in turning away with a sudden movement, she found herself face to face with Lucy. At that same moment, a tall footman with a powdered head--who had strayed away in search of amusement, and strayed a little too far--came bustling up to his mistress.

"This is your fly, my lady."

By which the stranger knew that the elegant girl she had travelled with and whose sweet face was then close to her own, was the young Lady Andinnian. Her own white face flushed again.

"I--I beg your pardon," she said. "I did not know you were Sir Karl Andinnian's wife. The fly, I thought, was only there for hire."

Before Lucy could make any answer, she had disappeared from the spot, and was giving some of her parcels to a porter. Lucy followed.

"Can I offer to set you down anywhere? The fly is certainly waiting for me, but--there is plenty of room."

"Oh thank you, no. You are very kind: but--*no!* I can walk quite well. I am obliged to you all the same."

The refusal was spoken very emphatically; especially the last No. Without turning again, she rapidly walked from the station, the porter carrying her parcels.

"I wonder who she is?" murmured Lucy aloud, looking back as she was about to enter the fly, her powdered servant standing to bow her in. For she saw that there was no luggage, save those small parcels, and was feeling somewhat puzzled.

"It is Mrs. Grey, my lady; she who lives at the Maze."

Had the footman, Giles, said it was an inhabitant of the world of spirits, Lucy would not have felt more painfully and disagreeably startled. *She!* And she, Lucy, had sat with her in the same carriage and talked to her on pleasant terms of equality! She, Mrs. Grey! Well, Theresa was right: the face would do for an angel's.

"Why, my dear Lady Andinnian, how pale you look! It's the heat, I suppose."

Lucy, half bewildered, her senses seeming to have gone she knew not whither, found herself shaking hands with the speaker, Miss Patchett: an elderly and eccentric lady who lived midway between the station and the village of Foxwood. Lucy mechanically asked her if she had come in the train.

"Yes," answered Miss Patchett. "I've been to London to engage a housemaid. And I am tired to death, my dear, and the London streets were like fire. I wish I was at home without having to walk there."

"Let the fly take you."

"It's hardly worth while, my dear: it's not far. And it would be taking you out of the way."

"Not many yards out of it. Step in, Miss Patchett."

The old lady stepped in, Lucy following her; Giles taking his place by the driver. Miss Patchett was set down at her house, and then the horse's head was turned round in the direction of Foxwood Court. The old lady had talked incessantly; Lucy had comprehended nothing. St. Jerome's absurd little bell was being swayed and tinkled by Tom Pepp, but Lucy had not given it a second glance, although it was the first time she had had the gratification of seeing and hearing it.

"I could almost have died, rather than it should have happened," she thought, her face burning now at the recollection of the encounter with Mrs. Grey, so mortifying to every good feeling within her. "How white she turned--how sharply she spoke--when they told her the fly was there for Lady Andinnian! And to think that I should have offered to set her down! To think it! Perhaps those parcels contained things that Karl bought for her in London!"

The fly, bowling on, was nearing the Maze gate. Lucy's fascinated gaze was,

in spite of herself, drawn to it. A middle-aged woman servant had opened it and was receiving the parcels from the porter. Mrs. Grey had her purse out, paying him. As she put the coin into his hand, she paused to look at Lady Andinnian. It was not a rude look, but one that seemed full of eager interest. Lucy turned her eyes the other way, and caught a full view of Mr. Smith, the agent. He was stretched out at one of his sitting-room windows, surveying the scene with undisguised curiosity. Lucy sank into the darkest corner of the fly, and flung her hands over her burning face.

"Was any position in the world ever so painful as mine?" she cried with a rising sob. "How shall I live on, and bear it?"

The fly clattered in by the lodge gate and drew up at the house. Hewitt appeared at the door, and Giles stood for his mistress to alight.

"Has Sir Karl returned, Hewitt?" questioned Lucy.

"Not yet, my lady."

She stood for a moment in thought, then gave orders for the fly to wait, and went indoors. An idea had arisen that if she could get no comfort whispered to her, she should almost go out of her mind. Her aching heart was yearning for it.

"Hewitt, I shall go and see poor Miss Sumnor. I should like to take her a little basket of strawberries and a few of Maclean's best flowers. Will you see to it for me, and put them in the fly?"

She tan up stairs. She put off her robes alone, and came down in one of her cool muslins and a straw bonnet as plain as Mrs. Grey's. Hewitt had placed the basket of strawberries--some of the large pine-apple beauties that the Court was famous for--in the fly, a sheet of tissue paper upon them, and some lovely hothouse flowers on the paper. Lucy got in; told the footman she should not require his attendance; and was driven away to the vicarage.

"Am I to wait for you, my lady?" asked the driver, as he set her down with her basket of fruit and flowers.

"No, thank you; I shall walk home."

Margaret was lying alone as usual, her face this afternoon a sad one. Lucy

presented her little offering; and when the poor lonely invalid saw the tempting, luscious fruit, smelt the sweet perfume of the gorgeous flowers, the tears came into her eyes.

"You have brought all this to brighten me, Lucy. How good you are! I have had something to try me to-day, and was in one of my saddest moods."

The tears and the admission tried Lucy sorely. Just a moment she struggled with herself for composure, and then gave way. Bursting into a flood of grief, the knelt down and hid her face on Margaret's bosom.

"Oh Margaret, Margaret, you cannot have as much to try you as I have!" she cried out in her pain. "My life is one long path of sorrow; my heart is breaking. Can't you say a word to comfort me?"

Margaret Sumnor, forgetting as by magic all sense of her own trouble, tried to comfort her. She touched her with her gently caressing hand; she whispered soothing words, as one whispers to a child in sorrow: and Lucy's sobs exhausted themselves.

"My dear Lucy, before I attempt to say anything, I must ask you a question. Can you tell me the nature of your sorrow?"

But Lucy made no reply.

"I see. It is what you cannot speak of."

"It is what I can never speak of to you or to any one, Margaret. But oh, it is hard to bear."

"It seems so to you, I am sure, whatever it may be. But in the very darkest trial and sorrow there is comfort to be found."

"Not for me," impetuously answered Lucy. "I think God has forgotten me."

"Lucy, hush! You know better. The darkest cloud ever o'ershadowing the earth, covers a bright sky. *We* see only the cloud, but the brightness is behind it; in time it will surely show itself and the cloud will have rolled away. God is above all. Only put your trust in Him."

Lucy was silent. There are times when the heart is so depressed that it admits not of comfort; when even sympathy cannot touch it. She bent her face in her hands and *thought*. Look out where she would, there seemed no refuge for her in the wide world. Her duty and the ills of life laid upon her seemed to be clashing with each other. Margaret had preached to her of patiently bearing, of resignation to Heaven's will, of striving to live on, silently hoping, and returning good for evil. But there were moments when the opposite course looked very sweet, and this moment was one. But one thought always held her back when this retaliation, this revenge appeared most tempting--should she not repent of it in the future?

"Lucy, my dear," broke in the invalid's voice, always so plaintive, "I do not pretend to fathom this trouble of yours. It is beyond me.
I can only think it must be some difference between you and your husband----"

"And if it were?" interrupted Lucy, recklessly.

"If it were! Why then, I should say to you, above all things, *bear*. You do not know, you cannot possess 'any idea of the bitter life Of a woman at real issue with her husband. I know a lady--but she does not live in these parts, and you have never heard of her--who separated from her husband. She and my own mother were at school together, and she married young and, it was thought, happily. After a time she grew jealous of her husband; *she had cause for it*: he was altogether a gay, careless man, fond of show and pleasure. For some years she bore a great deal in silence, the world knowing nothing of things being wrong between them. Papa could tell you more about this time than I: I was but a little child. How he and my mother, the only friends who were in her confidence, urged her to go on bearing with what patience she might, and trusting to God to set wrong things right. For a long while she listened to them; but there came a time when she allowed exasperation to get the better of her; and the world was astonished by hearing that she and her husband had agreed to separate. Ah Lucy! it was then that her life of real anguish set in. Just at first, for a few weeks or so, perhaps months, she was borne up by the excitement of the thing, by the noise it made in the world, by the gratification of taking revenge on her husband--by I know not what. But as the long months and the years went on, and all excitement, I may almost say all interest in life, had faded, she then saw what she had done. She was a solitary woman condemned to an unloved and solitary existence, and she repented her act with the whole force of her bitter and lonely heart. Better, Lucy, that she had exercised patience, and trusted in God;

better for her own happiness."

"And what of her now?" cried Lucy, eagerly.

"Nothing. Nothing but what I tell you. She lives away her solitary years, not a day of them passing but she wishes to heaven that that one fatal act of hers could be recalled--the severing herself from her husband."

"And he, Margaret?"

"He? For aught I know to the contrary, he has been as happy since as he was before; perhaps, in his complete freedom, more so. She thought, poor woman, to work out her revenge upon him; instead of that, it was on herself she worked it out. Men and women are different. A separated man--say a divorced man if you like--can go abroad; here, there, and everywhere; and enjoy life without hindrance, and take his pleasure at will: but a woman, if she be a right-minded woman, must stay in her home-shell, and eat her heart away."

Lucy Andinnian sighed. It was no doubt all too true.

"I have related this for your benefit, Lucy. My dear little friend, at all costs, *stay with your husband*."

"I should never think of leaving him for good as that other poor woman did," sobbed Lucy. "I should be dead of grief in a year."

"True. Whatever your cross may be, my dear--and I cannot doubt that it is a very sharp and heavy one--take it up as bravely as you can, and bear it. No cross, no crown."

Some of the school children came in for a lesson in fine work--stitching and gathering--and Lady Andinnian took her departure. She had not gained much comfort; she was just as miserable as it was possible to be.

The church bell was going for the five o'clock evening service. Since the advent of St. Jerome's, Mr. Sumnor had opened his church again for daily service, morning and evening. This, however, was a Saint's day. A feeling came over poor Lucy that she should like to sob out her heart in prayer to God; and she slipped in. Not going down the aisle to their own conspicuous pew, but into an old-fashioned, square, obscure thing near the door, that was filled on Sundays with the poor, and hidden behind a pillar. There, unseen, unsuspected, she knelt on the floor, she lifted up her heart on high, sobbing silent sobs of agony, bitter tears raining from her eyes; asking God to hear and help her; to help her to bear.

She sat out the service and grew composed enough to join in it. The pillar hid her from the clergyman's view; nobody noticed that she was there. So far as she could see, there were not above half-a-dozen people in the church. In going out, Mr. Sumnor and Mr. Moore's sister, Aunt Diana, came up to join her.

"I did not know you were in church, Lady Andinnian," said the clergyman.

"The bell was going when I left your house: I had been to see Margaret: so I stepped in," she replied. "But what a very small congregation!"

"People don't care to attend on week-days, and that's the truth," put in Miss Moore--a middle-aged, stout lady, with her brown hair cut short and a huge flapping hat on. "And the young folks are all off to that blessed St. Jerome's. My nieces are there; I know it; and so are your two daughters, Mr. Sumnor. More shame for them!"

"Ay," sighed Mr. Sumnor, whose hair and face were alike grey, and his look as sad as his tone. "Their running to St. Jerome's, as they do, is nothing less, in

my eyes, than a scandal. I don't know what is to be the end of it all."

"End of it all," echoed Aunt Diana, in her strong-minded voice. "Why, the end will be nothing but a continuation of the folly; or perhaps worse--Rome, or a convent, or something of that kind. I truly believe, Mr. Sumnor, that heaven above was never so mocked before, since the world began, as it is now by this semblance of zeal in boys and girls for religious services and worship. The true worship of a Christian, awakened to his state of sin and to the need he has of God's forgiveness and care, of Christ's love, is to be revered--but that is totally different from this business at Jerome's. *This* is hollow at the core; born of young men's and young girls' vanity. Does all the flocking thither come of religion, think you? Not it."

"Indeed no," said Mr. Sumnor.

"And therefore I say it is a mockery of true religion, and must be a sin in the sight of heaven. They run after Mr. Cattacomb himself: nothing else. I went to St. Jerome's myself this morning; not to say my prayers; just to watch my nieces and see what was going on. They had all sorts of ceremonies and foolish folly: three of the girls had been there beforehand, confessing to the Reverend Guy: and there was he, performing the service and turning up the tails of his eyes."

"O Miss Diana," involuntarily exclaimed Lucy, hardly knowing whether to laugh or reprove.

"It is true, Lady Andinnian. Mr. Sumnor here knows it is. Why does Cattacomb go through his service with all that affectation? Of course the girls like it: but they are little fools, all of them; they'd think anything right that was done by him. I fancy the young man has some good in him; I acknowledge it; but he is eaten up with vanity, and lives in the incense offered by these girls. Ah well, it's to be hoped they will all, priest and children, come to their senses sometime."

She turned into her home as she spoke, after wishing them good-bye. Lucy stayed to shake hands with the clergyman.

"Miss Diana is given to expressing herself strongly, but she is right in the main," said Mr. Sumnor. "St. Jerome's is giving me a great deal of trouble and sorrow just now, in more ways than one. But we have all something to bear," he added, after a pause. "All. Sometimes I think that the more painful it is, the more

God is caring for us. Fare you well, my dear young lady. Give my kind regards to Sir Karl."

Lucy walked homewards, a feeling of peace insensibly diffusing itself over her afflicted soul. The clergyman's words had touched her.

Verses of Holy Writ and thoughts connected with them kept rising in her mind like messages of consolation. In her misery, she felt how very weak and weary she was; that there was nothing for her but to resign herself to Heaven's protecting hand, as a helpless child. The cry for it broke out involuntarily from her lips.

"Lord, I am oppressed. Undertake for me!"

CHAPTER XXI.

Hard to Bear

Dinner was waiting when Lady Andinnian entered, and the first person she saw was her husband. He met her in the hall with outstretched hand, his face clear and open, showing no signs of shame or guilt.

"Did you think I was lost, Lucy?"

She suffered her hand to touch his; for Hewitt and the tall footman, Giles, were standing in the hall, looking on. Sir Karl saw how red her eyes were.

"I meant to have returned by an earlier train; but as I had the day before me I took the opportunity of seeing after a few things I wished to purchase--and the time slipped on," said Karl. "How have you been, Lucy?"

"Oh, quite well, thank you."

"Whom do you think I travelled down with, Lucy? My old friend, Lamprey. He had to come to Basham on some matter of business: so I have brought him here to dinner. Make haste," he added, as she turned to the staircase: "I think it must be ready."

"I will be down directly," she answered.

Aglaé was waiting; and in five minutes Lucy came down again, dressed. Captain Lamprey was introduced to her--for it happened that they had not been personally acquainted when at Winchester---and gave her his arm into the dining-room. Miss Blake fell to Karl.

But in Lucy's heart-sickness, she could scarcely be cheerful. Her tell-tale eyes were heavy; there arose ever and anon one of those rising sobs of the breath that speak most unmistakably of hidden grief: and altogether Captain Lamprey felt somewhat disappointed in Lady Andinnian. He remembered how beautiful Lucy Cleeve used to be: he had heard of the renewed gaiety of heart her marriage with Karl brought her: but he saw only a sad woman, who was evidently not too happy, and whose beauty was marred by sadness and paleness. Karl was more cheerful than usual; and Miss Blake seemed not to tire of inquiring after Winchester and its people. But in the midst of all his observations, Captain Lamprey never suspected that there was anything but perfect cordiality between Sir Karl and his wife. And the dinner came to an end.

After coffee, Captain Lamprey set off to walk to Basham. Karl went out with him, to put him in the right road and accompany him part of it. Miss Blake had gone to Vespers. Lucy was alone.

It seemed to her to be dull everywhere; especially dull indoors, and she stepped out to the lawn: turning back almost immediately to get a shawl for her shoulders, in obedience to an injunction of her husband's. On the Sunday evening, when he found her sitting out of doors without one, he had fetched one at once, and begged her not to be imprudent or to forget her ague-fever of the previous year. She remembered this now and went back for the shawl. Some wives, living in estrangement from their husbands, might have studiously set his commands at naught, and have risked ague, or what not, rather than obey them. Not so Lucy Andinnian. She was meek and gentle by nature. Moreover, in spite of the ill-feeling he had caused to rise up between them, in spite of her sense of wrong and insult, she loved him in her heart, and could not help it, as truly as

ever. Visions would steal over her in unguarded moments, of the present trouble being hushed to rest; of all that was amiss being done away with, and she and he reconciled and at peace again. Unhappily for the demands of pride, of self-assertion, Lucy was by no means one of your high-spirited and strong-minded heroines, who rashly overlook all interests to indulge in reprisals and revenge.

She folded the shawl about her--one of substantial white silk crape--as carefully as Karl could have folded it; and she stayed, she knew not how long, in the open air. Pacing the lawn; sitting amidst the flowers; standing under the shade of the trees; always in deep thought. The nightingale sang, and the tears gathered in her eyes as she listened to the strain. "What a sweet place this would be to live in," thought Lucy, "if only we could but have peace with it!"

But the nightingale's song and the oppressive thoughts, together with the falling dusk, brought back all her low spirits again. "There will never be any more happiness for me in this world, never, never," she sighed, and the tears were dropping as she went up to her own room.

By and by Sir Karl returned. Not seeing his wife downstairs, he went up and knocked at the door of her little sitting-room. He had not had an opportunity of speaking a private word to her since his return. There came no answer, and he entered. The room was empty; but as he stood for a moment in the deep silence of twilight, the sound of sobs in Lucy's bedchamber smote his ear. He knocked at it.

"Lucy!"

She had indeed once more given way to all the abandonment of grief. Which was very foolish: but perhaps its indulgence brought a kind of relief, and indeed her spirit was very sore. The knock startled her: but she had not heard the call.

"Who's there?" she asked, stepping to the door and stifling her sobs as she best could.

"I want to speak to you, Lucy."

She dried her eyes, and unlocked the door, and made believe to be calmly indifferent, as she stepped into the sitting-room.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Karl. I was busy, and did not hear you."

"You are looking very ill, Lucy," he said, with grieved concern. "I thought so when I first saw you this afternoon. Then, as now, your eyes were red with weeping."

She strove for calmness; she prayed for it. Her determination had been taken to bury in haughty silence all she had learnt of the London journey, its despicable deceit, and insult to her. She *could not* have spoken of it; no, not even to reproach him and to bring his shame home to him: it would have inflicted too much humiliation on her sensitive spirit. Besides, he must know what she suffered as well as she did.

"I have had rather a tiring day," she answered, leaning sideways against the open window. "There was the elaborate luncheon with General and Mrs. Lloyd, and the flower-show afterwards. The weather was very warm and oppressive."

"That may account for your being tired and not looking well: but not for the weeping, Lucy. As I stood here waiting for you to answer my knock, I heard your sobs."

"Yes," she said, rather faintly, feeling how useless it would be to deny that there had been some weeping. "I get a little low-spirited sometimes in the evening."

"But why? wherefore?"

"Is life so pleasant with us just now that I can always be gay, think you!" she retorted, after a pause, and her voice took a tone of resentment.

"But the unpleasantness is of your making; not mine. You *know* it, Lucy."

"Then--then it is right that I should be the one to suffer," was her impatient answer--for his words were trying her almost beyond endurance. "Let it go so: I do not wish to speak of it further."

Karl was standing at the opposite corner of the window, facing her, his arms folded. On his part he was beginning to be a little out of patience too, with what he deemed her unreasonable caprice. For a few moments there was silence.

"What I want to tell you is this, Lucy. My visit to London was connected with that wish which you seem to have so much at
heart--though I cannot exactly understand why----"

"I have no wish at heart," she resentfully interrupted.

"Nay, but hear me. The wish you expressed to me I think you must have at heart, since on its fulfilment you say depends our reconciliation. I speak of the removal of--of the tenants of the Maze," he added, half breaking down, in his sensitive hesitation. "Since my conversation with you on Saturday, during which, if you remember, this stipulation of yours was made, there occurred, by what I should call, a singular chance, only that I do not believe anything is chance that affects our vital interests in this life--there occurred to me a slight circumstance by which I thought I saw a possibility of carrying out your wish----
"

"You said then that it was your wish also," again interrupted Lucy. "Or affected to say it."

"Your wish for it cannot be as hearty as mine," he impulsively answered. "I pray for it night and day."

And Lucy could not well mistake the emotional earnestness. She believed him there.

"Well, I thought I saw a chance of it," he resumed, "and I went to get some information, that I fancied might help me, from Plunkett and Plunkett--"

"Is it fitting that you should give these details to me?" she haughtily interposed.

"I wish you to understand that I am doing my best. Plunkett and Plunkett could not give me the information: but they directed me to some people where I might obtain it. To enable me to see one of these people, I had to stay in town all night; and that was the reason of my not getting home."

Lucy had taken a spray of jessamine from her waistband, and stood pulling it to pieces, listening with an air of indifference.

"I do not really know more than I did before I went to town, as to whether or

not the Maze can be left empty," he went on. "But I have a good hope of it. I think I may be able to accomplish it, though perhaps not quite immediately. It may take time."

"As you please, of course," answered Lucy coldly. "It is nothing to me."

Karl Andinnian had one of the sweetest tempers in the world, and circumstances had taught him patience and endurance. But he felt grieved to his very heart at her cutting indifference, and for once his spirit rebelled against it.

"Lucy, how dare you treat me so? What have I done to deserve it from you? You must know and see what a life of tempest and apprehension mine is. There are moments when I feel that I could welcome death, rather than continue to live it."

She was not ungenerous. And, as he so spoke, it struck her that, whatever her wrongs, she had been petty and ungracious to him now. And perhaps--Heaven knew--he was really striving to rid himself of Mrs. Grey as earnestly as she could wish it. Her countenance softened.

"I am as a man tied down in a net from which there is no extrication," he resumed with increased emotion. "My days are so full of care that I envy the poor labourers at work by the road-side, and wish I was one of them--anything in the world, good or bad, but what that world calls me--Sir Karl Andinnian. And my wife, whom I have loved with my heart's best love, and whom I might have fondly hoped would pity my strait and comfort me--she turns against me. God forgive you for your harshness, Lucy."

The reproaches wrung her heart terribly. In the moment's repentance, she believed she had judged him more hardly than he deserved. Her tone was gentle, her eyes had tears in them.

"I have to bear on my side too, Karl. You forget that."

No, he did not forget it. But the temporary anger was pre-eminent just then. A hot retort was on his lips; when the sight of her face, sad with its utter sorrow, struck on every generous chord he possessed, and changed his mood to pity. He crossed over and took her unresisting hands in his.

"Forgive my words, Lucy: you tried me very much. We have both something

to forgive each other."

She could not speak; sobs were rising in her throat. Karl bent forward and kissed her passionately.

"Need we make life worse for one another than it is?" he asked.

"I cannot help it," she sobbed. "Don't blame me, for I cannot help it."

"Suppose I take the matter into my own hands, Lucy, and say you shall help it."

"You will not do that," she said, the implied threat restoring her coldness and calmness, though her face turned as pale as the blossoms of the jessamine. "Things are bad enough as they are, but that would make them worse. I should leave your home for good and all--and should have to say why I do so."

She knew how to subdue him. This exposure, if she carried it out, might cost his brother's safety. Karl, feeling his helplessness most bitterly, dropped her hands, and went back to his post at the opposite side of the window.

"I have not said quite all I wish to say," he began, in a voice from which emotion had passed. "As I had the day in London before me, I thought I would look after a pony-chaise for you, Lucy, and I found a beauty. It will be home in a day or two."

"But you have not bought it?"

"Yes, I have."

"Oh, I'm sorry! I did not want one. But it was very kind of you to think of me, Karl," she added in her gratitude.

"And there's a pretty pony to match: a small, quiet, gentle creature. I hope you will like him. I cannot have you running about the place on foot, making yourself ill with the heat."

"Thank you; thank you. But I never drove in my life. I fear I should be a coward."

"I will drive you until you get used to him. That is, if you will permit me. Lucy, believe me, amidst all my care and trouble, your happiness lies next my heart."

On his way to leave the room, he stopped and shook hands with her: perhaps as an earnest of his friendliness. Theresa Blake, walking on the lawn beneath, had seen them conversing together at the window. She thought a taste of Jane Shore's pillory might not have been amiss for bringing Lady Andinnian to her senses.

Presently Lucy went down and had tea with Theresa, presiding herself at the cups and saucers by moonlight--for there was little light of day left. Sir Karl did not appear. He was in his room on the other side the house, holding some colloquy with Hewitt.

"I am going to have a pony-chaise, Theresa."

"Oh, indeed," returned Miss Blake, who seemed in rather a crusty humour. "I thought I heard you say that you did not require one."

"Perhaps I may be glad of it, for all that. At any rate, Sir Karl has bought it, pony, and chaise, and all; and they will be down this week."

Miss Blake's face was a scornful one just then, in her condemnation of wrong-doing. "He bribes her into blindness," was the thought that ran through her mind.

"Why are your eyes so red and heavy, Lucy? They were so at dinner."

"My eyes red!" artfully responded Lucy. "Are they? Well, I have had rather a tiring day, Theresa; and it has been so very hot, you know. You ought to have waited for the flower-show. It was one of the best I ever saw."

"Yes, I should have liked it."

"I took home poor Miss Patchett in my fly, from the station," went on Lucy, who seemed to be running from one topic to another, perhaps to divert attention from herself. "She had been to London to engage a servant, and looked ready to drop with the heat. Did you ever know it so hot before, Theresa?"

"I think not. Not for a continuancy. Is Sir Karl going to take any tea? There's

nothing else so refreshing these sultry evenings."

"He says tea only makes him hotter," returned Lucy with a smile. "Ring the bell, please, Theresa: you are nearer to it than I am."

Giles appeared, in answer, and was sent by Lucy to inquire whether his master would take tea, or not. The message brought forth Karl. The moon was shining right on the table.

"I'll drink a cup of tea if you will put in plenty of milk to cool it," said he. "How romantic you look here, sitting in the moonlight! Thank you, Lucy."

"We are glad to do without lights so long as we can in this weather," observed Miss Blake. "They make the room warmer."

He drank the tea standing, and went back again. Lucy sent the tray away, and presently ordered the lights. She then ensconced herself in an easy chair with one of the romances Karl had brought her on the Saturday: and Miss Blake strolled out of doors.

At first Lucy held the book upside-down. Then she read a page three times over, and could not comprehend it. Ah, it was of no use, this playing at light-hearted ease. She might keep up the farce tolerably well before people; but when alone with herself and her misery, it was a senseless mockery.

Leaving the book behind her, she went wandering about from room to room. The windows of all were put open, to catch what little air there might be. As she stood in one of the unlighted rooms, Sir Karl passed along the terrace. She drew back lest he should see her, and heard him go into the lighted drawing-room and call her.

"Lucy!"

Not a word would she answer. She just stood back against the wall in the dark beyond the curtain, and kept still. He went out again, and began pacing the opposite path in the shade cast by the overhanging trees. Lucy watched him. Suddenly he plunged in amidst the trees, and she heard one of the private gates open and close.

"He is gone *there*," she said, the pulses of her heart quickening and her face

taking a ghastly tinge in the moonlight.

Miss Blake, who had been also lingering in the garden, in some of its shaded nooks and corners, her thoughts busy with Guy Cattacomb and with certain improvements that reverend man was contemplating to introduce at St. Jerome's, had also seen Sir Karl, and watched his stealthy exit. She immediately glided to another of the small private gates of egress, cautiously opened it, and looked out.

"Yes, I thought so: he is off to the Maze," she mentally cried, as she saw Sir Karl, who had crossed the road, walking towards that secluded spot, and keeping close against the opposite hedge. The moonlight was flung pretty broadly upon the road to-night, but the dark hedge served to screen him in a degree. Miss Blake's eyes were keen by moonlight or by daylight. She watched him pass under the trees at the entrance: she watched him open the gate, and enter. And Miss Blake, religious woman that she was, wondered that the skies did not drop down upon such a monster in human shape; she wondered that the same pure air from heaven could be permitted to be breathed by him and by that earthly saint, The Reverend Guy.

Some few of us, my readers, are judging others in exactly the same mistaken manner now: and have no more suspicion that we are wrong and they right than Miss Theresa Blake had.

CHAPTER XXII.

With his Brother.

Sir Karl locked the gate safely, wound himself through the maze of trees, and soon reached the open- space before the house. Part of the grass-plat was steeped in light, and he saw Mrs. Grey walking there. He crossed it to accost her.

"Did you get back yesterday, Rose?" he inquired, after shaking hands.

"No, not until this afternoon. Rennet kept me. I saw him when I drove there yesterday: but he was then preparing to go out of town for the rest of the day on business, and it was impossible for him to do what was wanted before this morning. So I had to wait in town."

"I wonder we did not chance to travel down together, then!" observed Karl. "I did not return until this afternoon. Would you like to take my arm, Rose, while you walk?"

"Thank you," she answered, and took it. She had on the black dress she had worn in London, and her golden hair gleamed with all its beauty in the moonlight. Karl remarked that she leaned upon him somewhat heavily.

"You are tired, Rose!"

"I felt very tired when I got home. But Ann Hopley preaches to me so much about the necessity of taking exercise, that I thought I would walk about here for half-an-hour. I have had scarcely any walking
to-day; I was so fatigued with the journey and with the shopping yesterday that I had to keep as still as I could this morning. But there was a good deal to do; what with Rennet and some errands I had left."

"Where's Adam?"

"In-doors. He is complaining of that sensation of pain again. I do not like it at all, Karl."

"And while he is lying concealed here he cannot have medical advice. At least I don't see how it would be possible."

"It would not be possible," said Rose, decisively. "Oh, but I
forgot--I have to tell you something, Karl. Whom do you think I travelled with from Basham to Foxwood?"

"I don't know."

"Your wife."

"My wife!"

"It is true. I was in the ladies' carriage alone all the way from London. At Basham a young and elegant lady in pearl-grey silk and white bonnet, with the daintiest parasol I ever saw was put in. An old gentleman--she called him 'General'--and some ladies were with her on the platform. We were alone in the carriage, she and I; and I think we looked at each other a good deal. What she thought of me I don't know; but I thought that she had one of the sweetest and gentlest faces my eyes ever rested on. She had a sweet voice, too, for we spoke a little just as we got to Foxwood."

"But did you know her?--did she know you?" interrupted Karl.

"No, no. I should have had no idea who she was, but that there arose some question about the one fly waiting there, and some one said it had been brought for Lady Andinnian. Karl, if ever I felt startled in my life, it was then."

"Why were you startled?"

"Don't you see? 'Lady Andinnian!' I took it at the moment to mean myself, and I felt my face turn white at the danger. Fear is quiet; and I am living in it always, Karl. What I thought was, that Adam had sent that fly for me, supposing I might come by that train; and that, in his incaution, or perhaps out of bravado, he had given my true name. Of course nothing could have been more absurd than this fancy of mine--but it was what arose to me. Almost at once I recognized my mistake, and saw how it was--that *she* was the Lady Andinnian meant, Sir Karl's wife. I think I said something to her, but I was so confused I hardly know. I only have wondered since that I did not guess who she was at first, from her attire and her beauty."

"Lucy did not tell me of this."

"Oh dear no, she would not be likely to recall it, or to know me from any other stranger one may meet in travelling. Adam says you love her to excess: I am sure, Karl, I don't wonder at it."

He made no answer. Yes, he loved his wife with a wondrous love: but just now she was trying that love sharply.

"And about the matter you went up upon?" resumed Mrs. Grey. "Did you succeed in learning anything of Philip Salter?"

"Not much. I joined you on the grass here to tell you what I did learn, before going in to Adam. Salter has never been retaken: and the police have an idea that he is still in concealment in England. There's a reward of five hundred pounds out against him."

"Why do they think he is in England?" asked Rose, quickly.

"I don't know. They would not tell me."

"You communicated with the police, then, Karl. You were not afraid?"

"Not with the police as a body, but with one of their private detectives: a Mr. Burtenshaw. Plunkett and Plunkett gave me a note to him. It was he who said he believed Salter to be still in the country: but the reason for believing it he would not give me."

"And did you get him described?"

"Yes, by the very man who let him escape: a policeman named Grimley: Burtenshaw sent for him. In nearly every particular his description tallies with Smith."

"Oh, Karl! he is certainly Salter."

"Does Smith wear his own hair?"

"Yes. At least," she added, less decisively, "if it were false I think I should not have failed to notice it. It is very dark; his whiskers are nearly black and his hair is only a shade lighter."

"Just so. But--I should say Smith was forty."

"About that."

"Well, Salter, they say, would be now only five-and-thirty. I don't attach much importance to the disparity!" added Karl: "Salter's trouble may have prematurely aged him."

"What shall you do in it?" she resumed after a pause. "It seems to me that if we could get Smith removed so as to leave Adam, in that sense, free, the half of

our dreadful trouble would be over."

"I don't know what I shall do," replied Karl. "It will not do to stir an inch, as to the bringing it home to Smith, unless I am sure and certain. At present, Rose, it seems to be for me only another care added to the rest."

"Karlo, old fellow, is that you?" interrupted a voice from the passage window over the porch. "What on earth do you stay chattering to the wife for? I want you."

Karl looked up, nodded to his brother, and went in. Adam was in his customary evening attire, and just as gay as usual. He waited for Karl at the head of the stairs and they went together into the sitting-room that was always used at night. This sitting-room had a second door; one in the paneling, not visible to a casual observer. It communicated with a passage that nothing else communicated with; the passage communicated with a spiral staircase, and that with nobody knew what or where. Had Adam Andinnian been surprised in his retreat by his enemies, it was by that private door he would have made his escape, or tried to do it.

"Rose says you are not very well, Adam: that you are feeling the pain again," began Karl. "What do you think it is?"

"Goodness knows: I don't," returned Adam. "My opinion is, that I must in some way have given my inside a deuce of a wrench. I don't tell Rose that: she'd set on and worry herself."

"I hope it is nothing serious--that it will soon pass off. You see, Adam, the cruel difficulty we should be in, if you were to require medical advice."

"Oh, bother!" cried Adam.

"Why do you say 'bother?'"

"Because it is bother, and nothing else. When did I ever want medical advice? In general health, I'm as strong as a horse."

"When we were young men at home, they used to say I had twice the constitution that you had, Adam, in spite of your strong looks."

"Home fallacy!" said Adam lightly. "It was the father used to say that, I remember. For the most part, the preaching that people make over 'constitution' is worth no more than the breath wasted on it. The proof of a pudding is in the eating: and the proof of a sound constitution lies in a man's good strength. I am stronger than you, Karl."

"As regards muscular strength, you are."

"And what's muscular strength a proof of, pray, but constitutional strength? Come, old wise-acre!"

To argue with Adam Andinnian had been always about as profitable as to tell a ship to sail against the wind. So Karl said no more about strength.

"The chance that such a necessity may arise, Adam, and the difficulty and danger that would attend it----"

"What necessity?" interrupted Adam.

"Of your requiring a medical man. Your wife will want one; but that's different: she is supposed to live here alone, and you will of course take care to keep out of the way at that time. But the other thought does cross my mind anxiously now and again."

"Karlo, old man, you were always one of the anxious ones. I am content to leave problems alone until they arise. It is the best way."

"Sometimes it may be; not always. Of course all these thoughts turn round to one point, Adam--the urgent expediency there exists for your quitting the Maze."

"And I am not going to quit it."

"The advance of those people on Saturday night; the studied tramp, as I thought it, of policemen, gave me a fright, Adam. Let us suppose such a thing for a moment as that they were coming after you! No earthly aid could have shielded you."

"But they were not coming after me, you see; they were but carrying some poor dead man to his home on my estate. The same fear may apply wherever I go."

"No, it could not. It could apply to nowhere as it does to here. In some place abroad, Adam, you would be comparatively secure and safe. I am convinced that this locality is, of all, the most dangerous."

"If I were already at the same place you mention, wherever that may be--an inaccessible island in the icy seas, say--I should undoubtedly be more out of the reach of English constables and warders than I am now: but as matters stand, Karl, I am safer here, because the danger to me would lie in getting away. I shall not attempt to do it."

Karl paused for a few minutes before he resumed. His brother, sitting near the shaded lamp, was turning over the pages of the "Art Journal," a copy of which Mrs. Grey had brought from London.

"How came you to know Smith, Adam?"

"How came I to know Smith!" repeated Sir Adam. "To tell you the truth, Karl, Smith saved me. But for his sheltering me in the time you know of, I should not be at liberty now; probably not in life. Until then he was a stranger."

"And for saving you he exacts his black mail."

"Little blame to him for it," returned Sir Adam, with a half laugh.

"I believe that the man is keeping you here," continued Karl; "that you dare not go away unless he lifts his finger."

"Naturally he is anxious for my safety, Karl; for the sake of his own self-interest."

"Precisely so. He would rather keep you here in danger than suffer you to escape to freedom. Do you know anything of his antecedents?"

"Nothing. For all I can tell, as to who or what the man was before that night he rescued me, he might have dropped from the moon."

"And since then it has been the business of your life to conciliate him, Adam!"

"What would you? The man knows that I am Adam Andinnian: and, knowing it, he holds a sword over me. Is it worth my while, or not, to try to keep it from

falling?"

Karl sighed deeply. He saw all the intricacies of the case; and, what was worse, he saw no outlet from them. If only he could but feel that his brother was passably safe at the Maze, he would have been less uneasy: but a secret instinct, that he surely believed was a prevision, warned him of danger.

"I wish, with my whole heart, Adam, that you had never come here!" broke from him, in his dire perplexity, the reiterated cry.

Sir Adam threw down the "Art Journal," and turned to confront his brother, leaning a little forward in his chair. His face was flushed, his voice took a tone of passion, even his beautiful teeth looked stern.

"Karl, did you ever try to realize to yourself all the horrors of my position at Portland!" he asked. "I, a gentleman, with a gentleman's habits--and a man to whom freedom of will and of limb was as the very, essence of life--was condemned for ever to a manacled confinement; to mate with felons; to be pointed at as one of a herd of convict labourers. A felon myself, you will perhaps say; but I do not recognize it. Had I been guilty of aught disgraceful? No. What I did, in shooting that man Scott, I was perfectly justified in doing, after my solemn warning to him. Remember, it was my wife he insulted that evening; not simply, as the world was allowed to believe, my young neighbour, Miss Rose Turner. What should *you* feel if some low reprobate seized your wife, Lucy, before your eyes, and pressed his foul kisses on her innocent face! Your blood would be up, I take it."

"Adam, since I knew she was your wife I have almost held you justified."

"To go on. Can you realize a *tithe* of what it was for me on Portland Island!"

"From the time you went there until I heard of your death, I never ceased to realize it in my own soul night or day."

"Karl, I believe it. I remember what your sensitively tender nature always used to be. And we did care for each other, old fellow."

"Ay, and *do*."

"Well, compare that life I escaped from with this that I lead now. Here I am,

so to say, a free man, at perfect liberty within these small bounds, my wife for my companion, my table at my command, master on my own estate, the revenues of which I divide with you that you may be the baronet to the world and keep up Foxwood. As fate has fallen, Karl, I could not be so happy anywhere as here."

"I know; I know. But it is the risk I fear."

"There must be some risk everywhere."

"Answer me truly--as you would to your own heart, Adam. If by some miracle you could be transported safely to a far-off land, would you not feel more secure there than here?"

"Yes. And for Rose's sake I would go if I could; she is just as apprehensive here as you. But I can't. When Smith says I must not attempt to get away, he is right. I feel that he is. The man's interest lies in my safety, and I believe he thinks my safety lies in my remaining here."

"Just so," said Karl. "Smith is the stumbling-block."

"Well, he holds the reins, you see. It is no use trying to fight against his opinion: besides, I think he is right. However that may be, I can't afford to come to a rupture with him. Good heavens, Karl! fancy his sending me back in irons to Portland! That will never be, however," added Sir Adam more calmly, "for I would not be taken alive. I or my capturers should fall."

He put his hand inside his white waistcoat, and showed the end of a pistol. One he kept close to him night and day, always loaded, always ready. Karl's arguments failed him, one by one. As he was helpless to combat the decisions of his wife, so was he helpless here.

And so the interview ended in nothing, just as others had ended.

A black cloud, threatening thunder, had come over the summer's night when Karl went out. It did not seem to him half so dark as the trouble at his own heart. He would have given his life freely, to purchase security for his brother.

END OF VOL. I.

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