DANIEL DERONDA
By George Eliot

Let thy chief terror be of thine own soul:
There, 'mid the throng of hurrying desires
That trample on the dead to seize their spoil,
Lurks vengeance, footless, irresistible
As exhalations laden with slow death,
And o'er the fairest troop of captured joys
Breathes pallid pestilence.

BOOK I — THE SPOILED CHILD

CHAPTER I

Men can do nothing without the make-believe of a beginning. Even science, the strict measurer, is obliged to start with a make-believe unit, and must fix on a point in the stars' unceasing journey when his sidereal clock shall pretend that time is at Nought. His

less accurate grandmother Poetry has always been understood to start in the middle; but on reflection it appears that her proceeding is not very different from his; since Science, too, reckons backward as well as forward, divides his unit into billions, and with his clock-finger at Nought really sets off *in medias res* . No retrospect will take us to the true beginning; and whether our prologue be in heaven or on earth, it is but a fraction of that all-presupposing fact with which our story sets out.

Was she beautiful or not beautiful? and what was the secret of form or expression which gave the dynamic quality to her glance? Was the good or the evil genius dominant in those beams? Probably the evil; else why was the effect that of unrest rather than of undisturbed charm? Why was the wish to look again felt as coercion and not as a longing in which the whole being consents?

She who raised these questions in Daniel Deronda's mind was occupied in gambling: not in the open air under a southern sky, tossing coppers on a ruined wall, with rags about her limbs; but in one of those splendid resorts which the enlightenment of ages has prepared for the same species of pleasure at a heavy cost of gilt mouldings, dark-toned color and chubby nudities, all correspondingly heavy — forming a suitable condenser for human breath belonging, in great

part, to the highest fashion, and not easily procurable to be breathed in elsewhere in the like proportion, at least by persons of little fashion.

It was near four o'clock on a September day, so that the atmosphere was well-brewed to a visible haze. There was deep stillness, broken only by a light rattle, a light chink, a small sweeping sound, and an occasional monotone in French, such as might be expected to issue from an ingeniously constructed automaton. Round two long tables were gathered two serried crowds of human beings, all save one having their faces and attention bent on the tables. The one exception was a melancholy little boy, with his knees and calves simply in their natural clothing of epidermis, but for the rest of his person in a fancy dress. He alone had his face turned toward the doorway, and fixing on it the blank gaze of a bedizened child stationed as a masquerading advertisement on the platform of an itinerant show, stood close behind a lady deeply engaged at the roulette-table.

About this table fifty or sixty persons were assembled, many in the outer rows, where there was occasionally a deposit of new-comers, being mere spectators, only that one of them, usually a woman, might now and then be observed putting down a five-franc with a simpering air, just to see what the passion of gambling really was. Those who were taking their pleasure at a higher strength, and were absorbed in

play, showed very distant varieties of European type: Livonian and Spanish, Graeco-Italian and miscellaneous German, English aristocratic and English plebeian. Here certainly was a striking admission of human equality. The white bejewelled fingers of an English countess were very near touching a bony, yellow, crab-like hand stretching a bared wrist to clutch a heap of coin — a hand easy to sort with the square, gaunt face, deep-set eyes, grizzled eyebrows, and ill-combed scanty hair which seemed a slight metamorphosis of the vulture. And where else would her ladyship have graciously consented to sit by that dry-lipped feminine figure prematurely old, withered after short bloom like her artificial flowers, holding a shabby velvet reticule before her, and occasionally putting in her mouth the point with which she pricked her card? There too, very near the fair countess, was a respectable London tradesman, blonde and soft-handed, his sleek hair scrupulously parted behind and before, conscious of circulars addressed to the nobility and gentry, whose distinguished patronage enabled him to take his holidays fashionably, and to a certain extent in their distinguished company. Not his the gambler's passion that nullifies appetite, but a well-fed leisure, which, in the intervals of winning money in business and spending it showily, sees no better resource than winning money in play and spending it yet more showily — reflecting always that Providence had never

manifested any disapprobation of his amusement, and dispassionate enough to leave off if the sweetness of winning much and seeing others lose had turned to the sourness of losing much and seeing others win. For the vice of gambling lay in losing money at it. In his bearing there might be something of the tradesman, but in his pleasures he was fit to rank with the owners of the oldest titles. Standing close to his chair was a handsome Italian, calm, statuesque, reaching across him to place the first pile of napoleons from a new bagful just brought him by an envoy with a scrolled mustache. The pile was in half a minute pushed over to an old bewigged woman with eye-glasses pinching her nose. There was a slight gleam, a faint mumbling smile about the lips of the old woman; but the statuesque Italian remained impassive, and — probably secure in an infallible system which placed his foot on the neck of chance — immediately prepared a new pile. So did a man with the air of an emaciated beau or worn-out libertine, who looked at life through one eye-glass, and held out his hand tremulously when he asked for change. It could surely be no severity of system, but rather some dream of white crows, or the induction that the eighth of the month was lucky, which inspired the fierce yet tottering impulsiveness of his play.

But, while every single player differed markedly from every other, there was a certain uniform negativeness of expression which had the effect of a

mask — as if they had all eaten of some root that for the time compelled the brains of each to the same narrow monotony of action.

Deronda's first thought when his eyes fell on this scene of dull, gas-poisoned absorption, was that the gambling of Spanish shepherd-boys had seemed to him more enviable — so far Rousseau might be justified in maintaining that art and science had done a poor service to mankind. But suddenly he felt the moment become dramatic. His attention was arrested by a young lady who, standing at an angle not far from him, was the last to whom his eyes traveled. She was bending and speaking English to a middle-aged lady seated at play beside her: but the next instant she returned to her play, and showed the full height of a graceful figure, with a face which might possibly be looked at without admiration, but could hardly be passed with indifference.

The inward debate which she raised in Deronda gave to his eyes a growing expression of scrutiny, tending farther and farther away from the glow of mingled undefined sensibilities forming admiration. At one moment they followed the movements of the figure, of the arms and hands, as this problematic sylph bent forward to deposit her stake with an air of firm choice; and the next they returned to the face which, at present unaffected by beholders, was directed steadily toward the game. The sylph was a winner; and as her

taper fingers, delicately gloved in pale-gray, were adjusting the coins which had been pushed toward her in order to pass them back again to the winning point, she looked round her with a survey too markedly cold and neutral not to have in it a little of that nature which we call art concealing an inward exultation.

But in the course of that survey her eyes met Deronda's, and instead of averting them as she would have desired to do, she was unpleasantly conscious that they were arrested — how long? The darting sense that he was measuring her and looking down on her as an inferior, that he was of different quality from the human dross around her, that he felt himself in a region outside and above her, and was examining her as a specimen of a lower order, roused a tingling resentment which stretched the moment with conflict. It did not bring the blood to her cheeks, but it sent it away from her lips. She controlled herself by the help of an inward defiance, and without other sign of emotion than this lip-paleness turned to her play. But Deronda's gaze seemed to have acted as an evil eye. Her stake was gone. No matter; she had been winning ever since she took to roulette with a few napoleons at command, and had a considerable reserve. She had begun to believe in her luck, others had begun to believe in it: she had visions of being followed by a *cortège* who would worship her as a goddess of luck and watch her play as a directing augury. Such things had been known of

male gamblers; why should not a woman have a like supremacy? Her friend and chaperon who had not wished her to play at first was beginning to approve, only administering the prudent advice to stop at the right moment and carry money back to England — advice to which Gwendolen had replied that she cared for the excitement of play, not the winnings. On that supposition the present moment ought to have made the flood-tide in her eager experience of gambling. Yet, when her next stake was swept away, she felt the orbits of her eyes getting hot, and the certainty she had (without looking) of that man still watching her was something like a pressure which begins to be torturing. The more reason to her why she should not flinch, but go on playing as if she were indifferent to loss or gain. Her friend touched her elbow and proposed that they should quit the table. For reply Gwendolen put ten louis on the same spot: she was in that mood of defiance in which the mind loses sight of any end beyond the satisfaction of enraged resistance; and with the puerile stupidity of a dominant impulse includes luck among its objects of defiance. Since she was not winning strikingly, the next best thing was to lose strikingly. She controlled her muscles, and showed no tremor of mouth or hands. Each time her stake was swept off she doubled it. Many were now watching her, but the sole observation she was conscious of was Deronda's, who, though she never looked toward him, she was sure had

not moved away. Such a drama takes no long while to play out: development and catastrophe can often be measured by nothing clumsier than the moment-hand. "Faites votre jeu, mesdames et messieurs," said the automatic voice of destiny from between the mustache and imperial of the croupier: and Gwendolen's arm was stretched to deposit her last poor heap of napoleons. "Le jeu ne va plus," said destiny. And in five seconds Gwendolen turned from the table, but turned resolutely with her face toward Deronda and looked at him. There was a smile of irony in his eyes as their glances met; but it was at least better that he should have kept his attention fixed on her than that he disregarded her as one of an insect swarm who had no individual physiognomy. Besides, in spite of his superciliousness and irony, it was difficult to believe that he did not admire her spirit as well as her person: he was young, handsome, distinguished in appearance — not one of these ridiculous and dowdy Philistines who thought it incumbent on them to blight the gaming-table with a sour look of protest as they passed by it. The general conviction that we are admirable does not easily give way before a single negative; rather when any of Vanity's large family, male or female, find their performance received coldly, they are apt to believe that a little more of it will win over the unaccountable dissident. In Gwendolen's habits of mind it had been taken for granted that she knew what was admirable

and that she herself was admired. This basis of her thinking had received a disagreeable concussion, and reeled a little, but was not easily to be overthrown.

In the evening the same room was more stiflingly heated, was brilliant with gas and with the costumes of ladies who floated their trains along it or were seated on the ottomans.

The Nereid in sea-green robes and silver ornaments, with a pale sea-green feather fastened in silver falling backward over her green hat and light brown hair, was Gwendolen Harleth. She was under the wing, or rather soared by the shoulder, of the lady who had sat by her at the roulette-table; and with them was a gentleman with a white mustache and clipped hair: solid-browed, stiff and German. They were walking about or standing to chat with acquaintances, and Gwendolen was much observed by the seated groups.

"A striking girl — that Miss Harleth — unlike others."

"Yes, she has got herself up as a sort of serpent now — all green and silver, and winds her neck about a little more than usual."

"Oh, she must always be doing something extraordinary. She is that kind of girl, I fancy. Do you think her pretty, Mr. Vandernoodt?"

"Very. A man might risk hanging for her — I mean a fool might."

"You like a *nez retroussé* , then, and long narrow

eyes?"

"When they go with such an *ensemble* ."

"The *ensemble du serpent* ?"

"If you will. Woman was tempted by a serpent; why not man?"

"She is certainly very graceful; but she wants a tinge of color in her cheeks. It is a sort of Lamia beauty she has."

"On the contrary, I think her complexion one of her chief charms. It is a warm paleness; it looks thoroughly healthy. And that delicate nose with its gradual little upward curve is distracting. And then her mouth — there never was a prettier mouth, the lips curled backward so finely, eh, Mackworth?"

"Think so? I cannot endure that sort of mouth. It looks so self-complacent, as if it knew its own beauty — the curves are too immovable. I like a mouth that trembles more."

"For my part, I think her odious," said a dowager. "It is wonderful what unpleasant girls get into vogue. Who are these Langens? Does anybody know them?"

"They are quite *comme il faut* . I have dined with them several times at the *Russie* . The baroness is English. Miss Harleth calls her cousin. The girl herself is thoroughly well-bred, and as clever as possible."

"Dear me! and the baron?".

"A very good furniture picture."

"Your baroness is always at the roulette-table,"

said Mackworth. "I fancy she has taught the girl to gamble."

"Oh, the old woman plays a very sober game; drops a ten-franc piece here and there. The girl is more headlong. But it is only a freak."

"I hear she has lost all her winnings to-day. Are they rich? Who knows?"

"Ah, who knows? Who knows that about anybody?" said Mr. Vandernoodt, moving off to join the Langens.

The remark that Gwendolen wound her neck about more than usual this evening was true. But it was not that she might carry out the serpent idea more completely: it was that she watched for any chance of seeing Deronda, so that she might inquire about this stranger, under whose measuring gaze she was still wincing. At last her opportunity came.

"Mr. Vandernoodt, you know everybody," said Gwendolen, not too eagerly, rather with a certain languor of utterance which she sometimes gave to her clear soprano. "Who is that near the door?"

"There are half a dozen near the door. Do you mean that old Adonis in the George the Fourth wig?"

"No, no; the dark-haired young man on the right with the dreadful expression."

"Dreadful, do you call it? I think he is an uncommonly fine fellow."

"But who is he?"

"He is lately come to our hotel with Sir Hugo Mallinger."

"Sir Hugo Mallinger?"

"Yes. Do you know him?"

"No." (Gwendolen colored slightly.) "He has a place near us, but he never comes to it. What did you say was the name of that gentleman near the door?"

"Deronda — Mr. Deronda."

"What a delightful name! Is he an Englishman?"

"Yes. He is reported to be rather closely related to the baronet. You are interested in him?"

"Yes. I think he is not like young men in general."

"And you don't admire young men in general?"

"Not in the least. I always know what they will say. I can't at all guess what this Mr. Deronda would say. What *does* he say?"

"Nothing, chiefly. I sat with his party for a good hour last night on the terrace, and he never spoke — and was not smoking either. He looked bored."

"Another reason why I should like to know him. I am always bored."

"I should think he would be charmed to have an introduction. Shall I bring it about? Will you allow it, baroness?"

"Why not? — since he is related to Sir Hugo Mallinger. It is a new *rôle* of yours, Gwendolen, to be always bored," continued Madame von Langen, when

Mr. Vandernoodt had moved away. "Until now you have always seemed eager about something from morning till night."

"That is just because I am bored to death. If I am to leave off play I must break my arm or my collar-bone. I must make something happen; unless you will go into Switzerland and take me up the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps this Mr. Deronda's acquaintance will do instead of the Matterhorn."

"Perhaps."

But Gwendolen did not make Deronda's acquaintance on this occasion. Mr. Vandernoodt did not succeed in bringing him up to her that evening, and when she re-entered her own room she found a letter recalling her home.

CHAPTER II

This man contrives a secret 'twixt us two,
That he may quell me with his meeting eyes
Like one who quells a lioness at bay.

This was the letter Gwendolen found on her table —

DEAREST CHILD. — I have been expecting to

hear from you for a week. In your last you said the Langens thought of leaving Leubronn and going to Baden. How could you be so thoughtless as to leave me in uncertainty about your address? I am in the greatest anxiety lest this should not reach you. In any case, you were to come home at the end of September, and I must now entreat you to return as quickly as possible, for if you spent all your money it would be out of my power to send you any more, and you must not borrow of the Langens, for I could not repay them. This is the sad truth, my child — I wish I could prepare you for it better — but a dreadful calamity has befallen us all. You know nothing about business and will not understand it; but Grapnell & Co. have failed for a million, and we are totally ruined — your aunt Gascoigne as well as I, only that your uncle has his benefice, so that by putting down their carriage and getting interest for the boys, the family can go on. All the property our poor father saved for us goes to pay the liabilities. There is nothing I can call my own. It is better you should know this at once, though it rends my heart to have to tell it you. Of course we cannot help thinking what a pity it was that you went away just when you did. But I shall never reproach you, my dear child; I would save you from all trouble if I could. On your way home you will have time to prepare yourself for the change you will find. We shall perhaps leave Offendene at once, for we hope that Mr. Haynes, who

wanted it before, may be ready to take it off my hands. Of course we cannot go to the rectory — there is not a corner there to spare. We must get some hut or other to shelter us, and we must live on your uncle Gascoigne's charity, until I see what else can be done. I shall not be able to pay the debts to the tradesmen besides the servants' wages. Summon up your fortitude, my dear child; we must resign ourselves to God's will. But it is hard to resign one's self to Mr. Lassman's wicked recklessness, which they say was the cause of the failure. Your poor sisters can only cry with me and give me no help. If you were once here, there might be a break in the cloud — I always feel it impossible that you can have been meant for poverty. If the Langens wish to remain abroad, perhaps you can put yourself under some one else's care for the journey. But come as soon as you can to your afflicted and loving mamma,

FANNY DAVILOW.

The first effect of this letter on Gwendolen was half-stupefying. The implicit confidence that her destiny must be one of luxurious ease, where any trouble that occurred would be well clad and provided for, had been stronger in her own mind than in her mamma's, being fed there by her youthful blood and that sense of superior claims which made a large part of her consciousness. It was almost as difficult for her to believe suddenly that her position had become one of

poverty and of humiliating dependence, as it would have been to get into the strong current of her blooming life the chill sense that her death would really come. She stood motionless for a few minutes, then tossed off her hat and automatically looked in the glass. The coils of her smooth light-brown hair were still in order perfect enough for a ball-room; and as on other nights, Gwendolen might have looked lingeringly at herself for pleasure (surely an allowable indulgence); but now she took no conscious note of her reflected beauty, and simply stared right before her as if she had been jarred by a hateful sound and was waiting for any sign of its cause. By-and-by she threw herself in the corner of the red velvet sofa, took up the letter again and read it twice deliberately, letting it at last fall on the ground, while she rested her clasped hands on her lap and sat perfectly still, shedding no tears. Her impulse was to survey and resist the situation rather than to wail over it. There was no inward exclamation of "Poor mamma!" Her mamma had never seemed to get much enjoyment out of life, and if Gwendolen had been at this moment disposed to feel pity she would have bestowed it on herself — for was she not naturally and rightfully the chief object of her mamma's anxiety too? But it was anger, it was resistance that possessed her; it was bitter vexation that she had lost her gains at roulette, whereas if her luck had continued through this one day she would have had a handsome sum to carry

home, or she might have gone on playing and won enough to support them all. Even now was it not possible? She had only four napoleons left in her purse, but she possessed some ornaments which she could sell: a practice so common in stylish society at German baths that there was no need to be ashamed of it; and even if she had not received her mamma's letter, she would probably have decided to get money for an Etruscan necklace which she happened not to have been wearing since her arrival; nay, she might have done so with an agreeable sense that she was living with some intensity and escaping humdrum. With ten louis at her disposal and a return of her former luck, which seemed probable, what could she do better than go on playing for a few days? If her friends at home disapproved of the way in which she got the money, as they certainly would, still the money would be there. Gwendolen's imagination dwelt on this course and created agreeable consequences, but not with unbroken confidence and rising certainty as it would have done if she had been touched with the gambler's mania. She had gone to the roulette-table not because of passion, but in search of it: her mind was still sanely capable of picturing balanced probabilities, and while the chance of winning allured her, the chance of losing thrust itself on her with alternate strength and made a vision from which her pride sank sensitively. For she was resolved not to tell the Langens that any misfortune had befallen her

family, or to make herself in any way indebted to their compassion; and if she were to part with her jewelry to any observable extent, they would interfere by inquiries and remonstrances. The course that held the least risk of intolerable annoyance was to raise money on her necklace early in the morning, tell the Langens that her mother desired her immediate return without giving a reason, and take the train for Brussels that evening. She had no maid with her, and the Langens might make difficulties about her returning home, but her will was peremptory.

Instead of going to bed she made as brilliant a light as she could and began to pack, working diligently, though all the while visited by the scenes that might take place on the coming day — now by the tiresome explanations and farewells, and the whirling journey toward a changed home, now by the alternative of staying just another day and standing again at the roulette-table. But always in this latter scene there was the presence of that Deronda, watching her with exasperating irony, and — the two keen experiences were inevitably revived together — beholding her again forsaken by luck. This importunate image certainly helped to sway her resolve on the side of immediate departure, and to urge her packing to the point which would make a change of mind inconvenient. It had struck twelve when she came into her room, and by the time she was assuring herself that she had left out only

what was necessary, the faint dawn was stealing through the white blinds and dulling her candles. What was the use of going to bed? Her cold bath was refreshment enough, and she saw that a slight trace of fatigue about the eyes only made her look the more interesting. Before six o'clock she was completely equipped in her gray traveling dress even to her felt hat, for she meant to walk out as soon as she could count on seeing other ladies on their way to the springs. And happening to be seated sideways before the long strip of mirror between her two windows she turned to look at herself, leaning her elbow on the back of the chair in an attitude that might have been chosen for her portrait. It is possible to have a strong self-love without any self-satisfaction, rather with a self-discontent which is the more intense because one's own little core of egoistic sensibility is a supreme care; but Gwendolen knew nothing of such inward strife. She had a *naïve* delight in her fortunate self, which any but the harshest saintliness will have some indulgence for in a girl who had every day seen a pleasant reflection of that self in her friends' flattery as well as in the looking-glass. And even in this beginning of troubles, while for lack of anything else to do she sat gazing at her image in the growing light, her face gathered a complacency gradual as the cheerfulness of the morning. Her beautiful lips curled into a more and more decided smile, till at last she took off her hat, leaned forward and kissed the cold

glass which had looked so warm. How could she believe in sorrow? If it attacked her, she felt the force to crush it, to defy it, or run away from it, as she had done already. Anything seemed more possible than that she could go on bearing miseries, great or small.

Madame von Langen never went out before breakfast, so that Gwendolen could safely end her early walk by taking her way homeward through the Obere Strasse in which was the needed shop, sure to be open after seven. At that hour any observers whom she minded would be either on their walks in the region of the springs, or would be still in their bedrooms; but certainly there was one grand hotel, the *Czarina* from which eyes might follow her up to Mr. Wiener's door. This was a chance to be risked: might she not be going in to buy something which had struck her fancy? This implicit falsehood passed through her mind as she remembered that the *Czarina* was Deronda's hotel; but she was then already far up the Obere Strasse, and she walked on with her usual floating movement, every line in her figure and drapery falling in gentle curves attractive to all eyes except those which discerned in them too close a resemblance to the serpent, and objected to the revival of serpent-worship. She looked neither to the right hand nor to the left, and transacted her business in the shop with a coolness which gave little Mr. Weiner nothing to remark except her proud grace of manner, and the superior size and quality of

the three central turquoises in the necklace she offered him. They had belonged to a chain once her father's: but she had never known her father; and the necklace was in all respects the ornament she could most conveniently part with. Who supposes that it is an impossible contradiction to be superstitious and rationalizing at the same time? Roulette encourages a romantic superstition as to the chances of the game, and the most prosaic rationalism as to human sentiments which stand in the way of raising needful money. Gwendolen's dominant regret was that after all she had only nine louis to add to the four in her purse: these Jew dealers were so unscrupulous in taking advantage of Christians unfortunate at play! But she was the Langens' guest in their hired apartment, and had nothing to pay there: thirteen louis would do more than take her home; even if she determined on risking three, the remaining ten would more than suffice, since she meant to travel right on, day and night. As she turned homeward, nay, entered and seated herself in the *salon* to await her friends and breakfast, she still wavered as to her immediate departure, or rather she had concluded to tell the Langens simply that she had had a letter from her mamma desiring her return, and to leave it still undecided when she should start. It was already the usual breakfast-time, and hearing some one enter as she was leaning back rather tired and hungry with her eyes shut, she rose expecting to see one or other of the

Langens — the words which might determine her lingering at least another day, ready-formed to pass her lips. But it was the servant bringing in a small packet for Miss Harleth, which had at that moment been left at the door. Gwendolen took it in her hand and immediately hurried into her own room. She looked paler and more agitated than when she had first read her mamma's letter. Something — she never quite knew what — revealed to her before she opened the packet that it contained the necklace she had just parted with. Underneath the paper it was wrapped in a cambric handkerchief, and within this was a scrap of torn-off note-paper, on which was written with a pencil, in clear but rapid handwriting—"*A stranger who has found Miss Harleth's necklace returns it to her with the hope that she will not again risk the loss of it.* "

Gwendolen reddened with the vexation of wounded pride. A large corner of the handkerchief seemed to have been recklessly torn off to get rid of a mark; but she at once believed in the first image of "the stranger" that presented itself to her mind. It was Deronda; he must have seen her go into the shop; he must have gone in immediately after and repurchased the necklace. He had taken an unpardonable liberty, and had dared to place her in a thoroughly hateful position. What could she do? — Not, assuredly, act on her conviction that it was he who had sent her the necklace and straightway send it back to him: that would be to

face the possibility that she had been mistaken; nay, even if the "stranger" were he and no other, it would be something too gross for her to let him know that she had divined this, and to meet him again with that recognition in their minds. He knew very well that he was entangling her in helpless humiliation: it was another way of smiling at her ironically, and taking the air of a supercilious mentor. Gwendolen felt the bitter tears of mortification rising and rolling down her cheeks. No one had ever before dared to treat her with irony and contempt. One thing was clear: she must carry out her resolution to quit this place at once; it was impossible for her to reappear in the public *salon* , still less stand at the gaming-table with the risk of seeing Deronda. Now came an importunate knock at the door: breakfast was ready. Gwendolen with a passionate movement thrust necklace, cambric, scrap of paper, and all into her *nécessaire* , pressed her handkerchief against her face, and after pausing a minute or two to summon back her proud self-control, went to join her friends. Such signs of tears and fatigue as were left seemed accordant enough with the account she at once gave of her having sat up to do her packing, instead of waiting for help from her friend's maid. There was much protestation, as she had expected, against her traveling alone, but she persisted in refusing any arrangements for companionship. She would be put into the ladies' compartment and go right on. She could rest

exceedingly well in the train, and was afraid of nothing.

In this way it happened that Gwendolen never reappeared at the roulette-table, but that Thursday evening left Leubronn for Brussels, and on Saturday morning arrived at Offendene, the home to which she and her family were soon to say a last good-bye.

CHAPTER III

"Let no flower of the spring pass by us; let us crown ourselves with rosebuds before they be withered."

— BOOK OF WISDOM.

Pity that Offendene was not the home of Miss Harleth's childhood, or endeared to her by family memories! A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of earth, for the labors men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amid the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, and — kindly acquaintance with all neighbors, even to the dogs and donkeys, may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood. At five years old, mortals are not prepared to be citizens of the world, to be stimulated by abstract nouns, to soar above

preference into impartiality; and that prejudice in favor of milk with which we blindly begin, is a type of the way body and soul must get nourished at least for a time. The best introduction to astronomy is to think of the nightly heavens as a little lot of stars belonging to one's own homestead.

But this blessed persistence in which affection can take root had been wanting in Gwendolen's life. It was only a year before her recall from Leubronn that Offendene had been chosen as her mamma's home, simply for its nearness to Pennicote Rectory, and that Mrs. Davilow, Gwendolen, and her four half-sisters (the governess and the maid following in another vehicle) had been driven along the avenue for the first time, on a late October afternoon when the rooks were crawing loudly above them, and the yellow elm-leaves were whirling.

The season suited the aspect of the old oblong red-brick house, rather too anxiously ornamented with stone at every line, not excepting the double row of narrow windows and the large square portico. The stone encouraged a greenish lichen, the brick a powdery gray, so that though the building was rigidly rectangular there was no harshness in the physiognomy which it turned to the three avenues cut east, west and south in the hundred yards' breadth of old plantation encircling the immediate grounds. One would have liked the house to have been lifted on a knoll, so as to

look beyond its own little domain to the long thatched roofs of the distant villages, the church towers, the scattered homesteads, the gradual rise of surging woods, and the green breadths of undulating park which made the beautiful face of the earth in that part of Wessex. But though standing thus behind a screen amid flat pastures, it had on one side a glimpse of the wider world in the lofty curves of the chalk downs, grand steadfast forms played over by the changing days.

The house was but just large enough to be called a mansion, and was moderately rented, having no manor attached to it, and being rather difficult to let with its sombre furniture and faded upholstery. But inside and outside it was what no beholder could suppose to be inhabited by retired trades-people: a certainty which was worth many conveniences to tenants who not only had the taste that shrinks from new finery, but also were in that border-territory of rank where annexation is a burning topic: and to take up her abode in a house which had once sufficed for dowager countesses gave a perceptible tinge to Mrs. Davilow's satisfaction in having an establishment of her own. This, rather mysteriously to Gwendolen, appeared suddenly possible on the death of her step-father, Captain Davilow, who had for the last nine years joined his family only in a brief and fitful manner, enough to reconcile them to his long absences; but she cared

much more for the fact than for the explanation. All her prospects had become more agreeable in consequence. She had disliked their former way of life, roving from one foreign watering-place or Parisian apartment to another, always feeling new antipathies to new suites of hired furniture, and meeting new people under conditions which made her appear of little importance; and the variation of having passed two years at a showy school, where, on all occasions of display, she had been put foremost, had only deepened her sense that so exceptional a person as herself could hardly remain in ordinary circumstances or in a social position less than advantageous. Any fear of this latter evil was banished now that her mamma was to have an establishment; for on the point of birth Gwendolen was quite easy. She had no notion how her maternal grandfather got the fortune inherited by his two daughters; but he had been a West Indian — which seemed to exclude further question; and she knew that her father's family was so high as to take no notice of her mamma, who nevertheless preserved with much pride the miniature of a Lady Molly in that connection. She would probably have known much more about her father but for a little incident which happened when she was twelve years old. Mrs. Davilow had brought out, as she did only at wide intervals, various memorials of her first husband, and while showing his miniature to Gwendolen recalled with a fervor which seemed to

count on a peculiar filial sympathy, the fact that dear papa had died when his little daughter was in long clothes. Gwendolen, immediately thinking of the unlovable step-father whom she had been acquainted with the greater part of her life while her frocks were short, said—

"Why did you marry again, mamma? It would have been nicer if you had not."

Mrs. Davilow colored deeply, a slight convulsive movement passed over her face, and straightway shutting up the memorials she said, with a violence quite unusual in her—

"You have no feeling, child!"

Gwendolen, who was fond of her mamma, felt hurt and ashamed, and had never since dared to ask a question about her father.

This was not the only instance in which she had brought on herself the pain of some filial compunction. It was always arranged, when possible, that she should have a small bed in her mamma's room; for Mrs. Davilow's motherly tenderness clung chiefly to her eldest girl, who had been born in her happier time. One night under an attack of pain she found that the specific regularly placed by her bedside had been forgotten, and begged Gwendolen to get out of bed and reach it for her. That healthy young lady, snug and warm as a rosy infant in her little couch, objected to step out into the cold, and lying perfectly still, grumbling a refusal. Mrs.

Davilow went without the medicine and never reproached her daughter; but the next day Gwendolen was keenly conscious of what must be in her mamma's mind, and tried to make amends by caresses which cost her no effort. Having always been the pet and pride of the household, waited on by mother, sisters, governess and maids, as if she had been a princess in exile, she naturally found it difficult to think her own pleasure less important than others made it, and when it was positively thwarted felt an astonished resentment apt, in her cruder days, to vent itself in one of those passionate acts which look like a contradiction of habitual tendencies. Though never even as a child thoughtlessly cruel, nay delighting to rescue drowning insects and watch their recovery, there was a disagreeable silent remembrance of her having strangled her sister's canary-bird in a final fit of exasperation at its shrill singing which had again and again jarringly interrupted her own. She had taken pains to buy a white mouse for her sister in retribution, and though inwardly excusing herself on the ground of a peculiar sensitiveness which was a mark of her general superiority, the thought of that infelonious murder had always made her wince. Gwendolen's nature was not remorseless, but she liked to make her penances easy, and now that she was twenty and more, some of her native force had turned into a self-control by which she guarded herself from penitential humiliation. There was more show of fire

and will in her than ever, but there was more calculation underneath it.

On this day of arrival at Offendene, which not even Mrs. Davilow had seen before — the place having been taken for her by her brother-in-law, Mr. Gascoigne — when all had got down from the carriage, and were standing under the porch in front of the open door, so that they could have a general view of the place and a glimpse of the stone hall and staircase hung with sombre pictures, but enlivened by a bright wood fire, no one spoke; mamma, the four sisters and the governess all looked at Gwendolen, as if their feelings depended entirely on her decision. Of the girls, from Alice in her sixteenth year to Isabel in her tenth, hardly anything could be said on a first view, but that they were girlish, and that their black dresses were getting shabby. Miss Merry was elderly and altogether neutral in expression. Mrs. Davilow's worn beauty seemed the more pathetic for the look of entire appeal which she cast at Gwendolen, who was glancing round at the house, the landscape and the entrance hall with an air of rapid judgment. Imagine a young race-horse in the paddock among untrimmed ponies and patient hacks.

"Well, dear, what do you think of the place," said Mrs. Davilow at last, in a gentle, deprecatory tone.

"I think it is charming," said Gwendolen, quickly. "A romantic place; anything delightful may happen in it; it would be a good background for anything. No one

need be ashamed of living here."

"There is certainly nothing common about it."

"Oh, it would do for fallen royalty or any sort of grand poverty. We ought properly to have been living in splendor, and have come down to this. It would have been as romantic as could be. But I thought my uncle and aunt Gascoigne would be here to meet us, and my cousin Anna," added Gwendolen, her tone changed to sharp surprise.

"We are early," said Mrs. Davilow, and entering the hall, she said to the housekeeper who came forward, "You expect Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne?"

"Yes, madam; they were here yesterday to give particular orders about the fires and the dinner. But as to fires, I've had 'em in all the rooms for the last week, and everything is well aired. I could wish some of the furniture paid better for all the cleaning it's had, but I *think* you'll see the brasses have been done justice to. I *think* when Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne come, they'll tell you nothing has been neglected. They'll be here at five, for certain."

This satisfied Gwendolen, who was not prepared to have their arrival treated with indifference; and after tripping a little way up the matted stone staircase to take a survey there, she tripped down again, and followed by all the girls looked into each of the rooms opening from the hall — the dining-room all dark oak and worn red satin damask, with a copy of snarling,

worrying dogs from Snyders over the side-board, and a Christ breaking bread over the mantel-piece; the library with a general aspect and smell of old brown-leather; and lastly, the drawing-room, which was entered through a small antechamber crowded with venerable knick-knacks.

"Mamma, mamma, pray come here!" said Gwendolen, Mrs. Davilow having followed slowly in talk with the housekeeper. "Here is an organ. I will be Saint Cecilia: some one shall paint me as Saint Cecilia. Jocosa (this was her name for Miss Merry), let down my hair. See, mamma?"

She had thrown off her hat and gloves, and seated herself before the organ in an admirable pose, looking upward; while the submissive and sad Jocosa took out the one comb which fastened the coil of hair, and then shook out the mass till it fell in a smooth light-brown stream far below its owner's slim waist.

Mrs. Davilow smiled and said, "A charming picture, my dear!" not indifferent to the display of her pet, even in the presence of a housekeeper. Gwendolen rose and laughed with delight. All this seemed quite to the purpose on entering a new house which was so excellent a background.

"What a queer, quaint, picturesque room!" she went on, looking about her. "I like these old embroidered chairs, and the garlands on the wainscot, and the pictures that may be anything. That one with

the ribs — nothing but ribs and darkness — I should think that is Spanish, mamma."

"Oh, Gwendolen!" said the small Isabel, in a tone of astonishment, while she held open a hinged panel of the wainscot at the other end of the room.

Every one, Gwendolen first, went to look. The opened panel had disclosed the picture of an upturned dead face, from which an obscure figure seemed to be fleeing with outstretched arms. "How horrible!" said Mrs. Davilow, with a look of mere disgust; but Gwendolen shuddered silently, and Isabel, a plain and altogether inconvenient child with an alarming memory, said—

"You will never stay in this room by yourself, Gwendolen."

"How dare you open things which were meant to be shut up, you perverse little creature?" said Gwendolen, in her angriest tone. Then snatching the panel out of the hand of the culprit, she closed it hastily, saying, "There is a lock — where is the key? Let the key be found, or else let one be made, and let nobody open it again; or rather, let the key be brought to me."

At this command to everybody in general Gwendolen turned with a face which was flushed in reaction from her chill shudder, and said, "Let us go up to our own room, mamma."

The housekeeper on searching found the key in

the drawer of the cabinet close by the panel, and presently handed it to Bugle, the lady's-maid, telling her significantly to give it to her Royal Highness.

"I don't know what you mean, Mrs. Startin," said Bugle, who had been busy up-stairs during the scene in the drawing-room, and was rather offended at this irony in a new servant.

"I mean the young lady that's to command us all — and well worthy for looks and figure," replied Mrs. Startin in propitiation. "She'll know what key it is."

"If you have laid out what we want, go and see to the others, Bugle," Gwendolen had said, when she and Mrs. Davilow entered their black and yellow bedroom, where a pretty little white couch was prepared by the side of the black and yellow catafalque known as the best bed. "I will help mamma."

But her first movement was to go to the tall mirror between the windows, which reflected herself and the room completely, while her mamma sat down and also looked at the reflection.

"That is a becoming glass, Gwendolen; or is it the black and gold color that sets you off?" said Mrs. Davilow, as Gwendolen stood obliquely with her three-quarter face turned toward the mirror, and her left hand brushing back the stream of hair.

"I should make a tolerable St. Cecilia with some white roses on my head," said Gwendolen, — "only how about my nose, mamma? I think saint's noses

never in the least turn up. I wish you had given me your perfectly straight nose; it would have done for any sort of character — a nose of all work. Mine is only a happy nose; it would not do so well for tragedy."

"Oh, my dear, any nose will do to be miserable with in this world," said Mrs. Davilow, with a deep, weary sigh, throwing her black bonnet on the table, and resting her elbow near it.

"Now, mamma," said Gwendolen, in a strongly remonstrant tone, turning away from the glass with an air of vexation, "don't begin to be dull here. It spoils all my pleasure, and everything may be so happy now. What have you to be gloomy about *now* ?"

"Nothing, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, seeming to rouse herself, and beginning to take off her dress. "It is always enough for me to see you happy."

"But you should be happy yourself," said Gwendolen, still discontentedly, though going to help her mamma with caressing touches. "Can nobody be happy after they are quite young? You have made me feel sometimes as if nothing were of any use. With the girls so troublesome, and Jocosa so dreadfully wooden and ugly, and everything make-shift about us, and you looking so dull — what was the use of my being anything? But now you *might* be happy."

"So I shall, dear," said Mrs. Davilow, patting the cheek that was bending near her.

"Yes, but really. Not with a sort of

make-believe," said Gwendolen, with resolute perseverance. "See what a hand and arm! — much more beautiful than mine. Any one can see you were altogether more beautiful."

"No, no, dear; I was always heavier. Never half so charming as you are."

"Well, but what is the use of my being charming, if it is to end in my being dull and not minding anything? Is that what marriage always comes to?"

"No, child, certainly not. Marriage is the only happy state for a woman, as I trust you will prove."

"I will not put up with it if it is not a happy state. I am determined to be happy — at least not to go on muddling away my life as other people do, being and doing nothing remarkable. I have made up my mind not to let other people interfere with me as they have done. Here is some warm water ready for you, mamma," Gwendolen ended, proceeding to take off her own dress and then waiting to have her hair wound up by her mamma.

There was silence for a minute or two, till Mrs. Davilow said, while coiling the daughter's hair, "I am sure I have never crossed you, Gwendolen."

"You often want me to do what I don't like."

"You mean, to give Alice lessons?"

"Yes. And I have done it because you asked me. But I don't see why I should, else. It bores me to death, she is so slow. She has no ear for music, or language, or

anything else. It would be much better for her to be ignorant, mamma: it is her *rôle* , she would do it well."

"That is a hard thing to say of your poor sister, Gwendolen, who is so good to you, and waits on you hand and foot."

"I don't see why it is hard to call things by their right names, and put them in their proper places. The hardship is for me to have to waste my time on her. Now let me fasten up your hair, mamma."

"We must make haste; your uncle and aunt will be here soon. For heaven's sake, don't be scornful to *them* , my dear child! or to your cousin Anna, whom you will always be going out with. Do promise me, Gwendolen. You know, you can't expect Anna to be equal to you."

"I don't want her to be equal," said Gwendolen, with a toss of her head and a smile, and the discussion ended there.

When Mr. and Mrs. Gascoigne and their daughter came, Gwendolen, far from being scornful, behaved as prettily as possible to them. She was introducing herself anew to relatives who had not seen her since the comparatively unfinished age of sixteen, and she was anxious — no, not anxious, but resolved that they should admire her.

Mrs. Gascoigne bore a family likeness to her sister. But she was darker and slighter, her face was unworn by grief, her movements were less languid, her

expression more alert and critical as that of a rector's wife bound to exert a beneficent authority. Their closest resemblance lay in a non-resistant disposition, inclined to imitation and obedience; but this, owing to the difference in their circumstances, had led them to very different issues. The younger sister had been indiscreet, or at least unfortunate in her marriages; the elder believed herself the most enviable of wives, and her pliancy had ended in her sometimes taking shapes of surprising definiteness. Many of her opinions, such as those on church government and the character of Archbishop Laud, seemed too decided under every alteration to have been arrived at otherwise than by a wifely receptiveness. And there was much to encourage trust in her husband's authority. He had some agreeable virtues, some striking advantages, and the failings that were imputed to him all leaned toward the side of success.

One of his advantages was a fine person, which perhaps was even more impressive at fifty-seven than it had been earlier in life. There were no distinctively clerical lines in the face, no tricks of starchiness or of affected ease: in his Inverness cape he could not have been identified except as a gentleman with handsome dark features, a nose which began with an intention to be aquiline but suddenly became straight, and iron-gray hair. Perhaps he owed this freedom from the sort of professional make-up which penetrates skin, tones and

gestures and defies all drapery, to the fact that he had once been Captain Gaskin, having taken orders and a diphthong but shortly before his engagement to Miss Armyn. If any one had objected that his preparation for the clerical function was inadequate, his friends might have asked who made a better figure in it, who preached better or had more authority in his parish? He had a native gift for administration, being tolerant both of opinions and conduct, because he felt himself able to overrule them, and was free from the irritations of conscious feebleness. He smiled pleasantly at the foible of a taste which he did not share — at floriculture or antiquarianism for example, which were much in vogue among his fellow-clergyman in the diocese: for himself, he preferred following the history of a campaign, or divining from his knowledge of Nesselrode's motives what would have been his conduct if our cabinet had taken a different course. Mr. Gascoigne's tone of thinking after some long-quieted fluctuations had become ecclesiastical rather than theological; not the modern Anglican, but what he would have called sound English, free from nonsense; such as became a man who looked at a national religion by daylight, and saw it in its relation to other things. No clerical magistrate had greater weight at sessions, or less of mischievous impracticableness in relation to worldly affairs. Indeed, the worst imputation thrown out against him was worldliness: it could not be proved that he forsook the

less fortunate, but it was not to be denied that the friendships he cultivated were of a kind likely to be useful to the father of six sons and two daughters; and bitter observers — for in Wessex, say ten years ago, there were persons whose bitterness may now seem incredible — remarked that the color of his opinions had changed in consistency with this principle of action. But cheerful, successful worldliness has a false air of being more selfish than the acrid, unsuccessful kind, whose secret history is summed up in the terrible words, "Sold, but not paid for."

Gwendolen wondered that she had not better remembered how very fine a man her uncle was; but at the age of sixteen she was a less capable and more indifferent judge. At present it was a matter of extreme interest to her that she was to have the near countenance of a dignified male relative, and that the family life would cease to be entirely, insipidly feminine. She did not intend that her uncle should control her, but she saw at once that it would be altogether agreeable to her that he should be proud of introducing her as his niece. And there was every sign of his being likely to feel that pride. He certainly looked at her with admiration as he said—

"You have outgrown Anna, my dear," putting his arm tenderly round his daughter, whose shy face was a tiny copy of his own, and drawing her forward. "She is not so old as you by a year, but her growing days are

certainly over. I hope you will be excellent companions."

He did give a comparing glance at his daughter, but if he saw her inferiority, he might also see that Anna's timid appearance and miniature figure must appeal to a different taste from that which was attracted by Gwendolen, and that the girls could hardly be rivals. Gwendolen at least, was aware of this, and kissed her cousin with real cordiality as well as grace, saying, "A companion is just what I want. I am so glad we are come to live here. And mamma will be much happier now she is near you, aunt."

The aunt trusted indeed that it would be so, and felt it a blessing that a suitable home had been vacant in their uncle's parish. Then, of course, notice had to be taken of the four other girls, whom Gwendolen had always felt to be superfluous: all of a girlish average that made four units utterly unimportant, and yet from her earliest days an obtrusive influential fact in her life. She was conscious of having been much kinder to them than could have been expected. And it was evident to her that her uncle and aunt also felt it a pity there were so many girls — what rational person could feel otherwise, except poor mamma, who never would see how Alice set up her shoulders and lifted her eyebrows till she had no forehead left, how Bertha and Fanny whispered and tittered together about everything, or how Isabel was always listening and staring and

forgetting where she was, and treading on the toes of her suffering elders?

"You have brothers, Anna," said Gwendolen, while the sisters were being noticed. "I think you are enviable there."

"Yes," said Anna, simply. "I am very fond of them; but of course their education is a great anxiety to papa. He used to say they made me a tomboy. I really was a great romp with Rex. I think you will like Rex. He will come home before Christmas."

"I remember I used to think you rather wild and shy; but it is difficult now to imagine you a romp," said Gwendolen, smiling.

"Of course, I am altered now; I am come out, and all that. But in reality I like to go blackberrying with Edwy and Lotta as well as ever. I am not very fond of going out; but I dare say I shall like it better now you will be often with me. I am not at all clever, and I never know what to say. It seems so useless to say what everybody knows, and I can think of nothing else, except what papa says."

"I shall like going out with you very much," said Gwendolen, well disposed toward this *naïve* cousin. "Are you fond of riding?"

"Yes, but we have only one Shetland pony amongst us. Papa says he can't afford more, besides the carriage-horses and his own nag; he has so many expenses."

"I intend to have a horse and ride a great deal now," said Gwendolen, in a tone of decision. "Is the society pleasant in this neighborhood?"

"Papa says it is, very. There are the clergymen all about, you know; and the Quallons, and the Arrowpoints, and Lord Brackenshaw, and Sir Hugo Mallinger's place, where there is nobody — that's very nice, because we make picnics there — and two or three families at Wanchester: oh, and old Mrs. Vulcany, at Nuttingwood, and—"

But Anna was relieved of this tax on her descriptive powers by the announcement of dinner, and Gwendolen's question was soon indirectly answered by her uncle, who dwelt much on the advantages he had secured for them in getting a place like Offendene. Except the rent, it involved no more expense than an ordinary house at Wanchester would have done.

"And it is always worth while to make a little sacrifice for a good style of house," said Mr. Gascoigne, in his easy, pleasantly confident tone, which made the world in general seem a very manageable place of residence: "especially where there is only a lady at the head. All the best people will call upon you; and you need give no expensive dinners. Of course, I have to spend a good deal in that way; it is a large item. But then I get my house for nothing. If I had to pay three hundred a year for my house I could not keep a table. My boys are too great a drain on me. You are

better off than we are, in proportion; there is no great drain on you now, after your house and carriage."

"I assure you, Fanny, now that the children are growing up, I am obliged to cut and contrive," said Mrs. Gascoigne. "I am not a good manager by nature, but Henry has taught me. He is wonderful for making the best of everything; he allows himself no extras, and gets his curates for nothing. It is rather hard that he has not been made a prebendary or something, as others have been, considering the friends he has made and the need there is for men of moderate opinions in all respects. If the Church is to keep its position, ability and character ought to tell."

"Oh, my dear Nancy, you forget the old story — thank Heaven, there are three hundred as good as I. And ultimately, we shall have no reason to complain, I am pretty sure. There could hardly be a more thorough friend than Lord Brackenshaw — your landlord, you know, Fanny. Lady Brackenshaw will call upon you. And I have spoken for Gwendolen to be a member of our Archery Club — the Brackenshaw Archery Club — the most select thing anywhere. That is, if she has no objection," added Mr. Gascoigne, looking at Gwendolen with pleasant irony.

"I should like it of all things," said Gwendolen. "There is nothing I enjoy more than taking aim — and hitting," she ended, with a pretty nod and smile.

"Our Anna, poor child, is too short-sighed for

archery. But I consider myself a first-rate shot, and you shall practice with me. I must make you an accomplished archer before our great meeting in July. In fact, as to neighborhood, you could hardly be better placed. There are the Arrowpoints — they are some of our best people. Miss Arrowpoint is a delightful girl — she has been presented at Court. They have a magnificent place — Quetcham Hall — worth seeing in point of art; and their parties, to which you are sure to be invited, are the best things of the sort we have. The archdeacon is intimate there, and they have always a good kind of people staying in the house. Mrs. Arrowpoint is peculiar, certainly; something of a caricature, in fact; but well-meaning. And Miss Arrowpoint is as nice as possible. It is not all young ladies who have mothers as handsome and graceful as yours and Anna's."

Mrs. Davilow smiled faintly at this little compliment, but the husband and wife looked affectionately at each other, and Gwendolen thought, "My uncle and aunt, at least, are happy: they are not dull and dismal." Altogether, she felt satisfied with her prospects at Offendene, as a great improvement on anything she had known. Even the cheap curates, she incidentally learned, were almost always young men of family, and Mr. Middleton, the actual curate, was said to be quite an acquisition: it was only a pity he was so soon to leave.

But there was one point which she was so anxious to gain that she could not allow the evening to pass without taking her measures toward securing it. Her mamma, she knew, intended to submit entirely to her uncle's judgment with regard to expenditure; and the submission was not merely prudential, for Mrs. Davilow, conscious that she had always been seen under a cloud as poor dear Fanny, who had made a sad blunder with her second marriage, felt a hearty satisfaction in being frankly and cordially identified with her sister's family, and in having her affairs canvassed and managed with an authority which presupposed a genuine interest. Thus the question of a suitable saddle-horse, which had been sufficiently discussed with mamma, had to be referred to Mr. Gascoigne; and after Gwendolen had played on the piano, which had been provided from Wanchester, had sung to her hearers' admiration, and had induced her uncle to join her in a duet — what more softening influence than this on any uncle who would have sung finely if his time had not been too much taken up by graver matters? — she seized the opportune moment for saying, "Mamma, you have not spoken to my uncle about my riding."

"Gwendolen desires above all things to have a horse to ride — a pretty, light, lady's horse," said Mrs. Davilow, looking at Mr. Gascoigne. "Do you think we can manage it?"

Mr. Gascoigne projected his lower lip and lifted his handsome eyebrows sarcastically at Gwendolen, who had seated herself with much grace on the elbow of her mamma's chair.

"We could lend her the pony sometimes," said Mrs. Gascoigne, watching her husband's face, and feeling quite ready to disapprove if he did.

"That might be inconveniencing others, aunt, and would be no pleasure to me. I cannot endure ponies," said Gwendolen. "I would rather give up some other indulgence and have a horse." (Was there ever a young lady or gentleman not ready to give up an unspecified indulgence for the sake of the favorite one specified?)

"She rides so well. She has had lessons, and the riding-master said she had so good a seat and hand she might be trusted with any mount," said Mrs. Davilow, who, even if she had not wished her darling to have the horse, would not have dared to be lukewarm in trying to get it for her.

"There is the price of the horse — a good sixty with the best chance, and then his keep," said Mr. Gascoigne, in a tone which, though demurring, betrayed the inward presence of something that favored the demand. "There are the carriage-horses — already a heavy item. And remember what you ladies cost in toilet now."

"I really wear nothing but two black dresses," said Mrs. Davilow, hastily. "And the younger girls, of

course, require no toilet at present. Besides, Gwendolen will save me so much by giving her sisters lessons." Here Mrs. Davilow's delicate cheek showed a rapid blush. "If it were not for that, I must really have a more expensive governess, and masters besides."

Gwendolen felt some anger with her mamma, but carefully concealed it.

"That is good — that is decidedly good," said Mr. Gascoigne, heartily, looking at his wife. And Gwendolen, who, it must be owned, was a deep young lady, suddenly moved away to the other end of the long drawing-room, and busied herself with arranging pieces of music.

"The dear child has had no indulgences, no pleasures," said Mrs. Davilow, in a pleading undertone. "I feel the expense is rather imprudent in this first year of our settling. But she really needs the exercise — she needs cheering. And if you were to see her on horseback, it is something splendid."

"It is what we could not afford for Anna," said Mrs. Gascoigne. "But she, dear child, would ride Lotta's donkey and think it good enough." (Anna was absorbed in a game with Isabel, who had hunted out an old back-gammon-board, and had begged to sit up an extra hour.)

"Certainly, a fine woman never looks better than on horseback," said Mr. Gascoigne. "And Gwendolen has the figure for it. I don't say the thing should not be

considered."

"We might try it for a time, at all events. It can be given up, if necessary," said Mrs. Davilow.

"Well, I will consult Lord Brackenshaw's head groom. He is my *fidus*

Achates in the horsey way."

"Thanks," said Mrs. Davilow, much relieved. "You are very kind."

"That he always is," said Mrs. Gascoigne. And later that night, when she and her husband were in private, she said—

"I thought you were almost too indulgent about the horse for Gwendolen. She ought not to claim so much more than your own daughter would think of. Especially before we see how Fanny manages on her income. And you really have enough to do without taking all this trouble on yourself."

"My dear Nancy, one must look at things from every point of view. This girl is really worth some expense: you don't often see her equal. She ought to make a first-rate marriage, and I should not be doing my duty if I spared my trouble in helping her forward. You know yourself she has been under a disadvantage with such a father-in-law, and a second family, keeping her always in the shade. I feel for the girl, And I should like your sister and her family now to have the benefit of your having married rather a better specimen of our kind than she did."

"Rather better! I should think so. However, it is for me to be grateful that you will take so much on your shoulders for the sake of my sister and her children. I am sure I would not grudge anything to poor Fanny. But there is one thing I have been thinking of, though you have never mentioned it."

"What is that?"

"The boys. I hope they will not be falling in love with Gwendolen."

"Don't presuppose anything of the kind, my dear, and there will be no danger. Rex will never be at home for long together, and Warham is going to India. It is the wiser plan to take it for granted that cousins will not fall in love. If you begin with precautions, the affair will come in spite of them. One must not undertake to act for Providence in these matters, which can no more be held under the hand than a brood of chickens. The boys will have nothing, and Gwendolen will have nothing. They can't marry. At the worst there would only be a little crying, and you can't save boys and girls from that."

Mrs. Gascoigne's mind was satisfied: if anything did happen, there was the comfort of feeling that her husband would know what was to be done, and would have the energy to do it.

CHAPTER IV

*"Gorgibus. — * Je te dis que le mariage est une chose sainte et sacrée: et que c'est faire en honnêtes gens, que de débuter par là.*

*"Madelon. — Mon Dieu! que si tout le monde vous ressemblait, un roman serait bientôt fini! La belle chose que ce serait, si d'abord Cyrus épousait Mandane, et qu'Aronce de plain-pied fût marié à Clélie! * Laissez-nous faire à loisir le tissu de notre roman, et n'en pressez pas tant la conclusion."*

MOLIÈRE. Les Précieuses Ridicules

.

It would be a little hard to blame the rector of Pennicote that in the course of looking at things from every point of view, he looked at Gwendolen as a girl likely to make a brilliant marriage. Why should he be expected to differ from his contemporaries in this matter, and wish his niece a worse end of her charming maidenhood than they would approve as the best possible? It is rather to be set down to his credit that his feelings on the subject were entirely good-natured. And in considering the relation of means to ends, it would have been mere folly to have been guided by the exceptional and idyllic — to have recommended that Gwendolen should wear a gown as shabby as Griselda's in order that a marquis might fall in love with her, or to have insisted that since a fair maiden was to be sought, she should keep herself out of the way. Mr. Gascoigne's

calculations were of the kind called rational, and he did not even think of getting a too frisky horse in order that Gwendolen might be threatened with an accident and be rescued by a man of property. He wished his niece well, and he meant her to be seen to advantage in the best society of the neighborhood.

Her uncle's intention fell in perfectly with Gwendolen's own wishes. But let no one suppose that she also contemplated a brilliant marriage as the direct end of her witching the world with her grace on horseback, or with any other accomplishment. That she was to be married some time or other she would have felt obliged to admit; and that her marriage would not be of a middling kind, such as most girls were contented with, she felt quietly, unargumentatively sure. But her thoughts never dwelt on marriage as the fulfillment of her ambition; the dramas in which she imagined herself a heroine were not wrought up to that close. To be very much sued or hopelessly sighed for as a bride was indeed an indispensable and agreeable guarantee of womanly power; but to become a wife and wear all the domestic fetters of that condition, was on the whole a vexatious necessity. Her observation of matrimony had inclined her to think it rather a dreary state in which a woman could not do what she liked, had more children than were desirable, was consequently dull, and became irrevocably immersed in humdrum. Of course marriage was social promotion;

she could not look forward to a single life; but promotions have sometimes to be taken with bitter herbs — a peerage will not quite do instead of leadership to the man who meant to lead; and this delicate-limbed sylph of twenty meant to lead. For such passions dwell in feminine breasts also. In Gwendolen's, however, they dwelt among strictly feminine furniture, and had no disturbing reference to the advancement of learning or the balance of the constitution; her knowledge being such as with no sort of standing-room or length of lever could have been expected to move the world. She meant to do what was pleasant to herself in a striking manner; or rather, whatever she could do so as to strike others with admiration and get in that reflected way a more ardent sense of living, seemed pleasant to her fancy.

"Gwendolen will not rest without having the world at her feet," said Miss Merry, the meek governess: hyperbolical words which have long come to carry the most moderate meanings; for who has not heard of private persons having the world at their feet in the shape of some half-dozen items of flattering regard generally known in a genteel suburb? And words could hardly be too wide or vague to indicate the prospect that made a hazy largeness about poor Gwendolen on the heights of her young self-exultation. Other people allowed themselves to be made slaves of, and to have their lives blown hither and thither like

empty ships in which no will was present. It was not to be so with her; she would no longer be sacrificed to creatures worth less than herself, but would make the very best of the chances that life offered her, and conquer circumstances by her exceptional cleverness. Certainly, to be settled at Offendene, with the notice of Lady Brackenshaw, the archery club, and invitations to dine with the Arrowpoints, as the highest lights in her scenery, was not a position that seemed to offer remarkable chances; but Gwendolen's confidence lay chiefly in herself. She felt well equipped for the mastery of life. With regard to much in her lot hitherto, she held herself rather hardly dealt with, but as to her "education," she would have admitted that it had left her under no disadvantages. In the school-room her quick mind had taken readily that strong starch of unexplained rules and disconnected facts which saves ignorance from any painful sense of limpness; and what remained of all things knowable, she was conscious of being sufficiently acquainted with through novels, plays and poems. About her French and music, the two justifying accomplishments of a young lady, she felt no ground for uneasiness; and when to all these qualifications, negative and positive, we add the spontaneous sense of capability some happy persons are born with, so that any subject they turn their attention to impresses them with their own power of forming a correct judgment on it, who can wonder if

Gwendolen felt ready to manage her own destiny?

There were many subjects in the world — perhaps the majority — in which she felt no interest, because they were stupid; for subjects are apt to appear stupid to the young as light seems dull to the old; but she would not have felt at all helpless in relation to them if they had turned up in conversation. It must be remembered that no one had disputed her power or her general superiority. As on the arrival at Offendene, so always, the first thought of those about her had been, what will Gwendolen think? — if the footman trod heavily in creaking boots, or if the laundress's work was unsatisfactory, the maid said, "This will never do for Miss Harleth"; if the wood smoked in the bedroom fireplace, Mrs. Davilow, whose own weak eyes suffered much from this inconvenience, spoke apologetically of it to Gwendolen. If, when they were under the stress of traveling, she did not appear at the breakfast table till every one else had finished, the only question was, how Gwendolen's coffee and toast should still be of the hottest and crispest; and when she appeared with her freshly-brushed light-brown hair streaming backward and awaiting her mamma's hand to coil it up, her large brown eyes glancing bright as a wave-washed onyx from under their long lashes, it was always she herself who had to be tolerant — to beg that Alice who sat waiting on her would not stick up her shoulders in that frightful manner, and that Isabel,

instead of pushing up to her and asking questions, would go away to Miss Merry.

Always she was the princess in exile, who in time of famine was to have her breakfast-roll made of the finest-bolted flour from the seven thin ears of wheat, and in a general decampment was to have her silver fork kept out of the baggage. How was this to be accounted for? The answer may seem to lie quite on the surface — in her beauty, a certain unusualness about her, a decision of will which made itself felt in her graceful movements and clear unhesitating tones, so that if she came into the room on a rainy day when everybody else was flaccid and the use of things in general was not apparent to them, there seemed to be a sudden, sufficient reason for keeping up the forms of life; and even the waiters at hotels showed the more alacrity in doing away with crumbs and creases and dregs with struggling flies in them. This potent charm, added to the fact that she was the eldest daughter, toward whom her mamma had always been in an apologetic state of mind for the evils brought on her by a step-father, may seem so full a reason for Gwendolen's domestic empire, that to look for any other would be to ask the reason of daylight when the sun is shining. But beware of arriving at conclusions without comparison. I remember having seen the same assiduous, apologetic attention awarded to persons who were not at all beautiful or unusual, whose firmness

showed itself in no very graceful or euphonious way, and who were not eldest daughters with a tender, timid mother, compunctious at having subjected them to inconveniences. Some of them were a very common sort of men. And the only point of resemblance among them all was a strong determination to have what was pleasant, with a total fearlessness in making themselves disagreeable or dangerous when they did not get it. Who is so much cajoled and served with trembling by the weak females of a household as the unscrupulous male — capable, if he has not free way at home, of going and doing worse elsewhere? Hence I am forced to doubt whether even without her potent charm and peculiar filial position Gwendolen might not still have played the queen in exile, if only she had kept her inborn energy of egoistic desire, and her power of inspiring fear as to what she might say or do. However, she had the charm, and those who feared her were also fond of her; the fear and the fondness being perhaps both heightened by what may be called the iridescence of her character — the play of various, nay, contrary tendencies. For Macbeth's rhetoric about the impossibility of being many opposite things in the same moment, referred to the clumsy necessities of action and not to the subtler possibilities of feeling. We cannot speak a loyal word and be meanly silent; we cannot kill and not kill in the same moment; but a moment is wide enough for the loyal and mean desire, for the outlash of

a murderous thought and the sharp backward stroke of repentance.

CHAPTER V

"Her wit
Values itself so highly, that to her
All matter else seems weak."
— Much Ado About Nothing.

Gwendolen's reception in the neighborhood fulfilled her uncle's expectations. From Brackenshaw Castle to the Firs at Wanchester, where Mr. Quallon the

banker kept a generous house, she was welcomed with manifest admiration, and even those ladies who did not quite like her, felt a comfort in having a new, striking girl to invite; for hostesses who entertain much must make up their parties as ministers make up their cabinets, on grounds other than personal liking. Then, in order to have Gwendolen as a guest, it was not necessary to ask any one who was disagreeable, for Mrs. Davilow always made a quiet, picturesque figure as a chaperon, and Mr. Gascoigne was everywhere in request for his own sake.

Among the houses where Gwendolen was not quite liked, and yet invited, was Quetcham Hall. One of her first invitations was to a large dinner-party there, which made a sort of general introduction for her to the society of the neighborhood; for in a select party of thirty and of well-composed proportions as to age, few visitable families could be entirely left out. No youthful figure there was comparable to Gwendolen's as she passed through the long suite of rooms adorned with light and flowers, and, visible at first as a slim figure floating along in white drapery, approached through one wide doorway after another into fuller illumination and definiteness. She had never had that sort of promenade before, and she felt exultingly that it befitted her: any one looking at her for the first time might have supposed that long galleries and lackeys had always been a matter of course in her life; while

her cousin Anna, who was really more familiar with these things, felt almost as much embarrassed as a rabbit suddenly deposited in that well-lit-space.

"Who is that with Gascoigne?" said the archdeacon, neglecting a discussion of military manoeuvres on which, as a clergyman, he was naturally appealed to. And his son, on the other side of the room — a hopeful young scholar, who had already suggested some "not less elegant than ingenious," emendations of Greek texts — said nearly at the same time, "By George! who is that girl with the awfully well-set head and jolly figure?"

But to a mind of general benevolence, wishing everybody to look well, it was rather exasperating to see how Gwendolen eclipsed others: how even the handsome Miss Lawe, explained to be the daughter of Lady Lawe, looked suddenly broad, heavy and inanimate; and how Miss Arrowpoint, unfortunately also dressed in white, immediately resembled a *carte-de-visite* in which one would fancy the skirt alone to have been charged for. Since Miss Arrowpoint was generally liked for the amiable unpretending way in which she wore her fortunes, and made a softening screen for the oddities of her mother, there seemed to be some unfitness in Gwendolen's looking so much more like a person of social importance.

"She is not really so handsome if you come to examine her features," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, later in

the evening, confidentially to Mrs. Vulcany. "It is a certain style she has, which produces a great effect at first, but afterward she is less agreeable."

In fact, Gwendolen, not intending it, but intending the contrary, had offended her hostess, who, though not a splenetic or vindictive woman, had her susceptibilities. Several conditions had met in the Lady of Quetcham which to the reasoners in that neighborhood seemed to have an essential connection with each other. It was occasionally recalled that she had been the heiress of a fortune gained by some moist or dry business in the city, in order fully to account for her having a squat figure, a harsh parrot-like voice, and a systematically high head-dress; and since these points made her externally rather ridiculous, it appeared to many only natural that she should have what are called literary tendencies. A little comparison would have shown that all these points are to be found apart; daughters of aldermen being often well-grown and well-featured, pretty women having sometimes harsh or husky voices, and the production of feeble literature being found compatible with the most diverse forms of *physique* , masculine as well as feminine.

Gwendolen, who had a keen sense of absurdity in others, but was kindly disposed toward any one who could make life agreeable to her, meant to win Mrs. Arrowpoint by giving her an interest and attention beyond what others were probably inclined to show.

But self-confidence is apt to address itself to an imaginary dullness in others; as people who are well off speak in a cajoling tone to the poor, and those who are in the prime of life raise their voice and talk artificially to seniors, hastily conceiving them to be deaf and rather imbecile. Gwendolen, with all her cleverness and purpose to be agreeable, could not escape that form of stupidity: it followed in her mind, unreflectingly, that because Mrs. Arrowpoint was ridiculous she was also likely to be wanting in penetration, and she went through her little scenes without suspicion that the various shades of her behavior were all noted.

"You are fond of books as well as of music, riding, and archery, I hear," Mrs. Arrowpoint said, going to her for a *tete-à-tete* in the drawing-room after dinner. "Catherine will be very glad to have so sympathetic a neighbor." This little speech might have seemed the most graceful politeness, spoken in a low, melodious tone; but with a twang, fatally loud, it gave Gwendolen a sense of exercising patronage when she answered, gracefully:

"It is I who am fortunate. Miss Arrowpoint will teach me what good music is. I shall be entirely a learner. I hear that she is a thorough musician."

"Catherine has certainly had every advantage. We have a first-rate musician in the house now — Herr Klesmer; perhaps you know all his compositions. You must allow me to introduce him to you. You sing, I

believe. Catherine plays three instruments, but she does not sing. I hope you will let us hear you. I understand you are an accomplished singer."

"Oh, no! — 'die Kraft ist schwach, allein die Lust ist gross,' as Mephistopheles says."

"Ah, you are a student of Goethe. Young ladies are so advanced now. I suppose you have read everything."

"No, really. I shall be so glad if you will tell me what to read. I have been looking into all the books in the library at Offendene, but there is nothing readable. The leaves all stick together and smell musty. I wish I could write books to amuse myself, as you can! How delightful it must be to write books after one's own taste instead of reading other people's! Home-made books must be so nice."

For an instant Mrs. Arrowpoint's glance was a little sharper, but the perilous resemblance to satire in the last sentence took the hue of girlish simplicity when Gwendolen added—

"I would give anything to write a book!"

"And why should you not?" said Mrs. Arrowpoint, encouragingly. "You have but to begin as I did. Pen, ink, and paper are at everybody's command. But I will send you all I have written with pleasure."

"Thanks. I shall be so glad to read your writings. Being acquainted with authors must give a peculiar understanding of their books: one would be able to tell

then which parts were funny and which serious. I am sure I often laugh in the wrong place." Here Gwendolen herself became aware of danger, and added quickly, "In Shakespeare, you know, and other great writers that we can never see. But I always want to know more than there is in the books."

"If you are interested in any of my subjects I can lend you many extra sheets in manuscript," said Mrs. Arrowpoint — while Gwendolen felt herself painfully in the position of the young lady who professed to like potted sprats.

"These are things I dare say I shall publish eventually: several friends have urged me to do so, and one doesn't like to be obstinate. My Tasso, for example — I could have made it twice the size."

"I dote on Tasso," said Gwendolen.

"Well, you shall have all my papers, if you like. So many, you know, have written about Tasso; but they are all wrong. As to the particular nature of his madness, and his feelings for Leonora, and the real cause of his imprisonment, and the character of Leonora, who, in my opinion, was a cold-hearted woman, else she would have married him in spite of her brother — they are all wrong. I differ from everybody."

"How very interesting!" said Gwendolen. "I like to differ from everybody. I think it is so stupid to agree. That is the worst of writing your opinions; you make people agree with you." This speech renewed a slight

suspicion in Mrs. Arrowpoint, and again her glance became for a moment examining. But Gwendolen looked very innocent, and continued with a docile air:

"I know nothing of Tasso except the *Gerusalemme Liberata* , which we read and learned by heart at school."

"Ah, his life is more interesting than his poetry, I have constructed the early part of his life as a sort of romance. When one thinks of his father Bernardo, and so on, there is much that must be true."

"Imagination is often truer than fact," said Gwendolen, decisively, though she could no more have explained these glib words than if they had been Coptic or Etruscan. "I shall be so glad to learn all about Tasso — and his madness especially. I suppose poets are always a little mad."

"To be sure—'the poet's eye in a fine frenzy rolling'; and somebody says of Marlowe—

'For that fine madness still he did maintain,

Which always should possess the poet's brain.'"

"But it was not always found out, was it?" said Gwendolen innocently. "I suppose some of them rolled their eyes in private. Mad people are often very cunning."

Again a shade flitted over Mrs. Arrowpoint's face; but the entrance of the gentlemen prevented any immediate mischief between her and this too quick young lady, who had over-acted her *naïveté* .

"Ah, here comes Herr Klesmer," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, rising; and presently bringing him to Gwendolen, she left them to a dialogue which was agreeable on both sides, Herr Klesmer being a felicitous combination of the German, the Sclave and the Semite, with grand features, brown hair floating in artistic fashion, and brown eyes in spectacles. His English had little foreignness except its fluency; and his alarming cleverness was made less formidable just then by a certain softening air of silliness which will sometimes befall even Genius in the desire of being agreeable to Beauty.

Music was soon begun. Miss Arrowpoint and Herr Klesmer played a four-handed piece on two pianos, which convinced the company in general that it was long, and Gwendolen in particular that the neutral, placid-faced Miss Arrowpoint had a mastery of the instrument which put her own execution out of question — though she was not discouraged as to her often-praised touch and style. After this every one became anxious to hear Gwendolen sing; especially Mr. Arrowpoint; as was natural in a host and a perfect gentleman, of whom no one had anything to say but that he married Miss Cuttler and imported the best cigars; and he led her to the piano with easy politeness. Herr Klesmer closed the instrument in readiness for her, and smiled with pleasure at her approach; then placed himself at a distance of a few feet so that he

could see her as she sang.

Gwendolen was not nervous; what she undertook to do she did without trembling, and singing was an enjoyment to her. Her voice was a moderately powerful soprano (some one had told her it was like Jenny Lind's), her ear good, and she was able to keep in tune, so that her singing gave pleasure to ordinary hearers, and she had been used to unmingled applause. She had the rare advantage of looking almost prettier when she was singing than at other times, and that Herr Klesmer was in front of her seemed not disagreeable. Her song, determined on beforehand, was a favorite aria of Belini's, in which she felt quite sure of herself.

"Charming?" said Mr. Arrowpoint, who had remained near, and the word was echoed around without more insincerity than we recognize in a brotherly way as human. But Herr Klesmer stood like a statue — if a statue can be imagined in spectacles; at least, he was as mute as a statue. Gwendolen was pressed to keep her seat and double the general pleasure, and she did not wish to refuse; but before resolving to do so, she moved a little toward Herr Klesmer, saying with a look of smiling appeal, "It would be too cruel to a great musician. You cannot like to hear poor amateur singing."

"No, truly; but that makes nothing," said Herr Klesmer, suddenly speaking in an odious German fashion with staccato endings, quite unobservable in

him before, and apparently depending on a change of mood, as Irishmen resume their strongest brogue when they are fervid or quarrelsome. "That makes nothing. It is always acceptable to see you sing."

Was there ever so unexpected an assertion of superiority? at least before the late Teutonic conquest? Gwendolen colored deeply, but, with her usual presence of mind, did not show an ungraceful resentment by moving away immediately; and Miss Arrowpoint, who had been near enough to overhear (and also to observe that Herr Klesmer's mode of looking at Gwendolen was more conspicuously admiring than was quite consistent with good taste), now with the utmost tact and kindness came close to her and said—

"Imagine what I have to go through with this professor! He can hardly tolerate anything we English do in music. We can only put up with his severity, and make use of it to find out the worst that can be said of us. It is a little comfort to know that; and one can bear it when every one else is admiring."

"I should be very much obliged to him for telling me the worst," said Gwendolen, recovering herself. "I dare say I have been extremely ill taught, in addition to having no talent — only liking for music." This was very well expressed considering that it had never entered her mind before.

"Yes, it is true: you have not been well taught,"

said Herr Klesmer, quietly. Woman was dear to him, but music was dearer. "Still, you are not quite without gifts. You sing in tune, and you have a pretty fair organ. But you produce your notes badly; and that music which you sing is beneath you. It is a form of melody which expresses a puerile state of culture — a dawdling, canting, see-saw kind of stuff — the passion and thought of people without any breadth of horizon. There is a sort of self-satisfied folly about every phrase of such melody; no cries of deep, mysterious passion — no conflict — no sense of the universal. It makes men small as they listen to it. Sing now something larger. And I shall see."

"Oh, not now — by-and-by," said Gwendolen, with a sinking of heart at the sudden width of horizon opened round her small musical performance. For a lady desiring to lead, this first encounter in her campaign was startling. But she was bent on not behaving foolishly, and Miss Arrowpoint helped her by saying—

"Yes, by-and-by. I always require half an hour to get up my courage after being criticised by Herr Klesmer. We will ask him to play to us now: he is bound to show us what is good music."

To be quite safe on this point Herr Klesmer played a composition of his own, a fantasia called *Freudvoll, Leidvoll, Gedankenvoll* —an extensive commentary on some melodic ideas not too grossly

evident; and he certainly fetched as much variety and depth of passion out of the piano as that moderately responsive instrument lends itself to, having an imperious magic in his fingers that seem to send a nerve-thrill through ivory key and wooden hammer, and compel the strings to make a quivering lingering speech for him. Gwendolen, in spite of her wounded egoism, had fullness of nature enough to feel the power of this playing, and it gradually turned her inward sob of mortification into an excitement which lifted her for the moment into a desperate indifference about her own doings, or at least a determination to get a superiority over them by laughing at them as if they belonged to somebody else. Her eyes had become brighter, her cheeks slightly flushed, and her tongue ready for any mischievous remarks.

"I wish you would sing to us again, Miss Harleth," said young Clintock, the archdeacon's classical son, who had been so fortunate as to take her to dinner, and came up to renew conversation as soon as Herr Klesmer's performance was ended, "That is the style of music for me. I never can make anything of this tip-top playing. It is like a jar of leeches, where you can never tell either beginnings or endings. I could listen to your singing all day."

"Yes, we should be glad of something popular now — another song from you would be a relaxation," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, who had also come near with

polite intentions.

"That must be because you are in a puerile state of culture, and have no breadth of horizon. I have just learned that. I have been taught how bad my taste is, and am feeling growing pains. They are never pleasant," said Gwendolen, not taking any notice of Mrs. Arrowpoint, and looking up with a bright smile at young Clintock.

Mrs. Arrowpoint was not insensible to this rudeness, but merely said, "Well, we will not press anything disagreeably," and as there was a perceptible outburst of imprisoned conversation just then, and a movement of guests seeking each other, she remained seated where she was, and looked around her with the relief of a hostess at finding she is not needed.

"I am glad you like this neighborhood," said young Clintock, well-pleased with his station in front of Gwendolen.

"Exceedingly. There seems to be a little of everything and not much of anything."

"That is rather equivocal praise."

"Not with me. I like a little of everything; a little absurdity, for example, is very amusing. I am thankful for a few queer people; but much of them is a bore."

(Mrs. Arrowpoint, who was hearing this dialogue, perceived quite a new tone in Gwendolen's speech, and felt a revival of doubt as to her interest in Tasso's madness.)

"I think there should be more croquet, for one thing," young Clintock; "I am usually away, but if I were more here I should go in for a croquet club. You are one of the archers, I think. But depend upon it croquet is the game of the future. It wants writing up, though. One of our best men has written a poem on it, in four cantos;—as good as Pope. I want him to publish it — You never read anything better."

"I shall study croquet to-morrow. I shall take to it instead of singing."

"No, no, not that; but do take to croquet. I will send you Jenning's poem if you like. I have a manuscript copy."

"Is he a great friend of yours?"

"Well, rather."

"Oh, if he is only rather, I think I will decline. Or, if you send it to me, will you promise not to catechise me upon it and ask me which part I like best? Because it is not so easy to know a poem without reading it as to know a sermon without listening."

"Decidedly," Mrs. Arrowpoint thought, "this girl is double and satirical. I shall be on my guard against her."

But Gwendolen, nevertheless, continued to receive polite attentions from the family at Quetcham, not merely because invitations have larger grounds than those of personal liking, but because the trying little scene at the piano had awakened a kindly solicitude

toward her in the gentle mind of Miss Arrowpoint, who managed all the invitations and visits, her mother being otherwise occupied.

CHAPTER VI

"Croyez-vous m'avoir humiliée pour m'avoir appris que la terre tourne autour du soleil? Je vous jure que je ne m'en estime pas moins."

— FONTENELLE: Pluralité des Mondes.

That lofty criticism had caused Gwendolen a new sort of pain. She would not have chosen to confess how unfortunate she thought herself in not having had Miss Arrowpoint's musical advantages, so as to be able to question Herr Klesmer's taste with the confidence of thorough knowledge; still less, to admit even to herself that Miss Arrowpoint each time they met raised an unwonted feeling of jealousy in her: not in the least because she was an heiress, but because it was really provoking that a girl whose appearance you could not characterize except by saying that her figure was slight and of middle stature, her features small, her eyes tolerable, and her complexion sallow, had nevertheless a certain mental superiority which could not be explained away — an exasperating thoroughness in her musical accomplishment, a fastidious discrimination in her general tastes, which made it impossible to force

her admiration and kept you in awe of her standard. This insignificant-looking young lady of four-and-twenty, whom any one's eyes would have passed over negligently if she had not been Miss Arrowpoint, might be suspected of a secret opinion that Miss Harleth's acquirements were rather of a common order, and such an opinion was not made agreeable to think of by being always veiled under a perfect kindness of manner.

But Gwendolen did not like to dwell on facts which threw an unfavorable light on itself. The musical Magus who had so suddenly widened her horizon was not always on the scene; and his being constantly backward and forward between London and Quetcham soon began to be thought of as offering opportunities for converting him to a more admiring state of mind. Meanwhile, in the manifest pleasure her singing gave at Brackenshaw Castle, the Firs, and elsewhere, she recovered her equanimity, being disposed to think approval more trustworthy than objection, and not being one of the exceptional persons who have a parching thirst for a perfection undemanded by their neighbors. Perhaps it would have been rash to say then that she was at all exceptional inwardly, or that the unusual in her was more than her rare grace of movement and bearing, and a certain daring which gave piquancy to a very common egoistic ambition, such as exists under many clumsy exteriors and is taken no

notice of. For I suppose that the set of the head does not really determine the hunger of the inner self for supremacy: it only makes a difference sometimes as to the way in which the supremacy is held attainable, and a little also to the degree in which it can be attained; especially when the hungry one is a girl, whose passion for doing what is remarkable has an ideal limit in consistency with the highest breeding and perfect freedom from the sordid need of income. Gwendolen was as inwardly rebellious against the restraints of family conditions, and as ready to look through obligations into her own fundamental want of feeling for them, as if she had been sustained by the boldest speculations; but she really had no such speculations, and would at once have marked herself off from any sort of theoretical or practically reforming women by satirizing them. She rejoiced to feel herself exceptional; but her horizon was that of the genteel romance where the heroine's soul poured out in her journal is full of vague power, originality, and general rebellion, while her life moves strictly in the sphere of fashion; and if she wanders into a swamp, the pathos lies partly, so to speak, in her having on her satin shoes. Here is a restraint which nature and society have provided on the pursuit of striking adventure; so that a soul burning with a sense of what the universe is not, and ready to take all existence as fuel, is nevertheless held captive by the ordinary wirework of social forms and does

nothing particular.

This commonplace result was what Gwendolen found herself threatened with even in the novelty of the first winter at Offendene. What she was clear upon was, that she did not wish to lead the same sort of life as ordinary young ladies did; but what she was not clear upon was, how she should set about leading any other, and what were the particular acts which she would assert her freedom by doing. Offendene remained a good background, if anything would happen there; but on the whole the neighborhood was in fault.

Beyond the effect of her beauty on a first presentation, there was not much excitement to be got out of her earliest invitations, and she came home after little sallies of satire and knowingness, such as had offended Mrs. Arrowpoint, to fill the intervening days with the most girlish devices. The strongest assertion she was able to make of her individual claims was to leave out Alice's lessons (on the principle that Alice was more likely to excel in ignorance), and to employ her with Miss Merry, and the maid who was understood to wait on all the ladies, in helping to arrange various dramatic costumes which Gwendolen pleased herself with having in readiness for some future occasions of acting in charades or theatrical pieces, occasions which she meant to bring about by force of will or contrivance. She had never acted — only made a figure in *tableaux vivans* at school; but she felt assured that

she could act well, and having been once or twice to the Théâtre Français, and also heard her mamma speak of Rachel, her waking dreams and cogitations as to how she would manage her destiny sometimes turned on the question whether she would become an actress like Rachel, since she was more beautiful than that thin Jewess. Meanwhile the wet days before Christmas were passed pleasantly in the preparation of costumes, Greek, Oriental, and Composite, in which Gwendolen attitudinized and speechified before a domestic audience, including even the housekeeper, who was once pressed into it that she might swell the notes of applause; but having shown herself unworthy by observing that Miss Harleth looked far more like a queen in her own dress than in that baggy thing with her arms all bare, she was not invited a second time.

"Do I look as well as Rachel, mamma?" said Gwendolen, one day when she had been showing herself in her Greek dress to Anna, and going through scraps of scenes with much tragic intention.

"You have better arms than Rachel," said Mrs. Davilow, "your arms would do for anything, Gwen. But your voice is not so tragic as hers; it is not so deep."

"I can make it deeper, if I like," said Gwendolen, provisionally; then she added, with decision, "I think a higher voice is more tragic: it is more feminine; and the more feminine a woman is, the more tragic it seems when she does desperate actions."

"There may be something in that," said Mrs. Davilow, languidly. "But I don't know what good there is in making one's blood creep. And if there is anything horrible to be done, I should like it to be left to the men."

"Oh, mamma, you are so dreadfully prosaic! As if all the great poetic criminals were not women! I think the men are poor cautious creatures."

"Well, dear, and you — who are afraid to be alone in the night — I don't think you would be very bold in crime, thank God."

"I am not talking about reality, mamma," said Gwendolen, impatiently. Then her mamma being called out of the room, she turned quickly to her cousin, as if taking an opportunity, and said, "Anna, do ask my uncle to let us get up some charades at the rectory. Mr. Middleton and Warham could act with us — just for practice. Mamma says it will not do to have Mr. Middleton consulting and rehearsing here. He is a stick, but we could give him suitable parts. Do ask, or else I will."

"Oh, not till Rex comes. He is so clever, and such a dear old thing, and he will act Napoleon looking over the sea. He looks just like Napoleon. Rex can do anything."

"I don't in the least believe in your Rex, Anna," said Gwendolen, laughing at her. "He will turn out to be like those wretched blue and yellow water-colors of

his which you hang up in your bedroom and worship."

"Very well, you will see," said Anna. "It is not that I know what is clever, but he has got a scholarship already, and papa says he will get a fellowship, and nobody is better at games. He is cleverer than Mr. Middleton, and everybody but you call Mr. Middleton clever."

"So he may be in a dark-lantern sort of way. But he *is* a stick. If he had to say, 'Perdition catch my soul, but I do love her,' he would say it in just the same tone as, 'Here endeth the second lesson.'"

"Oh, Gwendolen!" said Anna, shocked at these promiscuous allusions. "And it is very unkind of you to speak so of him, for he admires you very much. I heard Warham say one day to mamma, 'Middleton is regularly spooney upon Gwendolen.' She was very angry with him; but I know what it means. It is what they say at college for being in love."

"How can I help it?" said Gwendolen, rather contemptuously. "Perdition catch my soul if I love *him* ."

"No, of course; papa, I think, would not wish it. And he is to go away soon. But it makes me sorry when you ridicule him."

"What shall you do to me when I ridicule Rex?" said Gwendolen, wickedly.

"Now, Gwendolen, dear, you *will not* ?" said Anna, her eyes filling with tears. "I could not bear it.

But there really is nothing in him to ridicule. Only you may find out things. For no one ever thought of laughing at Mr. Middleton before you. Every one said he was nice-looking, and his manners perfect. I am sure I have always been frightened at him because of his learning and his square-cut coat, and his being a nephew of the bishop's, and all that. But you will not ridicule Rex — promise me." Anna ended with a beseeching look which touched Gwendolen.

"You are a dear little coz," she said, just touching the tip of Anna's chin with her thumb and forefinger. "I don't ever want to do anything that will vex you. Especially if Rex is to make everything come off — charades and everything."

And when at last Rex was there, the animation he brought into the life of Offendene and the rectory, and his ready partnership in Gwendolen's plans, left her no inclination for any ridicule that was not of an open and flattering kind, such as he himself enjoyed. He was a fine open-hearted youth, with a handsome face strongly resembling his father's and Anna's, but softer in expression than the one, and larger in scale than the other: a bright, healthy, loving nature, enjoying ordinary innocent things so much that vice had no temptation for him, and what he knew of it lay too entirely in the outer courts and little-visited chambers of his mind for him to think of it with great repulsion. Vicious habits were with him "what some fellows

did" — "stupid stuff" which he liked to keep aloof from. He returned Anna's affection as fully as could be expected of a brother whose pleasures apart from her were more than the sum total of hers; and he had never known a stronger love.

The cousins were continually together at the one house or the other — chiefly at Offendene, where there was more freedom, or rather where there was a more complete sway for Gwendolen; and whatever she wished became a ruling purpose for Rex. The charades came off according to her plans; and also some other little scenes not contemplated by her in which her acting was more impromptu. It was at Offendene that the charades and *tableaux* were rehearsed and presented, Mrs. Davilow seeing no objection even to Mr. Middleton's being invited to share in them, now that Rex too was there — especially as his services were indispensable: Warham, who was studying for India with a Wanchester "coach," having no time to spare, and being generally dismal under a cram of everything except the answers needed at the forthcoming examination, which might disclose the welfare of our Indian Empire to be somehow connected with a quotable knowledge of Browne's Pastorals.

Mr. Middleton was persuaded to play various grave parts, Gwendolen having flattered him on his enviable immobility of countenance; and at first a little pained and jealous at her comradeship with Rex, he

presently drew encouragement from the thought that this sort of cousinly familiarity excluded any serious passion. Indeed, he occasionally felt that her more formal treatment of himself was such a sign of favor as to warrant his making advances before he left Pennicote, though he had intended to keep his feelings in reserve until his position should be more assured. Miss Gwendolen, quite aware that she was adored by this unexceptionable young clergyman with pale whiskers and square-cut collar, felt nothing more on the subject than that she had no objection to being adored: she turned her eyes on him with calm mercilessness and caused him many mildly agitating hopes by seeming always to avoid dramatic contact with him — for all meanings, we know, depend on the key of interpretation.

Some persons might have thought beforehand that a young man of Anglican leanings, having a sense of sacredness much exercised on small things as well as great, rarely laughing save from politeness, and in general regarding the mention of spades by their naked names as rather coarse, would not have seen a fitting bride for himself in a girl who was daring in ridicule, and showed none of the special grace required in the clergyman's wife; or, that a young man informed by theological reading would have reflected that he was not likely to meet the taste of a lively, restless young lady like Miss Harleth. But are we always obliged to

explain why the facts are not what some persons thought beforehand? The apology lies on their side, who had that erroneous way of thinking.

As for Rex, who would possibly have been sorry for poor Middleton if he had been aware of the excellent curate's inward conflict, he was too completely absorbed in a first passion to have observation for any person or thing. He did not observe Gwendolen; he only felt what she said or did, and the back of his head seemed to be a good organ of information as to whether she was in the room or out. Before the end of the first fortnight he was so deeply in love that it was impossible for him to think of his life except as bound up with Gwendolen's. He could see no obstacles, poor boy; his own love seemed a guarantee of hers, since it was one with the unperturbed delight in her image, so that he could no more dream of her giving him pain than an Egyptian could dream of snow. She sang and played to him whenever he liked, was always glad of his companionship in riding, though his borrowed steeds were often comic, was ready to join in any fun of his, and showed a right appreciation of Anna. No mark of sympathy seemed absent. That because Gwendolen was the most perfect creature in the world she was to make a grand match, had not occurred to him. He had no conceit — at least not more than goes to make up the necessary gum and consistence of a substantial personality: it was only that

in the young bliss of loving he took Gwendolen's perfection as part of that good which had seemed one with life to him, being the outcome of a happy, well-embodied nature.

One incident which happened in the course of their dramatic attempts impressed Rex as a sign of her unusual sensibility. It showed an aspect of her nature which could not have been preconceived by any one who, like him, had only seen her habitual fearlessness in active exercises and her high spirits in society.

After a good deal of rehearsing it was resolved that a select party should be invited to Offendene to witness the performances which went with so much satisfaction to the actors. Anna had caused a pleasant surprise; nothing could be neater than the way in which she played her little parts; one would even have suspected her of hiding much sly observation under her simplicity. And Mr. Middleton answered very well by not trying to be comic. The main source of doubt and retardation had been Gwendolen's desire to appear in her Greek dress. No word for a charade would occur to her either waking or dreaming that suited her purpose of getting a statuesque pose in this favorite costume. To choose a motive from Racine was of no use, since Rex and the others could not declaim French verse, and improvised speeches would turn the scene into burlesque. Besides, Mr. Gascoigne prohibited the acting of scenes from plays: he usually protested

against the notion that an amusement which was fitting for every one else was unfitting for a clergyman; but he would not in this matter overstep the line of decorum as drawn in that part of Wessex, which did not exclude his sanction of the young people's acting charades in his sister-in-law's house — a very different affair from private theatricals in the full sense of the word.

Everybody of course was concerned to satisfy this wish of Gwendolen's, and Rex proposed that they should wind up with a tableau in which the effect of her majesty would not be marred by any one's speech. This pleased her thoroughly, and the only question was the choice of the tableau.

"Something pleasant, children, I beseech you," said Mrs. Davilow; "I can't have any Greek wickedness."

"It is no worse than Christian wickedness, mamma," said Gwendolen, whose mention of Rachelesque heroines had called forth that remark.

"And less scandalous," said Rex. "Besides, one thinks of it as all gone by and done with. What do you say to Briseis being led away? I would be Achilles, and you would be looking round at me — after the print we have at the rectory."

"That would be a good attitude for me," said Gwendolen, in a tone of acceptance. But afterward she said with decision, "No. It will not do. There must be three men in proper costume, else it will be ridiculous."

"I have it," said Rex, after a little reflection. "Hermione as the statue in Winter's Tale? I will be Leontes, and Miss Merry, Paulina, one on each side. Our dress won't signify," he went on laughingly; "it will be more Shakespearian and romantic if Leontes looks like Napoleon, and Paulina like a modern spinster."

And Hermione was chosen; all agreeing that age was of no consequence, but Gwendolen urged that instead of the mere tableau there should be just enough acting of the scene to introduce the striking up of the music as a signal for her to step down and advance; when Leontes, instead of embracing her, was to kneel and kiss the hem of her garment, and so the curtain was to fall. The antechamber with folding doors lent itself admirably to the purpose of a stage, and the whole of the establishment, with the addition of Jarrett the village carpenter, was absorbed in the preparations for an entertainment, which, considering that it was an imitation of acting, was likely to be successful, since we know from ancient fable that an imitation may have more chance of success than the original.

Gwendolen was not without a special exultation in the prospect of this occasion, for she knew that Herr Klesmer was again at Quetcham, and she had taken care to include him among the invited.

Klesmer came. He was in one of his placid, silent moods, and sat in serene contemplation, replying to all appeals in benignant-sounding syllables more or less

articulate — as taking up his cross meekly in a world overgrown with amateurs, or as careful how he moved his lion paws lest he should crush a rampant and vociferous mouse.

Everything indeed went off smoothly and according to expectation — all that was improvised and accidental being of a probable sort — until the incident occurred which showed Gwendolen in an unforeseen phase of emotion. How it came about was at first a mystery.

The tableau of Hermione was doubly striking from its dissimilarity with what had gone before: it was answering perfectly, and a murmur of applause had been gradually suppressed while Leontes gave his permission that Paulina should exercise her utmost art and make the statue move.

Hermione, her arm resting on a pillar, was elevated by about six inches, which she counted on as a means of showing her pretty foot and instep, when at the given signal she should advance and descend.

"Music, awake her, strike!" said Paulina (Mrs. Davilow, who, by special entreaty, had consented to take the part in a white burnous and hood).

Herr Klesmer, who had been good-natured enough to seat himself at the piano, struck a thunderous chord — but in the same instant, and before Hermione had put forth her foot, the movable panel, which was on a line with the piano, flew open on the right opposite

the stage and disclosed the picture of the dead face and the fleeing figure, brought out in pale definiteness by the position of the wax-lights. Everyone was startled, but all eyes in the act of turning toward the open panel were recalled by a piercing cry from Gwendolen, who stood without change of attitude, but with a change of expression that was terrifying in its terror. She looked like a statue into which a soul of Fear had entered: her pallid lips were parted; her eyes, usually narrowed under their long lashes, were dilated and fixed. Her mother, less surprised than alarmed, rushed toward her, and Rex, too, could not help going to her side. But the touch of her mother's arm had the effect of an electric charge; Gwendolen fell on her knees and put her hands before her face. She was still trembling, but mute, and it seemed that she had self-consciousness enough to aim at controlling her signs of terror, for she presently allowed herself to be raised from her kneeling posture and led away, while the company were relieving their minds by explanation.

"A magnificent bit of *plastik* that!" said Klesmer to Miss Arrowpoint.

And a quick fire of undertoned question and answer went round.

"Was it part of the play?"

"Oh, no, surely not. Miss Harleth was too much affected. A sensitive creature!"

"Dear me! I was not aware that there was a

painting behind that panel; were you?"

"No; how should I? Some eccentricity in one of the Earl's family long ago, I suppose."

"How very painful! Pray shut it up."

"Was the door locked? It is very mysterious. It must be the spirits."

"But there is no medium present."

"How do you know that? We must conclude that there is, when such things happen."

"Oh, the door was not locked; it was probably the sudden vibration from the piano that sent it open."

This conclusion came from Mr. Gascoigne, who begged Miss Merry if possible to get the key. But this readiness to explain the mystery was thought by Mrs. Vulcany unbecoming in a clergyman, and she observed in an undertone that Mr. Gascoigne was always a little too worldly for her taste. However, the key was produced, and the rector turned it in the lock with an emphasis rather offensively rationalizing — as who should say, "it will not start open again" — putting the key in his pocket as a security.

However, Gwendolen soon reappeared, showing her usual spirits, and evidently determined to ignore as far as she could the striking change she had made in the part of Hermione.

But when Klesmer said to her, "We have to thank you for devising a perfect climax: you could not have chosen a finer bit of *plastik* ," there was a flush of

pleasure in her face. She liked to accept as a belief what was really no more than delicate feigning. He divined that the betrayal into a passion of fear had been mortifying to her, and wished her to understand that he took it for good acting. Gwendolen cherished the idea that now he was struck with her talent as well as her beauty, and her uneasiness about his opinion was half turned to complacency.

But too many were in the secret of what had been included in the rehearsals, and what had not, and no one besides Klesmer took the trouble to soothe Gwendolen's imagined mortification. The general sentiment was that the incident should be let drop.

There had really been a medium concerned in the starting open of the panel: one who had quitted the room in haste and crept to bed in much alarm of conscience. It was the small Isabel, whose intense curiosity, unsatisfied by the brief glimpse she had had of the strange picture on the day of arrival at Offendene, had kept her on the watch for an opportunity of finding out where Gwendolen had put the key, of stealing it from the discovered drawer when the rest of the family were out, and getting on a stool to unlock the panel. While she was indulging her thirst for knowledge in this way, a noise which she feared was an approaching footstep alarmed her: she closed the door and attempted hurriedly to lock it, but failing and not daring to linger, she withdrew the key and trusted that

the panel would stick, as it seemed well inclined to do. In this confidence she had returned the key to its former place, stilling any anxiety by the thought that if the door were discovered to be unlocked nobody would know how the unlocking came about. The inconvenient Isabel, like other offenders, did not foresee her own impulse to confession, a fatality which came upon her the morning after the party, when Gwendolen said at the breakfast-table, "I know the door was locked before the housekeeper gave me the key, for I tried it myself afterward. Some one must have been to my drawer and taken the key."

It seemed to Isabel that Gwendolen's awful eyes had rested on her more than on the other sisters, and without any time for resolve, she said, with a trembling lip:

"Please forgive me, Gwendolen."

The forgiveness was sooner bestowed than it would have been if Gwendolen had not desired to dismiss from her own and every one else's memory any case in which she had shown her susceptibility to terror. She wondered at herself in these occasional experiences, which seemed like a brief remembered madness, an unexplained exception from her normal life; and in this instance she felt a peculiar vexation that her helpless fear had shown itself, not, as usual, in solitude, but in well-lit company. Her ideal was to be daring in speech and reckless in braving dangers, both

moral and physical; and though her practice fell far behind her ideal, this shortcoming seemed to be due to the pettiness of circumstances, the narrow theatre which life offers to a girl of twenty, who cannot conceive herself as anything else than a lady, or as in any position which would lack the tribute of respect. She had no permanent consciousness of other fetters, or of more spiritual restraints, having always disliked whatever was presented to her under the name of religion, in the same way that some people dislike arithmetic and accounts: it had raised no other emotion in her, no alarm, no longing; so that the question whether she believed it had not occurred to her any more than it had occurred to her to inquire into the conditions of colonial property and banking, on which, as she had had many opportunities of knowing, the family fortune was dependent. All these facts about herself she would have been ready to admit, and even, more or less indirectly, to state. What she unwillingly recognized, and would have been glad for others to be unaware of, was that liability of hers to fits of spiritual dread, though this fountain of awe within her had not found its way into connection with the religion taught her or with any human relations. She was ashamed and frightened, as at what might happen again, in remembering her tremor on suddenly feeling herself alone, when, for example, she was walking without companionship and there came some rapid change in

the light. Solitude in any wide scene impressed her with an undefined feeling of immeasurable existence aloof from her, in the midst of which she was helplessly incapable of asserting herself. The little astronomy taught her at school used sometimes to set her imagination at work in a way that made her tremble: but always when some one joined her she recovered her indifference to the vastness in which she seemed an exile; she found again her usual world in which her will was of some avail, and the religious nomenclature belonging to this world was no more identified for her with those uneasy impressions of awe than her uncle's surplices seen out of use at the rectory. With human ears and eyes about her, she had always hitherto recovered her confidence, and felt the possibility of winning empire.

To her mamma and others her fits of timidity or terror were sufficiently accounted for by her "sensitiveness" or the "excitability of her nature"; but these explanatory phrases required conciliation with much that seemed to be blank indifference or rare self-mastery. Heat is a great agent and a useful word, but considered as a means of explaining the universe it requires an extensive knowledge of differences; and as a means of explaining character "sensitiveness" is in much the same predicament. But who, loving a creature like Gwendolen, would not be inclined to regard every peculiarity in her as a mark of preeminence? That was

what Rex did. After the Hermione scene he was more persuaded than ever that she must be instinct with all feeling, and not only readier to respond to a worshipful love, but able to love better than other girls. Rex felt the summer on his young wings and soared happily.

CHAPTER VII

"Perigot. As the bonny lasse passed by,
Willie. Hey, ho, bonnilasse!
P. She roode at me with glauncing eye,
W. As clear as the crystal glasse.
P. All as the sunny beame so bright,
W. Hey, ho, the sunnebeame!
P. Glaunceth from Phoebus' face forthright,
W. So love into thy heart did streame."
— SPENSER: Shepard's Calendar.

"The kindliest symptom, yet the most alarming crisis in the ticklish state of youth; the nourisher and destroyer of hopeful wits; * the servitude above freedom; the gentle mind's religion; the liberal superstition." — CHARLES LAMB.

The first sign of the unimagined snow-storm was like the transparent white cloud that seems to set off the blue. Anna was in the secret of Rex's feeling; though for the first time in their lives he had said nothing to her about what he most thought of, and he only took it for

granted that she knew it. For the first time, too, Anna could not say to Rex what was continually in her mind. Perhaps it might have been a pain which she would have had to conceal, that he should so soon care for some one else more than for herself, if such a feeling had not been thoroughly neutralized by doubt and anxiety on his behalf. Anna admired her cousin — would have said with simple sincerity, "Gwendolen is always very good to me," and held it in the order of things for herself to be entirely subject to this cousin; but she looked at her with mingled fear and distrust, with a puzzled contemplation as of some wondrous and beautiful animal whose nature was a mystery, and who, for anything Anna knew, might have an appetite for devouring all the small creatures that were her own particular pets. And now Anna's heart was sinking under the heavy conviction which she dared not utter, that Gwendolen would never care for Rex. What she herself held in tenderness and reverence had constantly seemed indifferent to Gwendolen, and it was easier to imagine her scorning Rex than returning any tenderness of his. Besides, she was always thinking of being something extraordinary. And poor Rex! Papa would be angry with him if he knew. And of course he was too young to be in love in that way; and she, Anna had thought that it would be years and years before any thing of that sort came, and that she would be Rex's housekeeper ever so long. But what a heart must that be

which did not return his love! Anna, in the prospect of his suffering, was beginning to dislike her too fascinating cousin.

It seemed to her, as it did to Rex, that the weeks had been filled with a tumultuous life evident to all observers: if he had been questioned on the subject he would have said that he had no wish to conceal what he hoped would be an engagement which he should immediately tell his father of: and yet for the first time in his life he was reserved not only about his feelings but — which was more remarkable to Anna — about certain actions. She, on her side, was nervous each time her father or mother began to speak to her in private lest they should say anything about Rex and Gwendolen. But the elders were not in the least alive to this agitating drama, which went forward chiefly in a sort of pantomime extremely lucid in the minds thus expressing themselves, but easily missed by spectators who were running their eyes over the *Guardian* or the *Clerical Gazette* , and regarded the trivialities of the young ones with scarcely more interpretation than they gave to the action of lively ants.

"Where are you going, Rex?" said Anna one gray morning when her father had set off in his carriage to the sessions, Mrs. Gascoigne with him, and she had observed that her brother had on his antigropelos, the utmost approach he possessed to a hunting equipment.

"Going to see the hounds throw off at the Three

Barns."

"Are you going to take Gwendolen?" said Anna, timidly.

"She told you, did she?"

"No, but I thought — Does papa know you are going?"

"Not that I am aware of. I don't suppose he would trouble himself about the matter."

"You are going to use his horse?"

"He knows I do that whenever I can."

"Don't let Gwendolen ride after the hounds, Rex," said Anna, whose fears gifted her with second-sight.

"Why not?" said Rex, smiling rather provokingly.

"Papa and mamma and aunt Davilow all wish her not to. They think it is not right for her."

"Why should you suppose she is going to do what is not right?"

"Gwendolen minds nobody sometimes," said Anna getting bolder by dint of a little anger.

"Then she would not mind me," said Rex, perversely making a joke of poor Anna's anxiety.

"Oh Rex, I cannot bear it. You will make yourself very unhappy." Here

Anna burst into tears.

"Nannie, Nannie, what on earth is the matter with you?" said Rex, a little impatient at being kept in this way, hat on and whip in hand.

"She will not care for you one bit — I know she

never will!" said the poor child in a sobbing whisper. She had lost all control of herself.

Rex reddened and hurried away from her out of the hall door, leaving her to the miserable consciousness of having made herself disagreeable in vain.

He did think of her words as he rode along; they had the unwelcomeness which all unfavorable fortune-telling has, even when laughed at; but he quickly explained them as springing from little Anna's tenderness, and began to be sorry that he was obliged to come away without soothing her. Every other feeling on the subject, however, was quickly merged in a resistant belief to the contrary of hers, accompanied with a new determination to prove that he was right. This sort of certainty had just enough kinship to doubt and uneasiness to hurry on a confession which an untouched security might have delayed.

Gwendolen was already mounted and riding up and down the avenue when Rex appeared at the gate. She had provided herself against disappointment in case he did not appear in time by having the groom ready behind her, for she would not have waited beyond a reasonable time. But now the groom was dismissed, and the two rode away in delightful freedom. Gwendolen was in her highest spirits, and Rex thought that she had never looked so lovely before; her figure, her long white throat, and the curves of her

cheek and chin were always set off to perfection by the compact simplicity of her riding dress. He could not conceive a more perfect girl; and to a youthful lover like Rex it seems that the fundamental identity of the good, the true and the beautiful, is already extant and manifest in the object of his love. Most observers would have held it more than equally accountable that a girl should have like impressions about Rex, for in his handsome face there was nothing corresponding to the undefinable stinging quality — as it were a trace of demon ancestry — which made some beholders hesitate in their admiration of Gwendolen.

It was an exquisite January morning in which there was no threat of rain, but a gray sky making the calmest background for the charms of a mild winter scene — the grassy borders of the lanes, the hedgerows sprinkled with red berries and haunted with low twitterings, the purple bareness of the elms, the rich brown of the furrows. The horses' hoofs made a musical chime, accompanying their young voices. She was laughing at his equipment, for he was the reverse of a dandy, and he was enjoying her laughter; the freshness of the morning mingled with the freshness of their youth; and every sound that came from their clear throats, every glance they gave each other, was the bubbling outflow from a spring of joy. It was all morning to them, within and without. And thinking of them in these moments one is tempted to that futile sort

of wishing — if only things could have been a little otherwise then, so as to have been greatly otherwise after — if only these two beautiful young creatures could have pledged themselves to each other then and there, and never through life have swerved from that pledge! For some of the goodness which Rex believed in was there. Goodness is a large, often a prospective word; like harvest, which at one stage when we talk of it lies all underground, with an indeterminate future; is the germ prospering in the darkness? at another, it has put forth delicate green blades, and by-and-by the trembling blossoms are ready to be dashed off by an hour of rough wind or rain. Each stage has its peculiar blight, and may have the healthy life choked out of it by a particular action of the foul land which rears or neighbors it, or by damage brought from foulness afar.

"Anna had got it into her head that you would want to ride after the hounds this morning," said Rex, whose secret associations with Anna's words made this speech seem quite perilously near the most momentous of subjects.

"Did she?" said Gwendolen, laughingly. "What a little clairvoyant she is!"

"Shall you?" said Rex, who had not believed in her intending to do it if the elders objected, but confided in her having good reasons.

"I don't know. I can't tell what I shall do till I get there. Clairvoyants are often wrong: they foresee what

is likely. I am not fond of what is likely: it is always dull. I do what is unlikely."

"Ah, there you tell me a secret. When once I knew what people in general would be likely to do, I should know you would do the opposite. So you would have come round to a likelihood of your own sort. I shall be able to calculate on you. You couldn't surprise me."

"Yes, I could. I should turn round and do what was likely for people in general," said Gwendolen, with a musical laugh.

"You see you can't escape some sort of likelihood. And contradictoriness makes the strongest likelihood of all. You must give up a plan."

"No, I shall not. My plan is to do what pleases me." (Here should any young lady incline to imitate Gwendolen, let her consider the set of her head and neck: if the angle there had been different, the chin protrusive, and the cervical vertebrae a trifle more curved in their position, ten to one Gwendolen's words would have had a jar in them for the sweet-natured Rex. But everything odd in her speech was humor and pretty banter, which he was only anxious to turn toward one point.)

"Can you manage to feel only what pleases you?" said he.

"Of course not; that comes from what other people do. But if the world were pleasanter, one would

only feel what was pleasant. Girls' lives are so stupid: they never do what they like."

"I thought that was more the case of the men. They are forced to do hard things, and are often dreadfully bored, and knocked to pieces too. And then, if we love a girl very dearly we want to do as she likes, so after all you have your own way."

"I don't believe it. I never saw a married woman who had her own way."

"What should you like to do?" said Rex, quite guilelessly, and in real anxiety.

"Oh, I don't know! — go to the North Pole, or ride steeple-chases, or go to be a queen in the East like Lady Hester Stanhope," said Gwendolen, flightily. Her words were born on her lips, but she would have been at a loss to give an answer of deeper origin.

"You don't mean you would never be married?"

"No; I didn't say that. Only when I married, I should not do as other women do."

"You might do just as you liked if you married a man who loved you more dearly than anything else in the world," said Rex, who, poor youth, was moving in themes outside the curriculum in which he had promised to win distinction. "I know one who does."

"Don't talk of Mr. Middleton, for heaven's sake," said Gwendolen, hastily, a quick blush spreading over her face and neck; "that is Anna's chant. I hear the hounds. Let us go on."

She put her chestnut to a canter, and Rex had no choice but to follow her. Still he felt encouraged. Gwendolen was perfectly aware that her cousin was in love with her; but she had no idea that the matter was of any consequence, having never had the slightest visitation of painful love herself. She wished the small romance of Rex's devotion to fill up the time of his stay at Pennicote, and to avoid explanations which would bring it to an untimely end. Besides, she objected, with a sort of physical repulsion, to being directly made love to. With all her imaginative delight in being adored, there was a certain fierceness of maidenhood in her.

But all other thoughts were soon lost for her in the excitement of the scene at the Three Barns. Several gentlemen of the hunt knew her, and she exchanged pleasant greetings. Rex could not get another word with her. The color, the stir of the field had taken possession of Gwendolen with a strength which was not due to habitual associations, for she had never yet ridden after the hounds — only said she should like to do it, and so drawn forth a prohibition; her mamma dreading the danger, and her uncle declaring that for his part he held that kind of violent exercise unseemly in a woman, and that whatever might be done in other parts of the country, no lady of good position followed the Wessex hunt: no one but Mrs. Gadsby, the yeomanry captain's wife, who had been a kitchenmaid and still spoke like one. This last argument had some effect on Gwendolen,

and had kept her halting between her desire to assert her freedom and her horror of being classed with Mrs. Gadsby.

Some of the most unexceptionable women in the neighborhood occasionally went to see the hounds throw off; but it happened that none of them were present this morning to abstain from following, while Mrs. Gadsby, with her doubtful antecedents, grammatical and otherwise, was not visible to make following seem unbecoming. Thus Gwendolen felt no check on the animal stimulus that came from the stir and tongue of the hounds, the pawing of the horses, the varying voices of men, the movement hither and thither of vivid color on the background of green and gray stillness — that utmost excitement of the coming chase which consists in feeling something like a combination of dog and horse, with the superadded thrill of social vanities and consciousness of centaur-power which belongs to humankind.

Rex would have felt more of the same enjoyment if he could have kept nearer to Gwendolen, and not seen her constantly occupied with acquaintances, or looked at by would-be acquaintances, all on lively horses which veered about and swept the surrounding space as effectually as a revolving lever.

"Glad to see you here this fine morning, Miss Harleth," said Lord Brackenshaw, a middle-aged peer of aristocratic seediness in stained pink, with

easy-going manners which would have made the threatened deluge seem of no consequence. "We shall have a first-rate run. A pity you didn't go with us. Have you ever tried your little chestnut at a ditch? you wouldn't be afraid, eh?"

"Not the least in the world," said Gwendolen. And that was true: she was never fearful in action and companionship. "I have often taken him at some rails and a ditch too, near—"

"Ah, by Jove!" said his lordship, quietly, in notation that something was happening which must break off the dialogue: and as he reined off his horse, Rex was bringing his sober hackney up to Gwendolen's side when — the hounds gave tongue, and the whole field was in motion as if the whirl of the earth were carrying it; Gwendolen along with everything else; no word of notice to Rex, who without a second thought followed too. Could he let Gwendolen go alone? under other circumstances he would have enjoyed the run, but he was just now perturbed by the check which had been put on the impetus to utter his love, and get utterance in return, an impetus which could not at once resolve itself into a totally different sort of chase, at least with the consciousness of being on his father's gray nag, a good horse enough in his way, but of sober years and ecclesiastical habits. Gwendolen on her spirited little chestnut was up with the best, and felt as secure as an immortal goddess, having, if she had thought of risk, a

core of confidence that no ill luck would happen to her. But she thought of no such thing, and certainly not of any risk there might be for her cousin. If she had thought of him, it would have struck her as a droll picture that he should be gradually falling behind, and looking round in search of gates: a fine lithe youth, whose heart must be panting with all the spirit of a beagle, stuck as if under a wizard's spell on a stiff clerical hackney, would have made her laugh with a sense of fun much too strong for her to reflect on his mortification. But Gwendolen was apt to think rather of those who saw her than of those whom she could not see; and Rex was soon so far behind that if she had looked she would not have seen him. For I grieve to say that in the search for a gate, along a lane lately mended, Primrose fell, broke his knees, and undesignedly threw Rex over his head.

Fortunately a blacksmith's son who also followed the hounds under disadvantages, namely, on foot (a loose way of hunting which had struck some even frivolous minds as immoral), was naturally also in the rear, and happened to be within sight of Rex's misfortune. He ran to give help which was greatly needed, for Rex was a great deal stunned, and the complete recovery of sensation came in the form of pain. Joel Dagge on this occasion showed himself that most useful of personages, whose knowledge is of a kind suited to the immediate occasion: he not only

knew perfectly well what was the matter with the horse, how far they were both from the nearest public-house and from Pennicote Rectory, and could certify to Rex that his shoulder was only a bit out of joint, but also offered experienced surgical aid.

"Lord, sir, let me shove it in again for you! I's seen Nash, the bone-setter, do it, and done it myself for our little Sally twice over. It's all one and the same, shoulders is. If you'll trusten to me and tighten your mind up a bit, I'll do it for you in no time."

"Come then, old fellow," said Rex, who could tighten his mind better than his seat in the saddle. And Joel managed the operation, though not without considerable expense of pain to his patient, who turned so pitiably pale while tightening his mind, that Joel remarked, "Ah, sir, you aren't used to it, that's how it is. I's see lots and lots o' joints out. I see a man with his eye pushed out once — that was a rum go as ever I see. You can't have a bit o' fun wi'out such sort o' things. But it went in again. I's swallowed three teeth mysen, as sure as I'm alive. Now, sirrey" (this was addressed to Primrose), "come alonk — you musn't make believe as you can't."

Joel being clearly a low character, it is, happily, not necessary to say more of him to the refined reader, than that he helped Rex to get home with as little delay as possible. There was no alternative but to get home, though all the while he was in anxiety about

Gwendolen, and more miserable in the thought that she, too, might have had an accident, than in the pain of his own bruises and the annoyance he was about to cause his father. He comforted himself about her by reflecting that every one would be anxious to take care of her, and that some acquaintance would be sure to conduct her home.

Mr. Gascoigne was already at home, and was writing letters in his study, when he was interrupted by seeing poor Rex come in with a face which was not the less handsome and ingratiating for being pale and a little distressed. He was secretly the favorite son, and a young portrait of the father; who, however, never treated him with any partiality — rather, with an extra rigor. Mr. Gascoigne having inquired of Anna, knew that Rex had gone with Gwendolen to the meet at the Three Barns.

"What is the matter?" he said hastily, not laying down his pen.

"I'm very sorry, sir; Primrose has fallen down and broken his knees."

"Where have you been with him?" said Mr. Gascoigne, with a touch of severity. He rarely gave way to temper.

"To the Three Barns to see the hounds throw off."

"And you were fool enough to follow?"

"Yes, sir. I didn't go at any fences, but the horse got his leg into a hole."

"And you got hurt yourself, I hope, eh!"

"I got my shoulder put out, but a young blacksmith put it in again for me. I'm just a little battered, that's all."

"Well, sit down."

"I'm very sorry about the horse, sir; I knew it would be a vexation to you."

"And what has become of Gwendolen?" said Mr. Gascoigne, abruptly. Rex, who did not imagine that his father had made any inquiries about him, answered at first with a blush, which was the more remarkable for his previous paleness. Then he said, nervously—

"I am anxious to know — I should like to go or send at once to Offendene — but she rides so well, and I think she would keep up — there would most likely be many round her."

"I suppose it was she who led you on, eh?" said Mr. Gascoigne, laying down his pen, leaning back in his chair, and looking at Rex with more marked examination.

"It was natural for her to want to go: she didn't intend it beforehand — she was led away by the spirit of the thing. And, of course, I went when she went."

Mr. Gascoigne left a brief interval of silence, and then said, with quiet irony, — "But now you observe, young gentleman, that you are not furnished with a horse which will enable you to play the squire to your cousin. You must give up that amusement. You have

spoiled my nag for me, and that is enough mischief for one vacation. I shall beg you to get ready to start for Southampton to-morrow and join Stilfox, till you go up to Oxford with him. That will be good for your bruises as well as your studies."

Poor Rex felt his heart swelling and comporting itself as if it had been no better than a girl's.

"I hope you will not insist on my going immediately, sir."

"Do you feel too ill?"

"No, not that — but—" here Rex bit his lips and felt the tears starting, to his great vexation; then he rallied and tried to say more firmly, "I want to go to Offendene, but I can go this evening."

"I am going there myself. I can bring word about Gwendolen, if that is what you want."

Rex broke down. He thought he discerned an intention fatal to his happiness, nay, his life. He was accustomed to believe in his father's penetration, and to expect firmness. "Father, I can't go away without telling her that I love her, and knowing that she loves me."

Mr. Gascoigne was inwardly going through some self-rebuke for not being more wary, and was now really sorry for the lad; but every consideration was subordinate to that of using the wisest tactics in the case. He had quickly made up his mind and to answer the more quietly—

"My dear boy, you are too young to be taking

momentous, decisive steps of that sort. This is a fancy which you have got into your head during an idle week or two: you must set to work at something and dismiss it. There is every reason against it. An engagement at your age would be totally rash and unjustifiable; and moreover, alliances between first cousins are undesirable. Make up your mind to a brief disappointment. Life is full of them. We have all got to be broken in; and this is a mild beginning for you."

"No, not mild. I can't bear it. I shall be good for nothing. I shouldn't mind anything, if it were settled between us. I could do anything then," said Rex, impetuously. "But it's of no use to pretend that I will obey you. I can't do it. If I said I would, I should be sure to break my word. I should see Gwendolen again."

"Well, wait till to-morrow morning, that we may talk of the matter again — you will promise me that," said Mr. Gascoigne, quietly; and Rex did not, could not refuse.

The rector did not even tell his wife that he had any other reason for going to Offendene that evening than his desire to ascertain that Gwendolen had got home safely. He found her more than safe — elated. Mr. Quallon, who had won the brush, had delivered the trophy to her, and she had brought it before her, fastened on the saddle; more than that, Lord Brackenshaw had conducted her home, and had shown himself delighted with her spirited riding. All this was

told at once to her uncle, that he might see how well justified she had been in acting against his advice; and the prudential rector did feel himself in a slight difficulty, for at that moment he was particularly sensible that it was his niece's serious interest to be well regarded by the Brackenshaws, and their opinion as to her following the hounds really touched the essence of his objection. However, he was not obliged to say anything immediately, for Mrs. Davilow followed up Gwendolen's brief triumphant phrases with—

"Still, I do hope you will not do it again, Gwendolen. I should never have a moment's quiet. Her father died by an accident, you know."

Here Mrs. Davilow had turned away from Gwendolen, and looked at Mr. Gascoigne.

"Mamma, dear," said Gwendolen, kissing her merrily, and passing over the question of the fears which Mrs. Davilow had meant to account for, "children don't take after their parents in broken legs."

Not one word had yet been said about Rex. In fact there had been no anxiety about him at Offendene. Gwendolen had observed to her mamma, "Oh, he must have been left far behind, and gone home in despair," and it could not be denied that this was fortunate so far as it made way for Lord Brackenshaw's bringing her home. But now Mr. Gascoigne said, with some emphasis, looking at Gwendolen—

"Well, the exploit has ended better for you than

for Rex."

"Yes, I dare say he had to make a terrible round. You have not taught Primrose to take the fences, uncle," said Gwendolen, without the faintest shade of alarm in her looks and tone.

"Rex has had a fall," said Mr. Gascoigne, curtly, throwing himself into an arm-chair resting his elbows and fitting his palms and fingers together, while he closed his lips and looked at Gwendolen, who said—

"Oh, poor fellow! he is not hurt, I hope?" with a correct look of anxiety such as elated mortals try to super-induce when their pulses are all the while quick with triumph; and Mrs. Davilow, in the same moment, uttered a low "Good heavens! There!"

Mr. Gascoigne went on: "He put his shoulder out, and got some bruises, I believe." Here he made another little pause of observation; but Gwendolen, instead of any such symptoms as pallor and silence, had only deepened the compassionateness of her brow and eyes, and said again, "Oh, poor fellow! it is nothing serious, then?" and Mr. Gascoigne held his diagnosis complete. But he wished to make assurance doubly sure, and went on still with a purpose.

"He got his arm set again rather oddly. Some blacksmith — not a parishioner of mine — was on the field — a loose fish, I suppose, but handy, and set the arm for him immediately. So after all, I believe, I and Primrose come off worst. The horse's knees are cut to

pieces. He came down in a hole, it seems, and pitched Rex over his head."

Gwendolen's face had allowably become contented again, since Rex's arm had been reset; and now, at the descriptive suggestions in the latter part of her uncle's speech, her elated spirits made her features less unmanageable than usual; the smiles broke forth, and finally a descending scale of laughter.

"You are a pretty young lady — to laugh at other people's calamities," said Mr. Gascoigne, with a milder sense of disapprobation than if he had not had counteracting reasons to be glad that Gwendolen showed no deep feeling on the occasion.

"Pray forgive me, uncle. Now Rex is safe, it is so droll to fancy the figure he and Primrose would cut — in a lane all by themselves — only a blacksmith running up. It would make a capital caricature of 'Following the Hounds.'"

Gwendolen rather valued herself on her superior freedom in laughing where others might only see matter for seriousness. Indeed, the laughter became her person so well that her opinion of its gracefulness was often shared by others; and it even entered into her uncle's course of thought at this moment, that it was no wonder a boy should be fascinated by this young witch — who, however, was more mischievous than could be desired.

"How can you laugh at broken bones, child?" said Mrs. Davilow, still under her dominant anxiety. "I wish

we had never allowed you to have the horse. You will see that we were wrong," she added, looking with a grave nod at Mr. Gascoigne—"at least I was, to encourage her in asking for it."

"Yes, seriously, Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne, in a judicious tone of rational advice to a person understood to be altogether rational, "I strongly recommend you — I shall ask you to oblige me so far — not to repeat your adventure of to-day. Lord Brackenshaw is very kind, but I feel sure that he would concur with me in what I say. To be spoken of as 'the young lady who hunts' by way of exception, would give a tone to the language about you which I am sure you would not like. Depend upon it, his lordship would not choose that Lady Beatrice or Lady Maria should hunt in this part of the country, if they were old enough to do so. When you are married, it will be different: you may do whatever your husband sanctions. But if you intend to hunt, you must marry a man who can keep horses."

"I don't know why I should do anything so horrible as to marry without *that* prospect, at least," said Gwendolen, pettishly. Her uncle's speech had given her annoyance, which she could not show more directly; but she felt that she was committing herself, and after moving carelessly to another part of the room, went out.

"She always speaks in that way about marriage," said Mrs. Davilow; "but it will be different when she

has seen the right person."

"Her heart has never been in the least touched, that you know of?" said Mr. Gascoigne.

Mrs. Davilow shook her head silently. "It was only last night she said to me, 'Mamma, I wonder how girls manage to fall in love. It is easy to make them do it in books. But men are too ridiculous.'"

Mr. Gascoigne laughed a little, and made no further remark on the subject. The next morning at breakfast he said—

"How are your bruises, Rex?"

"Oh, not very mellow yet, sir; only beginning to turn a little."

"You don't feel quite ready for a journey to Southampton?"

"Not quite," answered Rex, with his heart metaphorically in his mouth.

"Well, you can wait till to-morrow, and go to say goodbye to them at Offendene."

Mrs. Gascoigne, who now knew the whole affair, looked steadily at her coffee lest she also should begin to cry, as Anna was doing already.

Mr. Gascoigne felt that he was applying a sharp remedy to poor Rex's acute attack, but he believed it to be in the end the kindest. To let him know the hopelessness of his love from Gwendolen's own lips might be curative in more ways than one.

"I can only be thankful that she doesn't care about

him," said Mrs. Gascoigne, when she joined her husband in his study. "There are things in Gwendolen I cannot reconcile myself to. My Anna is worth two of her, with all her beauty and talent. It looks very ill in her that she will not help in the schools with Anna — not even in the Sunday-school. What you or I advise is of no consequence to her: and poor Fannie is completely under her thumb. But I know you think better of her," Mrs. Gascoigne ended with a deferential hesitation.

"Oh, my dear, there is no harm in the girl. It is only that she has a high spirit, and it will not do to hold the reins too tight. The point is, to get her well married. She has a little too much fire in her for her present life with her mother and sisters. It is natural and right that she should be married soon — not to a poor man, but one who can give her a fitting position."

Presently Rex, with his arm in a sling, was on his two miles' walk to Offendene. He was rather puzzled by the unconditional permission to see Gwendolen, but his father's real ground of action could not enter into his conjectures. If it had, he would first have thought it horribly cold-blooded, and then have disbelieved in his father's conclusions.

When he got to the house, everybody was there but Gwendolen. The four girls, hearing him speak in the hall, rushed out of the library, which was their school-room, and hung round him with compassionate

inquiries about his arm. Mrs. Davilow wanted to know exactly what had happened, and where the blacksmith lived, that she might make him a present; while Miss Merry, who took a subdued and melancholy part in all family affairs, doubted whether it would not be giving too much encouragement to that kind of character. Rex had never found the family troublesome before, but just now he wished them all away and Gwendolen there, and he was too uneasy for good-natured feigning. When at last he had said, "Where is Gwendolen?" and Mrs. Davilow had told Alice to go and see if her sister were come down, adding, "I sent up her breakfast this morning. She needed a long rest." Rex took the shortest way out of his endurance by saying, almost impatiently, "Aunt, I want to speak to Gwendolen — I want to see her alone."

"Very well, dear; go into the drawing-room. I will send her there," said Mrs. Davilow, who had observed that he was fond of being with Gwendolen, as was natural, but had not thought of this as having any bearing on the realities of life: it seemed merely part of the Christmas holidays which were spinning themselves out.

Rex for his part thought that the realities of life were all hanging on this interview. He had to walk up and down the drawing-room in expectation for nearly ten minutes — ample space for all imaginative fluctuations; yet, strange to say, he was unvaryingly

occupied in thinking what and how much he could do, when Gwendolen had accepted him, to satisfy his father that the engagement was the most prudent thing in the world, since it inspired him with double energy for work. He was to be a lawyer, and what reason was there why he should not rise as high as Eldon did? He was forced to look at life in the light of his father's mind.

But when the door opened and she whose presence he was longing for entered, there came over him suddenly and mysteriously a state of tremor and distrust which he had never felt before. Miss Gwendolen, simple as she stood there, in her black silk, cut square about the round white pillar of her throat, a black band fastening her hair which streamed backward in smooth silky abundance, seemed more queenly than usual. Perhaps it was that there was none of the latent fun and tricksiness which had always pierced in her greeting of Rex. How much of this was due to her presentiment from what he had said yesterday that he was going to talk of love? How much from her desire to show regret about his accident? Something of both. But the wisdom of ages has hinted that there is a side of the bed which has a malign influence if you happen to get out on it; and this accident befalls some charming persons rather frequently. Perhaps it had befallen Gwendolen this morning. The hastening of her toilet, the way in which Bugle used the brush, the quality of

the shilling serial mistakenly written for her amusement, the probabilities of the coming day, and, in short, social institutions generally, were all objectionable to her. It was not that she was out of temper, but that the world was not equal to the demands of her fine organism.

However it might be, Rex saw an awful majesty about her as she entered and put out her hand to him, without the least approach to a smile in eyes or mouth. The fun which had moved her in the evening had quite evaporated from the image of his accident, and the whole affair seemed stupid to her. But she said with perfect propriety, "I hope you are not much hurt, Rex; I deserve that you should reproach me for your accident."

"Not at all," said Rex, feeling the soul within him spreading itself like an attack of illness. "There is hardly any thing the matter with me. I am so glad you had the pleasure: I would willingly pay for it by a tumble, only I was sorry to break the horse's knees."

Gwendolen walked to the hearth and stood looking at the fire in the most inconvenient way for conversation, so that he could only get a side view of her face.

"My father wants me to go to Southampton for the rest of the vacation," said Rex, his baritone trembling a little.

"Southampton! That's a stupid place to go to, isn't it?" said Gwendolen, chilly.

"It would be to me, because you would not be there." Silence.

"Should you mind about me going away, Gwendolen?"

"Of course. Every one is of consequence in this dreary country," said Gwendolen, curtly. The perception that poor Rex wanted to be tender made her curl up and harden like a sea-anemone at the touch of a finger.

"Are you angry with me, Gwendolen? Why do you treat me in this way all at once?" said Rex, flushing, and with more spirit in his voice, as if he too were capable of being angry.

Gwendolen looked round at him and smiled. "Treat you? Nonsense! I am only rather cross. Why did you come so very early? You must expect to find tempers in dishabille."

"Be as cross with me as you like — only don't treat me with indifference," said Rex, imploringly. "All the happiness of my life depends on your loving me — if only a little — better than any one else."

He tried to take her hand, but she hastily eluded his grasp and moved to the other end of the hearth, facing him.

"Pray don't make love to me! I hate it!" she looked at him fiercely.

Rex turned pale and was silent, but could not take his eyes off her, and the impetus was not yet exhausted

that made hers dart death at him. Gwendolen herself could not have foreseen that she should feel in this way. It was all a sudden, new experience to her. The day before she had been quite aware that her cousin was in love with her; she did not mind how much, so that he said nothing about it; and if any one had asked her why she objected to love-making speeches, she would have said, laughingly, "Oh I am tired of them all in the books." But now the life of passion had begun negatively in her. She felt passionately averse to this volunteered love.

To Rex at twenty the joy of life seemed at an end more absolutely than it can do to a man at forty. But before they had ceased to look at each other, he did speak again.

"Is that last word you have to say to me, Gwendolen? Will it always be so?"

She could not help seeing his wretchedness and feeling a little regret for the old Rex who had not offended her. Decisively, but yet with some return of kindness, she said—

"About making love? Yes. But I don't dislike you for anything else."

There was just a perceptible pause before he said a low "goodbye." and passed out of the room. Almost immediately after, she heard the heavy hall door bang behind him.

Mrs. Davilow, too, had heard Rex's hasty

departure, and presently came into the drawing-room, where she found Gwendolen seated on the low couch, her face buried, and her hair falling over her figure like a garment. She was sobbing bitterly. "My child, my child, what is it?" cried the mother, who had never before seen her darling struck down in this way, and felt something of the alarmed anguish that women, feel at the sight of overpowering sorrow in a strong man; for this child had been her ruler. Sitting down by her with circling arms, she pressed her cheek against Gwendolen's head, and then tried to draw it upward. Gwendolen gave way, and letting her head rest against her mother, cried out sobbingly, "Oh, mamma, what can become of my life? there is nothing worth living for!"

"Why, dear?" said Mrs. Davilow. Usually she herself had been rebuked by her daughter for involuntary signs of despair.

"I shall never love anybody. I can't love people. I hate them."

"The time will come, dear, the time will come."

Gwendolen was more and more convulsed with sobbing; but putting her arms round her mother's neck with an almost painful clinging, she said brokenly, "I can't bear any one to be very near me but you."

Then the mother began to sob, for this spoiled child had never shown such dependence on her before: and so they clung to each other.

CHAPTER VIII

What name doth Joy most borrow
When life is fair?
"To-morrow."
What name doth best fit Sorrow
In young despair?
"To-morrow."

There was a much more lasting trouble at the rectory. Rex arrived there only to throw himself on his bed in a state of apparent apathy, unbroken till the next day, when it began to be interrupted by more positive signs of illness. Nothing could be said about his going to Southampton: instead of that, the chief thought of his mother and Anna was how to tend this patient who did not want to be well, and from being the brightest, most grateful spirit in the household, was metamorphosed into an irresponsive, dull-eyed creature who met all affectionate attempts with a murmur of "Let me alone." His father looked beyond the crisis, and believed it to be the shortest way out of an unlucky affair; but he was sorry for the inevitable suffering, and went now and then to sit by him in silence for a few minutes, parting with a gentle pressure of his hand on Rex's blank brow, and a "God bless you, my boy." Warham and the younger children used to peep round the edge of the

door to see this incredible thing of their lively brother being laid low; but fingers were immediately shaken at them to drive them back. The guardian who was always there was Anna, and her little hand was allowed to rest within her brother's, though he never gave it a welcoming pressure. Her soul was divided between anguish for Rex and reproach of Gwendolen.

"Perhaps it is wicked of me, but I think I never *can* love her again," came as the recurrent burden of poor little Anna's inward monody. And even Mrs. Gascoigne had an angry feeling toward her niece which she could not refrain from expressing (apologetically) to her husband.

"I know of course it is better, and we ought to be thankful that she is not in love with the poor boy; but really. Henry, I think she is hard; she has the heart of a coquette. I can not help thinking that she must have made him believe something, or the disappointment would not have taken hold of him in that way. And some blame attaches to poor Fanny; she is quite blind about that girl."

Mr. Gascoigne answered imperatively: "The less said on that point the better, Nancy. I ought to have been more awake myself. As to the boy, be thankful if nothing worse ever happens to him. Let the thing die out as quickly as possible; and especially with regard to Gwendolen — let it be as if it had never been."

The rector's dominant feeling was that there had

been a great escape.

Gwendolen in love with Rex in return would have made a much harder problem, the solution of which might have been taken out of his hands.

But he had to go through some further difficulty.

One fine morning Rex asked for his bath, and made his toilet as usual. Anna, full of excitement at this change, could do nothing but listen for his coming down, and at last hearing his step, ran to the foot of the stairs to meet him. For the first time he gave her a faint smile, but it looked so melancholy on his pale face that she could hardly help crying.

"Nannie!" he said gently, taking her hand and leading her slowly along with him to the drawing-room. His mother was there, and when she came to kiss him, he said: "What a plague I am!"

Then he sat still and looked out of the bow-window on the lawn and shrubs covered with hoar-frost, across which the sun was sending faint occasional gleams — something like that sad smile on Rex's face, Anna thought. He felt as if he had had a resurrection into a new world, and did not know what to do with himself there, the old interests being left behind. Anna sat near him, pretending to work, but really watching him with yearning looks. Beyond the garden hedge there was a road where wagons and carts sometimes went on field-work: a railed opening was made in the hedge, because the upland with its

bordering wood and clump of ash-trees against the sky was a pretty sight. Presently there came along a wagon laden with timber; the horses were straining their grand muscles, and the driver having cracked his whip, ran along anxiously to guide the leader's head, fearing a swerve. Rex seemed to be shaken into attention, rose and looked till the last quivering trunk of the timber had disappeared, and then walked once or twice along the room. Mrs. Gascoigne was no longer there, and when he came to sit down again, Anna, seeing a return of speech in her brother's eyes, could not resist the impulse to bring a little stool and seat herself against his knee, looking up at him with an expression which seemed to say, "Do speak to me." And he spoke.

"I'll tell you what I'm thinking of, Nannie. I will go to Canada, or somewhere of that sort." (Rex had not studied the character of our colonial possessions.)

"Oh, Rex, not for always!"

"Yes, to get my bread there. I should like to build a hut, and work hard at clearing, and have everything wild about me, and a great wide quiet."

"And not take me with you?" said Anna, the big tears coming fast.

"How could I?"

"I should like it better than anything; and settlers go with their families. I would sooner go there than stay here in England. I could make the fires, and mend the clothes, and cook the food; and I could learn how to

make the bread before we went. It would be nicer than anything — like playing at life over again, as we used to do when we made our tent with the drugget, and had our little plates and dishes."

"Father and mother would not let you go."

"Yes, I think they would, when I explained everything. It would save money; and papa would have more to bring up the boys with."

There was further talk of the same practical kind at intervals, and it ended in Rex's being obliged to consent that Anna should go with him when he spoke to his father on the subject.

Of course it was when the rector was alone in his study. Their mother would become reconciled to whatever he decided on, but mentioned to her first, the question would have distressed her.

"Well, my children!" said Mr. Gascoigne, cheerfully, as they entered.

It was a comfort to see Rex about again.

"May we sit down with you a little, papa?" said Anna. "Rex has something to say."

"With all my heart."

It was a noticeable group that these three creatures made, each of them with a face of the same structural type — the straight brow, the nose suddenly straightened from an intention of being aquiline, the short upper lip, the short but strong and well-hung chin: there was even the same tone of complexion and set of

the eye. The gray-haired father was at once massive and keen-looking; there was a perpendicular line in his brow which when he spoke with any force of interest deepened; and the habit of ruling gave him an air of reserved authoritativeness. Rex would have seemed a vision of his father's youth, if it had been possible to imagine Mr. Gascoigne without distinct plans and without command, smitten with a heart sorrow, and having no more notion of concealment than a sick animal; and Anna was a tiny copy of Rex, with hair drawn back and knotted, her face following his in its changes of expression, as if they had one soul between them.

"You know all about what has upset me, father," Rex began, and Mr.

Gascoigne nodded.

"I am quite done up for life in this part of the world. I am sure it will be no use my going back to Oxford. I couldn't do any reading. I should fail, and cause you expense for nothing. I want to have your consent to take another course, sir."

Mr. Gascoigne nodded more slowly, the perpendicular line on his brow deepened, and Anna's trembling increased.

"If you would allow me a small outfit, I should like to go to the colonies and work on the land there." Rex thought the vagueness of the phrase prudential; "the colonies" necessarily embracing more advantages,

and being less capable of being rebutted on a single ground than any particular settlement.

"Oh, and with me, papa," said Anna, not bearing to be left out from the proposal even temporarily. "Rex would want some one to take care of him, you know — some one to keep house. And we shall never, either of us, be married. And I should cost nothing, and I should be so happy. I know it would be hard to leave you and mamma; but there are all the others to bring up, and we two should be no trouble to you any more."

Anna had risen from her seat, and used the feminine argument of going closer to her papa as she spoke. He did not smile, but he drew her on his knee and held her there, as if to put her gently out of the question while he spoke to Rex.

"You will admit that my experience gives me some power of judging for you, and that I can probably guide you in practical matters better than you can guide yourself?"

Rex was obliged to say, "Yes, sir."

"And perhaps you will admit — though I don't wish to press that point — that you are bound in duty to consider my judgment and wishes?"

"I have never yet placed myself in opposition to you, sir." Rex in his secret soul could not feel that he was bound not to go to the colonies, but to go to Oxford again — which was the point in question.

"But you will do so if you persist in setting your

mind toward a rash and foolish procedure, and deafening yourself to considerations which my experience of life assures me of. You think, I suppose, that you have had a shock which has changed all your inclinations, stupefied your brains, unfitted you for anything but manual labor, and given you a dislike to society? Is that what you believe?"

"Something like that. I shall never be up to the sort of work I must do to live in this part of the world. I have not the spirit for it. I shall never be the same again. And without any disrespect to you, father, I think a young fellow should be allowed to choose his way of life, if he does nobody any harm. There are plenty to stay at home, and those who like might be allowed to go where there are empty places."

"But suppose I am convinced on good evidence — as I am — that this state of mind of yours is transient, and that if you went off as you propose, you would by-and-by repent, and feel that you had let yourself slip back from the point you have been gaining by your education till now? Have you not strength of mind enough to see that you had better act on my assurance for a time, and test it? In my opinion, so far from agreeing with you that you should be free to turn yourself into a colonist and work in your shirt-sleeves with spade and hatchet — in my opinion you have no right whatever to expatriate yourself until you have honestly endeavored to turn to account the education

you have received here. I say nothing of the grief to your mother and me."

"I'm very sorry; but what can I do? I can't study — that's certain," said Rex.

"Not just now, perhaps. You will have to miss a term. I have made arrangements for you — how you are to spend the next two months. But I confess I am disappointed in you, Rex. I thought you had more sense than to take up such ideas — to suppose that because you have fallen into a very common trouble, such as most men have to go through, you are loosened from all bonds of duty — just as if your brain had softened and you were no longer a responsible being."

What could Rex say? Inwardly he was in a state of rebellion, but he had no arguments to meet his father's; and while he was feeling, in spite of any thing that might be said, that he should like to go off to "the colonies" to-morrow, it lay in a deep fold of his consciousness that he ought to feel — if he had been a better fellow he would have felt — more about his old ties. This is the sort of faith we live by in our soul sicknesses.

Rex got up from his seat, as if he held the conference to be at an end. "You assent to my arrangement, then?" said Mr. Gascoigne, with that distinct resolution of tone which seems to hold one in a vise.

There was a little pause before Rex answered,

"I'll try what I can do, sir. I can't promise." His thought was, that trying would be of no use.

Her father kept Anna, holding her fast, though she wanted to follow Rex. "Oh, papa," she said, the tears coming with her words when the door had closed; "it is very hard for him. Doesn't he look ill?"

"Yes, but he will soon be better; it will all blow over. And now, Anna, be as quiet as a mouse about it all. Never let it be mentioned when he is gone."

"No, papa. But I would not be like Gwendolen for any thing — to have people fall in love with me so. It is very dreadful."

Anna dared not say that she was disappointed at not being allowed to go to the colonies with Rex; but that was her secret feeling, and she often afterward went inwardly over the whole affair, saying to herself, "I should have done with going out, and gloves, and crinoline, and having to talk when I am taken to dinner — and all that!"

I like to mark the time, and connect the course of individual lives with the historic stream, for all classes of thinkers. This was the period when the broadening of gauge in crinolines seemed to demand an agitation for the general enlargement of churches, ball-rooms, and vehicles. But Anna Gascoigne's figure would only allow the size of skirt manufactured for young ladies of fourteen.

CHAPTER IX

I'll tell thee, Berthold, what men's hopes are like:
A silly child that, quivering with joy,
Would cast its little mimic fishing-line
Baited with loadstone for a bowl of toys
In the salt ocean.

Eight months after the arrival of the family at Offendene, that is to say in the end of the following June, a rumor was spread in the neighborhood which to many persons was matter of exciting interest. It had no reference to the results of the American war, but it was one which touched all classes within a certain circuit round Wanchester: the corn-factors, the brewers, the horse-dealers, and saddlers, all held it a laudable thing, and one which was to be rejoiced in on abstract grounds, as showing the value of an aristocracy in a free country like England; the blacksmith in the hamlet of Diplow felt that a good time had come round; the wives of laboring men hoped their nimble boys of ten or twelve would be taken into employ by the gentlemen in livery; and the farmers about Diplow admitted, with a tincture of bitterness and reserve, that a man might now again perhaps have an easier market or exchange for a rick of old hay or a wagon-load of straw. If such were the hopes of low persons not in society, it may be easily inferred that their betters had better reasons for

satisfaction, probably connected with the pleasures of life rather than its business. Marriage, however, must be considered as coming under both heads; and just as when a visit of majesty is announced, the dream of knighthood or a baronetcy is to be found under various municipal nightcaps, so the news in question raised a floating indeterminate vision of marriage in several well-bred imaginations.

The news was that Diplow Hall, Sir Hugo Mallinger's place, which had for a couple of years turned its white window-shutters in a painfully wall-eyed manner on its fine elms and beeches, its lilied pool and grassy acres specked with deer, was being prepared for a tenant, and was for the rest of the summer and through the hunting season to be inhabited in a fitting style both as to house and stable. But not by Sir Hugo himself: by his nephew, Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt, who was presumptive heir to the baronetcy, his uncle's marriage having produced nothing but girls. Nor was this the only contingency with which fortune flattered young Grandcourt, as he was pleasantly called; for while the chance of the baronetcy came through his father, his mother had given a baronial streak to his blood, so that if certain intervening persons slightly painted in the middle distance died, he would become a baron and peer of this realm.

It is the uneven allotment of nature that the male

bird alone has the tuft, but we have not yet followed the advice of hasty philosophers who would have us copy nature entirely in these matters; and if Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt became a baronet or a peer, his wife would share the title — which in addition to his actual fortune was certainly a reason why that wife, being at present unchosen, should be thought of by more than one person with a sympathetic interest as a woman sure to be well provided for.

Some readers of this history will doubtless regard it as incredible that people should construct matrimonial prospects on the mere report that a bachelor of good fortune and possibilities was coming within reach, and will reject the statement as a mere outflow of gall: they will aver that neither they nor their first cousins have minds so unbridled; and that in fact this is not human nature, which would know that such speculations might turn out to be fallacious, and would therefore not entertain them. But, let it be observed, nothing is here narrated of human nature generally: the history in its present stage concerns only a few people in a corner of Wessex — whose reputation, however, was unimpeached, and who, I am in the proud position of being able to state, were all on visiting terms with persons of rank.

There were the Arrowpoints, for example, in their beautiful place at Quetcham: no one could attribute sordid views in relation to their daughter's marriage to

parents who could leave her at least half a million; but having affectionate anxieties about their Catherine's position (she having resolutely refused Lord Slogan, an unexceptionable Irish peer, whose estate wanted nothing but drainage and population), they wondered, perhaps from something more than a charitable impulse, whether Mr. Grandcourt was good-looking, of sound constitution, virtuous, or at least reformed, and if liberal-conservative, not too liberal-conservative; and without wishing anybody to die, thought his succession to the title an event to be desired.

If the Arrowpoints had such ruminations, it is the less surprising that they were stimulated in Mr. Gascoigne, who for being a clergyman was not the less subject to the anxieties of a parent and guardian; and we have seen how both he and Mrs. Gascoigne might by this time have come to feel that he was overcharged with the management of young creatures who were hardly to be held in with bit or bridle, or any sort of metaphor that would stand for judicious advice.

Naturally, people did not tell each other all they felt and thought about young Grandcourt's advent: on no subject is this openness found prudently practicable — not even on the generation of acids, or the destination of the fixed stars: for either your contemporary with a mind turned toward the same subjects may find your ideas ingenious and forestall you in applying them, or he may have other views on

acids and fixed stars, and think ill of you in consequence. Mr. Gascoigne did not ask Mr. Arrowpoint if he had any trustworthy source of information about Grandcourt considered as a husband for a charming girl; nor did Mrs. Arrowpoint observe to Mrs. Davilow that if the possible peer sought a wife in the neighborhood of Diplow, the only reasonable expectation was that he would offer his hand to Catherine, who, however, would not accept him unless he were in all respects fitted to secure her happiness. Indeed, even to his wife the rector was silent as to the contemplation of any matrimonial result, from the probability that Mr. Grandcourt would see Gwendolen at the next Archery Meeting; though Mrs. Gascoigne's mind was very likely still more active in the same direction. She had said interjectionally to her sister, "It would be a mercy, Fanny, if that girl were well married!" to which Mrs. Davilow discerning some criticism of her darling in the fervor of that wish, had not chosen to make any audible reply, though she had said inwardly, "You will not get her to marry for your pleasure"; the mild mother becoming rather saucy when she identified herself with her daughter.

To her husband Mrs. Gascoigne said, "I hear Mr. Grandcourt has got two places of his own, but he comes to Diplow for the hunting. It is to be hoped he will set a good example in the neighborhood. Have you heard what sort of a young man he is, Henry?"

Mr. Gascoigne had not heard; at least, if his male acquaintances had gossiped in his hearing, he was not disposed to repeat their gossip, or to give it any emphasis in his own mind. He held it futile, even if it had been becoming, to show any curiosity as to the past of a young man whose birth, wealth, and consequent leisure made many habits venial which under other circumstances would have been inexcusable. Whatever Grandcourt had done, he had not ruined himself; and it is well-known that in gambling, for example, whether of the business or holiday sort, a man who has the strength of mind to leave off when he has only ruined others, is a reformed character. This is an illustration merely: Mr. Gascoigne had not heard that Grandcourt had been a gambler; and we can hardly pronounce him singular in feeling that a landed proprietor with a mixture of noble blood in his veins was not to be an object of suspicious inquiry like a reformed character who offers himself as your butler or footman. Reformation, where a man can afford to do without it, can hardly be other than genuine. Moreover, it was not certain on any other showing hitherto, that Mr. Grandcourt had needed reformation more than other young men in the ripe youth of five-and-thirty; and, at any rate, the significance of what he had been must be determined by what he actually was.

Mrs. Davilow, too, although she would not respond to her sister's pregnant remark, could not be

inwardly indifferent to an advent that might promise a brilliant lot for Gwendolen. A little speculation on "what may be" comes naturally, without encouragement — comes inevitably in the form of images, when unknown persons are mentioned; and Mr. Grandcourt's name raised in Mrs. Davilow's mind first of all the picture of a handsome, accomplished, excellent young man whom she would be satisfied with as a husband for her daughter; but then came the further speculation — would Gwendolen be satisfied with him? There was no knowing what would meet that girl's taste or touch her affections — it might be something else than excellence; and thus the image of the perfect suitor gave way before a fluctuating combination of qualities that might be imagined to win Gwendolen's heart. In the difficulty of arriving at the particular combination which would insure that result, the mother even said to herself, "It would not signify about her being in love, if she would only accept the right person." For whatever marriage had been for herself, how could she the less desire it for her daughter? The difference her own misfortunes made was, that she never dared to dwell much to Gwendolen on the desirableness of marriage, dreading an answer something like that of the future Madame Roland, when her gentle mother urging the acceptance of a suitor, said, "Tu seras heureuse, ma chère." "Oui, maman, comme toi."

In relation to the problematic Mr. Grandcourt least of all would Mrs. Davilow have willingly let fall a hint of the aerial castle-building which she had the good taste to be ashamed of; for such a hint was likely enough to give an adverse poise to Gwendolen's own thought, and make her detest the desirable husband beforehand. Since that scene after poor Rex's farewell visit, the mother had felt a new sense of peril in touching the mystery of her child's feeling, and in rashly determining what was her welfare: only she could think of welfare in no other shape than marriage.

The discussion of the dress that Gwendolen was to wear at the Archery Meeting was a relevant topic, however; and when it had been decided that as a touch of color on her white cashmere, nothing, for her complexion, was comparable to pale green — a feather which she was trying in her hat before the looking-glass having settled the question — Mrs. Davilow felt her ears tingle when Gwendolen, suddenly throwing herself into the attitude of drawing her bow, said with a look of comic enjoyment — "How I pity all the other girls at the Archery Meeting — all thinking of Mr. Grandcourt! And they have not a shadow of a chance."

Mrs. Davilow had not the presence of mind to answer immediately, and Gwendolen turned round quickly toward her, saying, wickedly— "Now you know they have not, mamma. You and my uncle and aunt — you all intend him to fall in love with me."

Mrs. Davilow, piqued into a little stratagem, said, "Oh, my, dear, that is not so certain. Miss Arrowpoint has charms which you have not."

"I know, but they demand thought. My arrow will pierce him before he has time for thought. He will declare himself my slave — I shall send him round the world to bring me back the wedding ring of a happy woman — in the meantime all the men who are between him and the title will die of different diseases — he will come back Lord Grandcourt — but without the ring — and fall at my feet. I shall laugh at him — he will rise in resentment — I shall laugh more — he will call for his steed and ride to Quetcham, where he will find Miss Arrowpoint just married to a needy musician, Mrs. Arrowpoint tearing her cap off, and Mr. Arrowpoint standing by. Exit Lord Grandcourt, who returns to Diplow, and, like M. Jabot, *change de linge* ."

Was ever any young witch like this? You thought of hiding things from her — sat upon your secret and looked innocent, and all the while she knew by the corner of your eye that it was exactly five pounds ten you were sitting on! As well turn the key to keep out the damp! It was probable that by dint of divination she already knew more than any one else did of Mr. Grandcourt. That idea in Mrs. Davilow's mind prompted the sort of question which often comes without any other apparent reason than the faculty of

speech and the not knowing what to do with it.

"Why, what kind of a man do you imagine him to be, Gwendolen?"

"Let me see!" said the witch, putting her forefinger to her lips, with a little frown, and then stretching out the finger with decision. "Short — just above my shoulder — trying to make himself tall by turning up his mustache and keeping his beard long — a glass in his right eye to give him an air of distinction — a strong opinion about his waistcoat, but uncertain and trimming about the weather, on which he will try to draw me out. He will stare at me all the while, and the glass in his eye will cause him to make horrible faces, especially when he smiles in a flattering way. I shall cast down my eyes in consequence, and he will perceive that I am not indifferent to his attentions. I shall dream that night that I am looking at the extraordinary face of a magnified insect — and the next morning he will make an offer of his hand; the sequel as before."

"That is a portrait of some one you have seen already, Gwen. Mr. Grandcourt may be a delightful young man for what you know."

"Oh, yes," said Gwendolen, with a high note of careless admission, taking off her best hat and turning it round on her hand contemplatively. "I wonder what sort of behavior a delightful young man would have? I know he would have hunters and racers, and a London

house and two country-houses — one with battlements and another with a veranda. And I feel sure that with a little murdering he might get a title."

The irony of this speech was of the doubtful sort that has some genuine belief mixed up with it. Poor Mrs. Davilow felt uncomfortable under it. Her own meanings being usually literal and in intention innocent; and she said with a distressed brow:

"Don't talk in that way, child, for heaven's sake! you do read such books — they give you such ideas of everything. I declare when your aunt and I were your age we knew nothing about wickedness. I think it was better so."

"Why did you not bring me up in that way, mamma?" said Gwendolen. But immediately perceiving in the crushed look and rising sob that she had given a deep wound, she tossed down her hat and knelt at her mother's feet crying—

"Mamma, mamma! I was only speaking in fun. I meant nothing."

"How could I, Gwendolen?" said poor Mrs. Davilow, unable to hear the retraction, and sobbing violently while she made the effort to speak. "Your will was always too strong for me — if everything else had been different."

This disjoined logic was intelligible enough to the daughter. "Dear mamma, I don't find fault with you — I love you," said Gwendolen, really compunctious. "How

can you help what I am? Besides, I am very charming. Come, now." Here Gwendolen with her handkerchief gently rubbed away her mother's tears. "Really — I am contented with myself. I like myself better than I should have liked my aunt and you. How dreadfully dull you must have been!"

Such tender cajolery served to quiet the mother, as it had often done before after like collisions. Not that the collisions had often been repeated at the same point; for in the memory of both they left an association of dread with the particular topics which had occasioned them: Gwendolen dreaded the unpleasant sense of compunction toward her mother, which was the nearest approach to self-condemnation and self-distrust that she had known; and Mrs. Davilow's timid maternal conscience dreaded whatever had brought on the slightest hint of reproach. Hence, after this little scene, the two concurred in excluding Mr. Grandcourt from their conversation.

When Mr. Gascoigne once or twice referred to him, Mrs. Davilow feared least Gwendolen should betray some of her alarming keen-sightedness about what was probably in her uncle's mind; but the fear was not justified. Gwendolen knew certain differences in the characters with which she was concerned as birds know climate and weather; and for the very reason that she was determined to evade her uncle's control, she was determined not to clash with him. The good

understanding between them was much fostered by their enjoyment of archery together: Mr. Gascoigne, as one of the best bowmen in Wessex, was gratified to find the elements of like skill in his niece; and Gwendolen was the more careful not to lose the shelter of his fatherly indulgence, because since the trouble with Rex both Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna had been unable to hide what she felt to be a very unreasonable alienation from her. Toward Anna she took some pains to behave with a regretful affectionateness; but neither of them dared to mention Rex's name, and Anna, to whom the thought of him was part of the air she breathed, was ill at ease with the lively cousin who had ruined his happiness. She tried dutifully to repress any sign of her changed feeling; but who in pain can imitate the glance and hand-touch of pleasure.

This unfair resentment had rather a hardening effect on Gwendolen, and threw her into a more defiant temper. Her uncle too might be offended if she refused the next person who fell in love with her; and one day when that idea was in her mind she said—

"Mamma, I see now why girls are glad to be married — to escape being expected to please everybody but themselves."

Happily, Mr. Middleton was gone without having made any avowal; and notwithstanding the admiration for the handsome Miss Harleth, extending perhaps over thirty square miles in a part of Wessex well studded

with families whose numbers included several disengaged young men, each glad to seat himself by the lively girl with whom it was so easy to get on in conversation, — notwithstanding these grounds for arguing that Gwendolen was likely to have other suitors more explicit than the cautious curate, the fact was not so.

Care has been taken not only that the trees should not sweep the stars down, but also that every man who admires a fair girl should not be enamored of her, and even that every man who is enamored should not necessarily declare himself. There are various refined shapes in which the price of corn, known to be potent cause in their relation, might, if inquired into, show why a young lady, perfect in person, accomplishments, and costume, has not the trouble of rejecting many offers; and nature's order is certainly benignant in not obliging us one and all to be desperately in love with the most admirable mortal we have ever seen. Gwendolen, we know, was far from holding that supremacy in the minds of all observers. Besides, it was but a poor eight months since she had come to Offendene, and some inclinations become manifest slowly, like the sunward creeping of plants.

In face of this fact that not one of the eligible young men already in the neighborhood had made Gwendolen an offer, why should Mr. Grandcourt be thought of as likely to do what they had left undone?

Perhaps because he was thought of as still more eligible; since a great deal of what passes for likelihood in the world is simply the reflex of a wish. Mr. and Mrs. Arrowpoint, for example, having no anxiety that Miss Harleth should make a brilliant marriage, had quite a different likelihood in their minds.

CHAPTER X

1st Gent. What woman should be? Sir, consult the taste
Of marriageable men. This planet's store
In iron, cotton, wool, or chemicals—
All matter rendered to our plastic skill,
Is wrought in shapes responsive to demand;
The market's pulse makes index high or low,
By rule sublime. Our daughters must be wives,
And to the wives must be what men will choose;
Men's taste is woman's test. You mark the phrase?
'Tis good, I think? — the sense well-winged and poised
With t's and s's.
2nd Gent. Nay, but turn it round;
Give us the test of taste. A fine menu—
Is it to-day what Roman epicures
Insisted that a gentleman must eat
To earn the dignity of dining well?

Brackenshaw Park, where the Archery Meeting was held, looked out from its gentle heights far over the neighboring valley to the outlying eastern downs and

the broad, slow rise of cultivated country, hanging like a vast curtain toward the west. The castle which stood on the highest platform of the clustered hills, was built of rough-hewn limestone, full of lights and shadows made by the dark dust of lichens and the washings of the rain. Masses of beech and fir sheltered it on the north, and spread down here and there along the green slopes like flocks seeking the water which gleamed below. The archery-ground was a carefully-kept enclosure on a bit of table-land at the farthest end of the park, protected toward the southwest by tall elms and a thick screen of hollies, which kept the gravel walk and the bit of newly-mown turf where the targets were placed in agreeable afternoon shade. The Archery Hall with an arcade in front showed like a white temple against the greenery on the north side.

What could make a better background for the flower-groups of ladies, moving and bowing and turning their necks as it would become the leisurely lilies to do if they took to locomotion. The sounds too were very pleasant to hear, even when the military band from Wanchester ceased to play: musical laughs in all the registers and a harmony of happy, friendly speeches, now rising toward mild excitement, now sinking to an agreeable murmur.

No open-air amusement could be much freer from those noisy, crowding conditions which spoil most modern pleasures; no Archery Meeting could be more

select, the number of friends accompanying the members being restricted by an award of tickets, so as to keep the maximum within the limits of convenience for the dinner and ball to be held in the castle. Within the enclosure no plebeian spectators were admitted except Lord Brackenshaw's tenants and their families, and of these it was chiefly the feminine members who used the privilege, bringing their little boys and girls or younger brothers and sisters. The males among them relieved the insipidity of the entertainment by imaginative betting, in which the stake was "anything you like," on their favorite archers; but the young maidens, having a different principle of discrimination, were considering which of those sweetly-dressed ladies they would choose to be, if the choice were allowed them. Probably the form these rural souls would most have striven for as a tabernacle, was some other than Gwendolen's — one with more pink in her cheeks and hair of the most fashionable yellow; but among the male judges in the ranks immediately surrounding her there was unusual unanimity in pronouncing her the finest girl present.

No wonder she enjoyed her existence on that July day. Preeminence is sweet to those who love it, even under mediocre circumstances. Perhaps it was not quite mythical that a slave has been proud to be bought first; and probably a barn-door fowl on sale, though he may not have understood himself to be called the best of a

bad lot, may have a self-informed consciousness of his relative importance, and strut consoled. But for complete enjoyment the outward and the inward must concur. And that concurrence was happening to Gwendolen.

Who can deny that bows and arrows are among the prettiest weapons in the world for feminine forms to play with? They prompt attitudes full of grace and power, where that fine concentration of energy seen in all markmanship, is freed from associations of bloodshed. The time-honored British resource of "killing something" is no longer carried on with bow and quiver; bands defending their passes against an invading nation fight under another sort of shade than a cloud of arrows; and poisoned darts are harmless survivals either in rhetoric or in regions comfortably remote. Archery has no ugly smell of brimstone; breaks nobody's shins, breeds no athletic monsters; its only danger is that of failing, which for generous blood is enough to mould skilful action. And among the Brackenshaw archers the prizes were all of the nobler symbolic kind; not properly to be carried off in a parcel, degrading honor into gain; but the gold arrow and the silver, the gold star and the silver, to be worn for a long time in sign of achievement and then transferred to the next who did excellently. These signs of preeminence had the virtue of wreaths without their inconveniences, which might have produced a

melancholy effect in the heat of the ball-room. Altogether the Brackenshaw Archery Club was an institution framed with good taste, so as not to have by necessity any ridiculous incidents.

And to-day all incalculable elements were in its favor. There was mild warmth, and no wind to disturb either hair or drapery or the course of the arrow; all skillful preparation had fair play, and when there was a general march to extract the arrows, the promenade of joyous young creatures in light speech and laughter, the graceful movement in common toward a common object, was a show worth looking at. Here Gwendolen seemed a Calypso among her nymphs. It was in her attitudes and movements that every one was obliged to admit her surpassing charm.

"That girl is like a high-mettled racer," said Lord Brackenshaw to young Clintock, one of the invited spectators.

"First chop! tremendously pretty too," said the elegant Grecian, who had been paying her assiduous attention; "I never saw her look better."

Perhaps she had never looked so well. Her face was beaming with young pleasure in which there was no malign rays of discontent; for being satisfied with her own chances, she felt kindly toward everybody and was satisfied with the universe. Not to have the highest distinction in rank, not to be marked out as an heiress, like Miss Arrowpoint, gave an added triumph in

eclipsing those advantages. For personal recommendation she would not have cared to change the family group accompanying her for any other: her mamma's appearance would have suited an amiable duchess; her uncle and aunt Gascoigne with Anna made equally gratifying figures in their way; and Gwendolen was too full of joyous belief in herself to feel in the least jealous though Miss Arrowpoint was one of the best archeresses.

Even the reappearance of the formidable Herr Klesmer, which caused some surprise in the rest of the company, seemed only to fall in with Gwendolen's inclination to be amused. Short of Apollo himself, what great musical *maestro* could make a good figure at an archery meeting? There was a very satirical light in Gwendolen's eyes as she looked toward the Arrowpoint party on their first entrance, when the contrast between Klesmer and the average group of English country people seemed at its utmost intensity in the close neighborhood of his hosts — or patrons, as Mrs. Arrowpoint would have liked to hear them called, that she might deny the possibility of any longer patronizing genius, its royalty being universally acknowledged. The contrast might have amused a graver personage than Gwendolen. We English are a miscellaneous people, and any chance fifty of us will present many varieties of animal architecture or facial ornament; but it must be admitted that our prevailing expression is not that of a

lively, impassioned race, preoccupied with the ideal and carrying the real as a mere make-weight. The strong point of the English gentleman pure is the easy style of his figure and clothing; he objects to marked ins and outs in his costume, and he also objects to looking inspired.

Fancy an assemblage where the men had all that ordinary stamp of the well-bred Englishman, watching the entrance of Herr Klesmer — his mane of hair floating backward in massive inconsistency with the chimney-pot hat, which had the look of having been put on for a joke above his pronounced but well-modeled features and powerful clear-shaven mouth and chin; his tall, thin figure clad in a way which, not being strictly English, was all the worse for its apparent emphasis of intention. Draped in a loose garment with a Florentine *berretta* on his head, he would have been fit to stand by the side of Leonardo de Vinci; but how when he presented himself in trousers which were not what English feeling demanded about the knees? — and when the fire that showed itself in his glances and the movements of his head, as he looked round him with curiosity, was turned into comedy by a hat which ruled that mankind should have well-cropped hair and a staid demeanor, such, for example, as Mr. Arrowsmith's, whose nullity of face and perfect tailoring might pass everywhere without ridicule? One feels why it is often better for greatness to be dead, and to have got rid of

the outward man.

Many present knew Klesmer, or knew of him; but they had only seen him on candle-light occasions when he appeared simply as a musician, and he had not yet that supreme, world-wide celebrity which makes an artist great to the most ordinary people by their knowledge of his great expensiveness. It was literally a new light for them to see him in — presented unexpectedly on this July afternoon in an exclusive society: some were inclined to laugh, others felt a little disgust at the want of judgment shown by the Arrowpoints in this use of an introductory card.

"What extreme guys those artistic fellows usually are?" said young Clintock to Gwendolen. "Do look at the figure he cuts, bowing with his hand on his heart to Lady Brackenshaw — and Mrs. Arrowpoint's feather just reaching his shoulder."

"You are one of the profane," said Gwendolen. "You are blind to the majesty of genius. Herr Klesmer smites me with awe; I feel crushed in his presence; my courage all oozes from me."

"Ah, you understand all about his music."

"No, indeed," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh; "it is he who understands all about mine and thinks it pitiable." Klesmer's verdict on her singing had been an easier joke to her since he had been struck by her *plastik* .

"It is not addressed to the ears of the future, I

suppose. I'm glad of that: it suits mine."

"Oh, you are very kind. But how remarkably well Miss Arrowpoint looks to-day! She would make quite a fine picture in that gold-colored dress."

"Too splendid, don't you think?"

"Well, perhaps a little too symbolical — too much like the figure of Wealth in an allegory."

This speech of Gwendolen's had rather a malicious sound, but it was not really more than a bubble of fun. She did not wish Miss Arrowpoint or any one else to be out of the way, believing in her own good fortune even more than in her skill. The belief in both naturally grew stronger as the shooting went on, for she promised to achieve one of the best scores — a success which astonished every one in a new member; and to Gwendolen's temperament one success determined another. She trod on air, and all things pleasant seemed possible. The hour was enough for her, and she was not obliged to think what she should do next to keep her life at the due pitch.

"How does the scoring stand, I wonder?" said Lady Brackenshaw, a gracious personage who, adorned with two little girls and a boy of stout make, sat as lady paramount. Her lord had come up to her in one of the intervals of shooting. "It seems to me that Miss Harleth is likely to win the gold arrow."

"Gad, I think she will, if she carries it on! she is running Juliet Fenn hard. It is wonderful for one in her

first year. Catherine is not up to her usual mark," continued his lordship, turning to the heiress's mother who sat near. "But she got the gold arrow last time. And there's a luck even in these games of skill. That's better. It gives the hinder ones a chance."

"Catherine will be very glad for others to win," said Mrs. Arrowpoint, "she is so magnanimous. It was entirely her considerateness that made us bring Herr Klesmer instead of Canon Stopley, who had expressed a wish to come. For her own pleasure, I am sure she would rather have brought the Canon; but she is always thinking of others. I told her it was not quite *en règle* to bring one so far out of our own set; but she said, 'Genius itself is not *en règle* ; it comes into the world to make new rules.' And one must admit that."

"Ay, to be sure," said Lord Brackenshaw, in a tone of careless dismissal, adding quickly, "For my part, I am not magnanimous; I should like to win. But, confound it! I never have the chance now. I'm getting old and idle. The young ones beat me. As old Nestor says — the gods don't give us everything at one time: I was a young fellow once, and now I am getting an old and wise one. Old, at any rate; which is a gift that comes to everybody if they live long enough, so it raises no jealousy." The Earl smiled comfortably at his wife.

"Oh, my lord, people who have been neighbors twenty years must not talk to each other about age,"

said Mrs. Arrowpoint. "Years, as the Tuscans say, are made for the letting of houses. But where is our new neighbor? I thought Mr. Grandcourt was to be here to-day."

"Ah, by the way, so he was. The time's getting on too," said his lordship, looking at his watch. "But he only got to Diplow the other day. He came to us on Tuesday and said he had been a little bothered. He may have been pulled in another direction. Why, Gascoigne!" — the rector was just then crossing at a little distance with Gwendolen on his arm, and turned in compliance with the call—"this is a little too bad; you not only beat us yourself, but you bring up your niece to beat all the archeresses."

"It *is* rather scandalous in her to get the better of elder members," said Mr. Gascoigne, with much inward satisfaction curling his short upper lip. "But it is not my doing, my lord. I only meant her to make a tolerable figure, without surpassing any one."

"It is not my fault, either," said Gwendolen, with pretty archness. "If I am to aim, I can't help hitting."

"Ay, ay, that may be a fatal business for some people," said Lord Brackenshaw, good-humoredly; then taking out his watch and looking at Mrs. Arrowpoint again—"The time's getting on, as you say. But Grandcourt is always late. I notice in town he's always late, and he's no bowman — understands nothing about it. But I told him he must come; he would see the

flower of the neighborhood here. He asked about you — had seen Arrowpoint's card. I think you had not made his acquaintance in town. He has been a good deal abroad. People don't know him much."

"No; we are strangers," said Mrs. Arrowpoint. "But that is not what might have been expected. For his uncle Sir Hugo Mallinger and I are great friends when we meet."

"I don't know; uncles and nephews are not so likely to be seen together as uncles and nieces," said his lordship, smiling toward the rector. "But just come with me one instant, Gascoigne, will you? I want to speak a word about the clout-shooting."

Gwendolen chose to go too and be deposited in the same group with her mamma and aunt until she had to shoot again. That Mr. Grandcourt might after all not appear on the archery-ground, had begun to enter into Gwendolen's thought as a possible deduction from the completeness of her pleasure. Under all her saucy satire, provoked chiefly by her divination that her friends thought of him as a desirable match for her, she felt something very far from indifference as to the impression she would make on him. True, he was not to have the slightest power over her (for Gwendolen had not considered that the desire to conquer is itself a sort of subjection); she had made up her mind that he was to be one of those complimentary and assiduously admiring men of whom even her narrow experience had

shown her several with various-colored beards and various styles of bearing; and the sense that her friends would want her to think him delightful, gave her a resistant inclination to presuppose him ridiculous. But that was no reason why she could spare his presence: and even a passing prevision of trouble in case she despised and refused him, raised not the shadow of a wish that he should save her that trouble by showing no disposition to make her an offer. Mr. Grandcourt taking hardly any notice of her, and becoming shortly engaged to Miss Arrowpoint, was not a picture which flattered her imagination.

Hence Gwendolen had been all ear to Lord Brackenshaw's mode of accounting for Grandcourt's non-appearance; and when he did arrive, no consciousness — not even Mrs. Arrowpoint's or Mr. Gascoigne's — was more awake to the fact than hers, although she steadily avoided looking toward any point where he was likely to be. There should be no slightest shifting of angles to betray that it was of any consequence to her whether the much-talked-of Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt presented himself or not. She became again absorbed in the shooting, and so resolutely abstained from looking round observantly that, even supposing him to have taken a conspicuous place among the spectators, it might be clear she was not aware of him. And all the while the certainty that he was there made a distinct thread in her consciousness.

Perhaps her shooting was the better for it: at any rate, it gained in precision, and she at last raised a delightful storm of clapping and applause by three hits running in the gold — a feat which among the Brackenshaw archers had not the vulgar reward of a shilling poll-tax, but that of a special gold star to be worn on the breast. That moment was not only a happy one to herself — it was just what her mamma and her uncle would have chosen for her. There was a general falling into ranks to give her space that she might advance conspicuously to receive the gold star from the hands of Lady Brackenshaw; and the perfect movement of her fine form was certainly a pleasant thing to behold in the clear afternoon light when the shadows were long and still. She was the central object of that pretty picture, and every one present must gaze at her. That was enough: she herself was determined to see nobody in particular, or to turn her eyes any way except toward Lady Brackenshaw, but her thoughts undeniably turned in other ways. It entered a little into her pleasure that Herr Klesmer must be observing her at a moment when music was out of the question, and his superiority very far in the background; for vanity is as ill at ease under indifference as tenderness is under a love which it cannot return; and the unconquered Klesmer threw a trace of his malign power even across her pleasant consciousness that Mr. Grandcourt was seeing her to the utmost advantage, and was probably giving her an

admiration unmixed with criticism. She did not expect to admire *him* , but that was not necessary to her peace of mind.

Gwendolen met Lady Brackenshaw's gracious smile without blushing (which only came to her when she was taken by surprise), but with a charming gladness of expression, and then bent with easy grace to have the star fixed near her shoulder. That little ceremony had been over long enough for her to have exchanged playful speeches and received congratulations as she moved among the groups who were now interesting themselves in the results of the scoring; but it happened that she stood outside examining the point of an arrow with rather an absent air when Lord Brackenshaw came up to her and said:

"Miss Harleth, here is a gentleman who is not willing to wait any longer for an introduction. He has been getting Mrs. Davilow to send me with him. Will you allow me to introduce Mr. Mallinger Grandcourt?"

BOOK II — MEETING STREAMS

CHAPTER XI

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

Mr. Grandcourt's wish to be introduced had no suddenness for Gwendolen; but when Lord Brackenshaw moved aside a little for the prefigured stranger to come forward and she felt herself face to face with the real man, there was a little shock which flushed her cheeks and vexatiously deepened with her consciousness of it. The shock came from the reversal of her expectations: Grandcourt could hardly have been more unlike all her imaginary portraits of him. He was slightly taller than herself, and their eyes seemed to be on a level; there was not the faintest smile on his face as he looked at her, not a trace of self-consciousness or anxiety in his bearing: when he raised his hat he showed an extensive baldness surrounded with a mere fringe of reddish-blonde hair, but he also showed a perfect hand; the line of feature from brow to chin undisguised by beard was decidedly handsome, with only moderate departures from the perpendicular, and the slight whisker too was perpendicular. It was not possible for a human aspect to be freer from grimace or solicitous wrigglings: also it was perhaps not possible for a breathing man wide awake to look less animated. The correct Englishman, drawing himself up from his bow into rigidity, assenting severely, and seemed to be in a state of internal drill, suggests a suppressed vivacity, and may be suspected of letting go with some violence when he is released from parade; but Grandcourt's bearing had no rigidity, it inclined rather

to the flaccid. His complexion had a faded fairness resembling that of an actress when bare of the artificial white and red; his long narrow gray eyes expressed nothing but indifference. Attempts at description are stupid: who can all at once describe a human being? even when he is presented to us we only begin that knowledge of his appearance which must be completed by innumerable impressions under differing circumstances. We recognize the alphabet; we are not sure of the language. I am only mentioning the point that Gwendolen saw by the light of a prepared contrast in the first minutes of her meeting with Grandcourt: they were summed up in the words, "He is not ridiculous." But forthwith Lord Brackenshaw was gone, and what is called conversation had begun, the first and constant element in it being that Grandcourt looked at Gwendolen persistently with a slightly exploring gaze, but without change of expression, while she only occasionally looked at him with a flash of observation a little softened by coquetry. Also, after her answers there was a longer or shorter pause before he spoke again.

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

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

(Pause, during which she imagined various degrees and modes of opinion about herself that might

be entertained by Grandcourt.)

"Yes, since I saw you shooting. In things of this sort one generally sees people missing and simpering."

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

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

"I have left off shooting."

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

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

"What do you call follies?"

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

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

"One must do something."

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

(Pause, during which Gwendolen thought that a man of extremely calm, cold manners might be less disagreeable as a husband than other men, and not

likely to interfere with his wife's preferences.)

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

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

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

"Do you like danger?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I begin to think I am very fortunate, because

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

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

"Why are you dull?"

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

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

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

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

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

"Miss Arrowpoint. No — that is, yes."

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

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

"You have just missed the gold arrow, Gwendolen," said Mr. Gascoigne.

"Miss Juliet Fenn scores eight above you."

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

It was impossible to be jealous of Juliet Fenn, a girl as middling as mid-day market in everything but her archery and plainness, in which last she was noticeable like her father: underhung and with receding brow resembling that of the more intelligent fishes.

(Surely, considering the importance which is given to such an accident in female offspring, marriageable men, or what the new English calls "intending bridegrooms," should look at themselves dispassionately in the glass, since their natural selection of a mate prettier than themselves is not certain to bar the effect of their own ugliness.)

There was now a lively movement in the mingling groups, which carried the talk along with it. Every one spoke to every one else by turns, and Gwendolen, who chose to see what was going on around her now, observed that Grandcourt was having Klesmer presented to him by some one unknown to her — a middle-aged man, with dark, full face and fat hands, who seemed to be on the easiest terms with both, and presently led the way in joining the Arrowpoints, whose acquaintance had already been made by both him and Grandcourt. Who this stranger was she did not care much to know; but she wished to observe what was Grandcourt's manner toward others than herself. Precisely the same: except that he did not look much at Miss Arrowpoint, but rather at Klesmer, who was speaking with animation — now stretching out his long fingers horizontally, now pointing downward with his fore-finger, now folding his arms and tossing his mane, while he addressed himself first to one and then to the other, including Grandcourt, who listened with an impassive face and narrow eyes, his left fore-finger in

his waistcoat-pocket, and his right slightly touching his thin whisker.

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

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

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

"In what, mamma?"

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

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

It was the rule on these occasions for the ladies and gentlemen to dine apart, so that the dinner might make a time of comparative ease and rest for both. Indeed, the gentlemen had a set of archery stories about

the epicurism of the ladies, who had somehow been reported to show a revolting masculine judgment in venison, even asking for the fat — a proof of the frightful rate at which corruption might go on in women, but for severe social restraint, and every year the amiable Lord Brackenshaw, who was something of a *gourmet* , mentioned Byron's opinion that a woman should never be seen eating, — introducing it with a confidential—"The fact is" as if he were for the first time admitting his concurrence in that sentiment of the refined poet.

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

"She knows, as I do, that our friends are ready to quarrel over a husband for us," thought Gwendolen,

"and she is determined not to enter into the quarrel."

"I think Miss Arrowpoint has the best manners I ever saw," said Mrs. Davilow, when she and Gwendolen were in a dressing-room with Mrs.

Gascoigne and Anna, but at a distance where they could have their talk apart.

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

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

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

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

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

"The dancing will come next," said Mrs. Davilow

"You are sure to enjoy that."

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

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

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

"Whom do you mean by ugly people?"

"Oh, plenty."

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

"Well, I hate woolen cloth touching me."

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

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

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

"My *dear* !" said Mrs. Gascoigne, in a tone of severe check, and Anna looked frightened at Gwendolen's daring. But they all passed on without saying any more.

Apparently something had changed Gwendolen's mood since the hour of exulting enjoyment in the archery-ground. But she did not look the worse under

the chandeliers in the ball-room, where the soft splendor of the scene and the pleasant odors from the conservatory could not but be soothing to the temper, when accompanied with the consciousness of being preeminently sought for. Hardly a dancing man but was anxious to have her for a partner, and each whom she accepted was in a state of melancholy remonstrance that she would not waltz or polk.

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

"Gwendolen has usually good reasons." He thought she was certainly more distinguished in not waltzing, and he wished her to be distinguished. The archery ball was intended to be kept at the subdued pitch that suited all dignities clerical and secular; it was not an escapement for youthful high spirits, and he himself was of opinion that the fashionable dances were too much of a romp.

Among the remonstrant dancing men, however, Mr. Grandcourt was not numbered. After standing up for a quadrille with Miss Arrowpoint, it seemed that he meant to ask for no other partner. Gwendolen observed him frequently with the Arrowpoints, but he never took

an opportunity of approaching her. Mr. Gascoigne was sometimes speaking to him; but Mr. Gascoigne was everywhere. It was in her mind now that she would probably after all not have the least trouble about him: perhaps he had looked at her without any particular admiration, and was too much used to everything in the world to think of her as more than one of the girls who were invited in that part of the country. Of course! It was ridiculous of elders to entertain notions about what a man would do, without having seen him even through a telescope. Probably he meant to marry Miss Arrowpoint. Whatever might come, she, Gwendolen, was not going to be disappointed: the affair was a joke whichever way it turned, for she had never committed herself even by a silent confidence in anything Mr. Grandcourt would do. Still, she noticed that he did sometimes quietly and gradually change his position according to hers, so that he could see her whenever she was dancing, and if he did not admire her — so much the worse for him.

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

"Perhaps he likes to look at what is against his

taste," said Gwendolen, with a light laugh; she was quite courageous with Klesmer now. "He may be so tired of admiring that he likes disgust for variety."

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

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

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

"That is a compliment as well as a correction. I am obliged for both. But do you know I am bold enough to wish to correct *you* , and require you to understand a joke?"

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

"I am glad you tell me that," said Gwendolen, not without some wickedness of intention. But Klesmer's thoughts had flown off on the wings of his own

statement, as their habit was, and she had the wickedness all to herself. "Pray, who is that standing near the card-room door?" she went on, seeing there the same stranger with whom Klesmer had been in animated talk on the archery ground. "He is a friend of yours, I think."

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

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

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

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

"Not in the least."

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

"I should have been very happy," said Gwendolen looking at her card, "but I am engaged for the next to Mr. Clintock — and indeed I perceive that I am

doomed for every quadrille; I have not one to dispose of." She was not sorry to punish Mr. Grandcourt's tardiness, yet at the same time she would have liked to dance with him. She gave him a charming smile as she looked up to deliver her answer, and he stood still looking down at her with no smile at all.

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

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

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

"Is novelty always agreeable?"

"No, no — not always."

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

"On the contrary, there would probably be much more."

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

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

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

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

"If you are stupid, I admit that stupidity is adorable," returned Grandcourt, after the usual pause, and without change of tone. But clearly he knew what to say.

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

"He deserves to be renounced," said Grandcourt.

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

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

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

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

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

his place?"

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

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

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

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

Impossible to look more unconscious of being addressed than Grandcourt; but Gwendolen took a new survey of the speaker, deciding, first, that he must be on terms of intimacy with the tenant of Diplow, and, secondly, that she would never, if she could help it, let him come within a yard of her. She was subject to physical antipathies, and Mr. Lush's prominent eyes, fat though not clumsy figure, and strong black gray-besprinkled hair of frizzy thickness, which, with the rest of his prosperous person, was enviable to many, created one of the strongest of her antipathies. To be

safe from his looking at her, she murmured to Grandcourt, "I should like to continue walking."

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

"Do you like this kind of thing?"

If the situation had been described to Gwendolen half an hour before, she would have laughed heartily at it, and could only have imagined herself returning a playful, satirical answer. But for some mysterious reason — it was a mystery of which she had a faint wondering consciousness — she dared not be satirical: she had begun to feel a wand over her that made her afraid of offending Grandcourt.

"Yes," she said, quietly, without considering what "kind of thing" was meant — whether the flowers, the scents, the ball in general, or this episode of walking with Mr. Grandcourt in particular. And they returned along the conservatory without farther interpretation.

She then proposed to go and sit down in her old place, and they walked among scattered couples preparing for the waltz to the spot where Mrs. Davilow had been seated all the evening. As they approached it her seat was vacant, but she was coming toward it again, and, to Gwendolen's shuddering annoyance, with Mr. Lush at her elbow. There was no avoiding the confrontation: her mamma came close to her before they had reached the seats, and, after a quiet greeting smile, said innocently, "Gwendolen, dear, let me present Mr. Lush to you." Having just made the acquaintance of this personage, as an intimate and constant companion of Mr. Grandcourt's, Mrs. Davilow imagined it altogether desirable that her daughter also should make the acquaintance.

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

A man who forgave this would have much Christian feeling, supposing he had intended to be agreeable to the young lady; but before he seized the burnous Mr. Lush had ceased to have that intention. Grandcourt quietly took the drapery from him, and Mr. Lush, with a slight bow, moved away. "You had perhaps better put it on," said Mr. Grandcourt, looking down on her without change of expression.

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

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

would not accept his offer.

Could there be a slenderer, more insignificant thread in human history than this consciousness of a girl, busy with her small inferences of the way in which she could make her life pleasant? — in a time, too, when ideas were with fresh vigor making armies of themselves, and the universal kinship was declaring itself fiercely; when women on the other side of the world would not mourn for the husbands and sons who died bravely in a common cause, and men stinted of bread on our side of the world heard of that willing loss and were patient: a time when the soul of man was walking to pulses which had for centuries been beating in him unfelt, until their full sum made a new life of terror or of joy.

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

CHAPTER XII

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

— SHAKESPEARE: Henry IV.

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

Whether the gentlemen were agreeable to each other was less evident. Mr. Grandcourt had drawn his chair aside so as to face the lawn, and with his left leg over another chair, and his right elbow on the table, was smoking a large cigar, while his companion was still eating. The dogs — half-a-dozen of various kinds were moving lazily in and out, taking attitudes of brief attention — gave a vacillating preference first to one gentleman, then to the other; being dogs in such good circumstances that they could play at hunger, and liked to be served with delicacies which they declined to put in their mouths; all except Fetch, the beautiful liver-colored water-spaniel, which sat with its forepaws firmly planted and its expressive brown face turned

upward, watching Grandcourt with unshaken constancy. He held in his lap a tiny Maltese dog with a tiny silver collar and bell, and when he had a hand unused by cigar or coffee-cup, it rested on this small parcel of animal warmth. I fear that Fetch was jealous, and wounded that her master gave her no word or look; at last it seemed that she could bear this neglect no longer, and she gently put her large silky paw on her master's leg. Grandcourt looked at her with unchanged face for half a minute, and then took the trouble to lay down his cigar while he lifted the unimpassioned Fluff close to his chin and gave it caressing pats, all the while gravely watching Fetch, who, poor thing, whimpered interruptedly, as if trying to repress that sign of discontent, and at last rested her head beside the appealing paw, looking up with piteous beseeching. So, at least, a lover of dogs must have interpreted Fetch, and Grandcourt kept so many dogs that he was reputed to love them; at any rate, his impulse to act just in that way started from such an interpretation. But when the amusing anguish burst forth in a howling bark, Grandcourt pushed Fetch down without speaking, and, depositing Fluff carelessly on the table (where his black nose predominated over a salt-cellar), began to look to his cigar, and found, with some annoyance against Fetch as the cause, that the brute of a cigar required relighting. Fetch, having begun to wail, found, like others of her sex, that it was not easy to leave off;

indeed, the second howl was a louder one, and the third was like unto it.

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

And Lush immediately rose, lifted Fetch, though she was rather heavy, and he was not fond of stooping, and carried her out, disposing of her in some way that took him a couple of minutes before he returned. He then lit a cigar, placed himself at an angle where he could see Grandcourt's face without turning, and presently said—

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

"I am not going to Quetcham."

"You did not go yesterday."

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

"I suppose you sent my card and inquiries."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Lush spoke carelessly, but he was really seizing an opportunity and fixing an observant look on Grandcourt, who now for the first time, turned his eyes

toward his companion, but slowly and without speaking until he had given two long luxuriant puffs, when he said, perhaps in a lower tone than ever, but with a perceptible edge of contempt—

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

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

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

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

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

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

Grandcourt did not answer, and Lush went on.

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

"Perhaps not."

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

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

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

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

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

"I am going to marry the other girl."

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

"I am going to marry her."

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

"No."

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

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

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

Grandcourt took no notice of this speech, but sipped his coffee, rose, and strolled out on the lawn, all the dogs following him.

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

"Check, old boy!"

Lush, being a man of some ability, had not known Grandcourt for fifteen years without learning what sort of measures were useless with him, though what sort might be useful remained often dubious. In the beginning of his career he held a fellowship, and was near taking orders for the sake of a college living, but not being fond of that prospect accepted instead the office of traveling companion to a marquess, and afterward to young Grandcourt, who had lost his father early, and who found Lush so convenient that he had allowed him to become prime minister in all his more personal affairs. The habit of fifteen years had made Grandcourt more and more in need of Lush's handiness, and Lush more and more in need of the lazy luxury to which his transactions on behalf of Grandcourt made no interruption worth reckoning. I cannot say that the same lengthened habit had intensified Grandcourt's want of respect for his companion since that want had been absolute from the beginning, but it had confirmed his sense that he might kick Lush if he chose — only he never did choose to kick any animal, because the act of kicking is a compromising attitude, and a gentleman's

dogs should be kicked for him. He only said things which might have exposed himself to be kicked if his confidant had been a man of independent spirit. But what son of a vicar who has stinted his wife and daughters of calico in order to send his male offspring to Oxford, can keep an independent spirit when he is bent on dining with high discrimination, riding good horses, living generally in the most luxuriant honey-blossomed clover — and all without working? Mr. Lush had passed for a scholar once, and had still a sense of scholarship when he was not trying to remember much of it; but the bachelor's and other arts which soften manners are a time-honored preparation for sinecures; and Lush's present comfortable provision was as good a sinecure in not requiring more than the odor of departed learning. He was not unconscious of being held kickable, but he preferred counting that estimate among the peculiarities of Grandcourt's character, which made one of his incalculable moods or judgments as good as another. Since in his own opinion he had never done a bad action, it did not seem necessary to consider whether he should be likely to commit one if his love of ease required it. Lush's love of ease was well-satisfied at present, and if his puddings were rolled toward him in the dust, he took the inside bits and found them relishing.

This morning, for example, though he had encountered more annoyance than usual, he went to his

private sitting-room and played a good hour on the violoncello.

CHAPTER XIII

"Philistia, be thou glad of me!"

Grandcourt having made up his mind to marry Miss Harleth, showed a power of adapting means to ends. During the next fortnight there was hardly a day on which by some arrangement or other he did not see her, or prove by emphatic attentions that she occupied his thoughts. His cousin, Mrs. Torrington, was now doing the honors of his house, so that Mrs. Davilow and Gwendolen could be invited to a large party at Diplow in which there were many witnesses how the host distinguished the dowerless beauty, and showed no solicitude about the heiress. The world — I mean Mr. Gascoigne and all the families worth speaking of within visiting distance of Pennicote — felt an assurance on the subject which in the rector's mind converted itself into a resolution to do his duty by his niece and see that the settlements were adequate. Indeed the wonder to him and Mrs. Davilow was that the offer for which so many suitable occasions presented themselves had not been already made; and in this wonder Grandcourt himself was not without a share. When he had told his resolution to Lush he had thought that the affair would

be concluded more quickly, and to his own surprise he had repeatedly promised himself in a morning that he would to-day give Gwendolen the opportunity of accepting him, and had found in the evening that the necessary formality was still unaccomplished. This remarkable fact served to heighten his determination on another day. He had never admitted to himself that Gwendolen might refuse him, but — heaven help us all! — we are often unable to act on our certainties; our objection to a contrary issue (were it possible) is so strong that it rises like a spectral illusion between us and our certainty; we are rationally sure that the blind worm can not bite us mortally, but it would be so intolerable to be bitten, and the creature has a biting look — we decline to handle it.

He had asked leave to have a beautiful horse of his brought for Gwendolen to ride. Mrs. Davilow was to accompany her in the carriage, and they were to go to Diplow to lunch, Grandcourt conducting them. It was a fine mid-harvest time, not too warm for a noonday ride of five miles to be delightful; the poppies glowed on the borders of the fields, there was enough breeze to move gently like a social spirit among the ears of uncut corn, and to wing the shadow of a cloud across the soft gray downs; here the sheaves were standing, there the horses were straining their muscles under the last load from a wide space of stubble, but everywhere the green pasture made a broader setting for the corn-fields, and

the cattle took their rest under wide branches. The road lay through a bit of country where the dairy-farms looked much as they did in the days of our forefathers — where peace and permanence seemed to find a home away from the busy change that sent the railway train flying in the distance.

But the spirit of peace and permanence did not penetrate poor Mrs. Davilow's mind so as to overcome her habit of uneasy foreboding. Gwendolen and Grandcourt cantering in front of her, and then slackening their pace to a conversational walk till the carriage came up with them again, made a gratifying sight; but it served chiefly to keep up the conflict of hopes and fears about her daughter's lot. Here was an irresistible opportunity for a lover to speak and put an end to all uncertainties, and Mrs. Davilow could only hope with trembling that Gwendolen's decision would be favorable. Certainly if Rex's love had been repugnant to her, Mr. Grandcourt had the advantage of being in complete contrast with Rex; and that he had produced some quite novel impression on her seemed evident in her marked abstinence from satirical observations, nay, her total silence about his characteristics, a silence which Mrs. Davilow did not dare to break. "Is he a man she would be happy with?" — was a question that inevitably arose in the mother's mind. "Well, perhaps as happy as she would be with any one else — or as most other women are" —

was the answer with which she tried to quiet herself; for she could not imagine Gwendolen under the influence of any feeling which would make her satisfied in what we traditionally call "mean circumstances."

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

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

Grandcourt's speeches this morning were, as usual, all of that brief sort which never fails to make a conversational figure when the speaker is held

important in his circle. Stopping so soon, they give signs of a suppressed and formidable ability so say more, and have also the meritorious quality of allowing lengthiness to others.

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

"He is delightful to ride. I should like to have a leap with him, if it would not frighten mamma. There was a good wide channel we passed five minutes ago. I should like to have a gallop back and take it."

"Pray do. We can take it together."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There was a considerable pause before

Grandcourt said, looking toward her, "I should like to have the right always to take care of you."

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

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

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

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

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

She had not been at Diplow before except to dine; and since certain points of view from the windows and the garden were worth showing, Lady Flora Hollis proposed after luncheon, when some of the guests had

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

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

Here Grandcourt, who stood with Gwendolen outside the group, turned deliberately, and fixing his eyes on a knoll planted with American shrubs, and having a winding path up it, said languidly—

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

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

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

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

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

"What sort of a place do you prefer?" said Grandcourt.

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

"Your place of Offendene is too sombre."

"It is, rather."

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

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

Silence for a short space.

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

"I don't know. We women can't go in search of adventures — to find out the North-West Passage or the source of the Nile, or to hunt tigers in the East. We must stay where we grow, or where the gardeners like to transplant us. We are brought up like the flowers, to look as pretty as we can, and be dull without complaining. That is my notion about the plants; they are often bored, and that is the reason why some of

them have got poisonous. What do you think?" Gwendolen had run on rather nervously, lightly whipping the rhododendron bush in front of her.

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

"But a woman can be married."

"Some women can."

"You, certainly, unless you are obstinately cruel."

"I am not sure that I am not both cruel and obstinate." Here Gwendolen suddenly turned her head and looked full at Grandcourt, whose eyes she had felt to be upon her throughout their conversation. She was wondering what the effect of looking at him would be on herself rather than on him.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

the plan projected on the evening of the ball.

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

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

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

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

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

Seated according to her habit with her back to the horses on their drive homeward, she was completely under the observation of her mamma, who took the excitement and changefulness in the expression of her eyes, her unwonted absence of mind and total silence, as unmistakable signs that something unprecedented had occurred between her and Grandcourt. Mrs. Davilow's uneasiness determined her to risk some speech on the subject: the Gascoignes were to dine at

Offendene, and in what had occurred this morning there might be some reason for consulting the rector; not that she expected him anymore than herself to influence Gwendolen, but that her anxious mind wanted to be disburdened.

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

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

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

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

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

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

"About Mr. Grandcourt's intentions?" said Mrs.

Davilow, gathering determination from her alarms.

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

"About whether you will accept him, then?"

"Precisely."

"Have you given him a doubtful answer?"

"I have given him no answer at all."

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

"As far as I would let him speak."

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

"I dare say not."

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

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

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

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

And Mrs. Davilow said no more.

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

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

which he adjusted himself.

This match with Grandcourt presented itself to him as a sort of public affair; perhaps there were ways in which it might even strengthen the establishment. To the rector, whose father (nobody would have suspected it, and nobody was told) had risen to be a provincial corn-dealer, aristocratic heirship resembled regal heirship in excepting its possessor from the ordinary standard of moral judgments, Grandcourt, the almost certain baronet, the probable peer, was to be ranged with public personages, and was a match to be accepted on broad general grounds national and ecclesiastical. Such public personages, it is true, are often in the nature of giants which an ancient community may have felt pride and safety in possessing, though, regarded privately, these born eminences must often have been inconvenient and even noisome. But of the future husband personally Mr. Gascoigne was disposed to think the best. Gossip is a sort of smoke that comes from the dirty tobacco-pipes of those who diffuse it: it proves nothing but the bad taste of the smoker. But if Grandcourt had really made any deeper or more unfortunate experiments in folly than were common in young men of high prospects, he was of an age to have finished them. All accounts can be suitably wound up when a man has not ruined himself, and the expense may be taken as an insurance against future error. This was the view of practical wisdom; with reference to

higher views, repentance had a supreme moral and religious value. There was every reason to believe that a woman of well-regulated mind would be happy with Grandcourt.

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

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

"It is naturally a satisfaction to me that the prospect of a marriage for you — advantageous in the

highest degree — has presented itself so early. I do not know exactly what has passed between you and Mr. Grandcourt, but I presume there can be little doubt, from the way in which he has distinguished you, that he desires to make you his wife."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"I suppose I hesitate without grounds."

Gwendolen spoke rather poutingly, and her uncle grew suspicious.

"Is he disagreeable to you personally?"

"No."

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

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

"Then, my dear Gwendolen, I have nothing further to say than this: you hold your fortune in your own hands — a fortune such as rarely happens to a girl in your circumstances — a fortune in fact which almost takes the question out of the range of mere personal feeling, and makes your acceptance of it a duty. If Providence offers you power and position — especially when unclogged by any conditions that are repugnant to you — your course is one of responsibility, into which caprice must not enter. A man does not like to have his attachment trifled with: he may not be at once repelled — these things are matters of individual disposition. But the trifling may be carried too far. And I must point out to you that in case Mr. Grandcourt were repelled without your having refused him — without your having intended ultimately to refuse him, your situation

would be a humiliating and painful one. I, for my part, should regard you with severe disapprobation, as the victim of nothing else than your own coquetry and folly."

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

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

"I am aware of that, uncle," said Gwendolen, rising and shaking her head back, as if to rouse herself out of painful passivity. "I am not foolish. I know that I must be married some time — before it is too late. And I don't see how I could do better than marry Mr. Grandcourt. I mean to accept him, if possible." She felt as if she were reinforcing herself by speaking with this decisiveness to her uncle.

But the rector was a little startled by so bare a version of his own meaning from those young lips. He wished that in her mind his advice should be taken in an infusion of sentiments proper to a girl, and such as are presupposed in the advice of a clergyman, although

he may not consider them always appropriate to be put forward. He wished his niece parks, carriages, a title — everything that would make this world a pleasant abode; but he wished her not to be cynical — to be, on the contrary, religiously dutiful, and have warm domestic affections.

"My dear Gwendolen," he said, rising also, and speaking with benignant gravity, "I trust that you will find in marriage a new fountain of duty and affection. Marriage is the only true and satisfactory sphere of a woman, and if your marriage with Mr. Grandcourt should be happily decided upon, you will have, probably, an increasing power, both of rank and wealth, which may be used for the benefit of others. These considerations are something higher than romance! You are fitted by natural gifts for a position which, considering your birth and early prospects, could hardly be looked forward to as in the ordinary course of things; and I trust that you will grace it, not only by those personal gifts, but by a good and consistent life."

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

Mr. Gascoigne felt that he had come to a satisfactory understanding with his niece, and had furthered her happy settlement in life by furthering her engagement to Grandcourt. Meanwhile there was

another person to whom the contemplation of that issue had been a motive for some activity, and who believed that he, too, on this particular day had done something toward bringing about a favorable decision in *his* sense — which happened to be the reverse of the rector's.

Mr. Lush's absence from Diplow during Gwendolen's visit had been due, not to any fear on his part of meeting that supercilious young lady, or of being abashed by her frank dislike, but to an engagement from which he expected important consequences. He was gone, in fact, to the Wanchester station to meet a lady, accompanied by a maid and two children, whom he put into a fly, and afterward followed to the hotel of the Golden Keys, in that town. An impressive woman, whom many would turn to look at again in passing; her figure was slim and sufficiently tall, her face rather emaciated, so that its sculpturesque beauty was the more pronounced, her crisp hair perfectly black, and her large, anxious eyes what we call black. Her dress was soberly correct, her age, perhaps, physically more advanced than the number of years would imply, but hardly less than seven-and-thirty. An uneasy-looking woman: her glance seemed to presuppose that the people and things were going to be unfavorable to her, while she was, nevertheless, ready to meet them with resolution. The children were lovely — a dark-haired girl of six or

more, a fairer boy of five. When Lush incautiously expressed some surprise at her having brought the children, she said, with a sharp-toned intonation—

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

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

He stayed an hour or so in conference with her, and rode back to Diplow in a state of mind that was at once hopeful and busily anxious as to the execution of the little plan on which his hopefulness was based. Grandcourt's marriage to Gwendolen Harleth would not, he believed, be much of a good to either of them, and it would plainly be fraught with disagreeables to himself. But now he felt confident enough to say inwardly, "I will take, nay, I will lay odds that the marriage will never happen."

CHAPTER XIV

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

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

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

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

"Not exactly so far."

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

this morning?"

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

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

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

"Old, child, truly."

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

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

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

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

Gwendolen put out her lips saucily and said nothing.

It was a slight drawback on her pleasure in starting that the rector was detained by magistrate's business, and would probably not be able to get to Cardell Chase at all that day. She cared little that Mrs. Gascoigne and Anna chose not to go without him, but

her uncle's presence would have seemed to make it a matter of course that the decision taken would be acted on. For decision in itself began to be formidable. Having come close to accepting Grandcourt, Gwendolen felt this lot of unhoped-for fullness rounding itself too definitely. When we take to wishing a great deal for ourselves, whatever we get soon turns into mere limitation and exclusion. Still there was the reassuring thought that marriage would be the gate into a larger freedom.

The place of meeting was a grassy spot called Green Arbor, where a bit of hanging wood made a sheltering amphitheatre. It was here that the coachful of servants with provisions had to prepare the picnic meal; and the warden of the Chase was to guide the roving archers so as to keep them within the due distance from this centre, and hinder them from wandering beyond the limit which had been fixed on — a curve that might be drawn through certain well-known points, such as the double Oak, the Whispering Stones, and the High Cross. The plan was to take only a preliminary stroll before luncheon, keeping the main roving expedition for the more exquisite lights of the afternoon. The muster was rapid enough to save every one from dull moments of waiting, and when the groups began to scatter themselves through the light and shadow made here by closely neighboring beeches and there by rarer oaks, one may suppose that a painter would have been

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

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

nearly three weeks."

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

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

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

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

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

Do *you* like uncertainty?"

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

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

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

Grandcourt would have followed up this answer, which the change in her manner made apparently decisive of her favorable intention; but he was not in

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

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

"It is indeed," said Mrs. Davilow, able to assent with quiet cheerfulness, for she was so well satisfied with the actual situation of affairs that her habitual melancholy in their general unsatisfactoriness was altogether in abeyance.

I am not concerned to tell of the food that was eaten in that green refectory, or even to dwell on the

stories of the forest scenery that spread themselves out beyond the level front of the hollow; being just now bound to tell a story of life at a stage when the blissful beauty of earth and sky entered only by narrow and oblique inlets into the consciousness, which was busy with a small social drama almost as little penetrated by a feeling of wider relations as if it had been a puppet-show. It will be understood that the food and champagne were of the best — the talk and laughter too, in the sense of belonging to the best society, where no one makes an invidious display of anything in particular, and the advantages of the world are taken with that high-bred depreciation which follows from being accustomed to them. Some of the gentlemen strolled a little and indulged in a cigar, there being a sufficient interval before, four o'clock — the time for beginning to rove again. Among these, strange to say, was Grandcourt; but not Mr. Lush, who seemed to be taking his pleasure quite generously to-day by making himself particularly serviceable, ordering everything for everybody, and by this activity becoming more than ever a blot on the scene to Gwendolen, though he kept himself amiably aloof from her, and never even looked at her obviously. When there was a general move to prepare for starting, it appeared that the bows had all been put under the charge of Lord Brackenshaw's valet, and Mr. Lush was concerned to save ladies the trouble of fetching theirs from the carriage where they were

propped. He did not intend to bring Gwendolen's, but she, fearful lest he should do so, hurried to fetch it herself. The valet, seeing her approach, met her with it, and in giving it into her hand gave also a letter addressed to her. She asked no question about it, perceived at a glance that the address was in a lady's handwriting (of the delicate kind which used to be esteemed feminine before the present uncial period), and moving away with her bow in her hand, saw Mr. Lush coming to fetch other bows. To avoid meeting him she turned aside and walked with her back toward the stand of carriages, opening the letter. It contained these words—

If Miss Harleth is in doubt whether she should accept Mr. Grandcourt, let her break from her party after they have passed the Whispering Stones and return to that spot. She will then hear something to decide her; but she can only hear it by keeping this letter a strict secret from every one. If she does not act according to this letter, she will repent, as the woman who writes it has repented. The secrecy Miss Harleth will feel herself bound in honor to guard.

Gwendolen felt an inward shock, but her immediate thought was, "It is come in time." It lay in her youthfulness that she was absorbed by the idea of the revelation to be made, and had not even a momentary suspicion of contrivance that could justify her in showing the letter. Her mind gathered itself up at

once into the resolution, that she would manage to go unobserved to the Whispering Stones; and thrusting the letter into her pocket she turned back to rejoin the company, with that sense of having something to conceal which to her nature had a bracing quality and helped her to be mistress of herself.

It was a surprise to every one that Grandcourt was not, like the other smokers, on the spot in time to set out roving with the rest. "We shall alight on him by-and-by," said Lord Brackenshaw; "he can't be gone far." At any rate, no man could be waited for. This apparent forgetfulness might be taken for the distraction of a lover so absorbed in thinking of the beloved object as to forget an appointment which would bring him into her actual presence. And the good-natured Earl gave Gwendolen a distant jocose hint to that effect, which she took with suitable quietude. But the thought in her mind was "Can he too be starting away from a decision?" It was not exactly a pleasant thought to her; but it was near the truth. "Starting away," however, was not the right expression for the languor of intention that came over Grandcourt, like a fit of diseased numbness, when an end seemed within easy reach: to desist then, when all expectation was to the contrary, became another gratification of mere will, sublimely independent of definite motive. At that moment he had begun a second large cigar in a vague, hazy obstinacy which, if Lush or any other

mortal who might be insulted with impunity had interrupted by overtaking him with a request for his return, would have expressed itself by a slow removal of his cigar, to say in an undertone, "You'll be kind enough to go to the devil, will you?"

But he was not interrupted, and the rovers set off without any visible depression of spirits, leaving behind only a few of the less vigorous ladies, including Mrs. Davilow, who preferred a quiet stroll free from obligation to keep up with others. The enjoyment of the day was soon at its highest pitch, the archery getting more spirited and the changing scenes of the forest from roofed grove to open glade growing lovelier with the lengthening shadows, and the deeply-felt but undefinable gradations of the mellowing afternoon. It was agreed that they were playing an extemporized "As you like it;" and when a pretty compliment had been turned to Gwendolen about her having the part of Rosalind, she felt the more compelled to be surpassing in loveliness. This was not very difficult to her, for the effect of what had happened to-day was an excitement which needed a vent — a sense of adventure rather than alarm, and a straining toward the management of her retreat, so as not to be impeded.

The roving had been lasting nearly an hour before the arrival at the Whispering Stones, two tall conical blocks that leaned toward each other like gigantic gray-mantled figures. They were soon surveyed and

passed by with the remark that they would be good ghosts on a starlit night. But a soft sunlight was on them now, and Gwendolen felt daring. The stones were near a fine grove of beeches, where the archers found plenty of marks.

"How far are we from Green Arbor now?" said Gwendolen, having got in front by the side of the warden.

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

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

lady, and one who must have been exceedingly handsome. She perceived, also, that a few yards from her were two children seated on the grass.

"Miss Harleth?" said the lady.

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

"Have you accepted Mr. Grandcourt?"

"No."

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

"I promise."

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

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

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

pale.

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

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

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

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

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

In a few minutes Gwendolen was in the beech grove again but her party had gone out of sight and apparently had not sent in search of her, for all was solitude till she had reached the avenue pointed out by the warden. She determined to take this way back to Green Arbor, which she reached quickly; rapid

movements seeming to her just now a means of suspending the thoughts which might prevent her from behaving with due calm. She had already made up her mind what step she would take.

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

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

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

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

With all Gwendolen's resolve not to betray any agitation, she could not help it that her tone was unusually high and hard, and her mother felt sure that something unpropitious had happened.

Mrs. Arrowpoint thought that the self-confident young lady was much piqued, and that Mr. Grandcourt

was probably seeing reason to change his mind.

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

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

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

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

"Yes, we are going," said Gwendolen, looking busily at her scarf, which she was arranging across her shoulders Scotch fashion.

"May I call at Offendene to-morrow?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

"But why do you mean to do it?"

"I wish to go away."

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

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

"What can I say to your uncle, Gwendolen? Consider the position you place me in. You led him to

believe only last night that you had made up your mind in favor of Mr. Grandcourt."

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

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

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

The mother was reduced to trembling silence. She began to see that the difficulty would be lessened if Gwendolen went away.

And she did go. The packing was all carefully done that evening, and not long after dawn the next day Mrs. Davilow accompanied her daughter to the railway station. The sweet dews of morning, the cows and horses looking over the hedges without any particular reason, the early travelers on foot with their bundles, seemed all very melancholy and purposeless to them both. The dingy torpor of the railway station, before the ticket could be taken, was still worse. Gwendolen had

certainly hardened in the last twenty-four hours: her mother's trouble evidently counted for little in her present state of mind, which did not essentially differ from the mood that makes men take to worse conduct when their belief in persons or things is upset. Gwendolen's uncontrolled reading, though consisting chiefly in what are called pictures of life, had somehow not prepared her for this encounter with reality. Is that surprising? It is to be believed that attendance at the *opéra bouffe* in the present day would not leave men's minds entirely without shock, if the manners observed there with some applause were suddenly to start up in their own families. Perspective, as its inventor remarked, is a beautiful thing. What horrors of damp huts, where human beings languish, may not become picturesque through aerial distance! What hymning of cancerous vices may we not languish over as sublimest art in the safe remoteness of a strange language and artificial phrase! Yet we keep a repugnance to rheumatism and other painful effects when presented incur personal experience.

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

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