THE STAR SAPPHIRE

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BY

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CHAPTER I.

PHILIP TEMPEST was walking along Piccadilly, on a warm summer afternoon, communing with himself. He had no one else to talk to; that was his first great trouble. He had another, a very serious one, but it would have been halved if he could have talked it over with a friend. It could not be shared except with one of those rare beings who can be trusted with any person's honor; and he numbered none such among his friends. These were very numerous, for Philip Tempest was a popular man for his own sake, apart from the special advantages he possessed, and there was something in his bearing or aspect which told that he belonged to the favored few of the world, even to the poor men he passed in the street, who looked anxiously at him as he went by. Yet he was a quiet man, modest in every way; but there was a stamp upon him which not the most discreet demeanor imaginable could in any way disguise. Yet this quiet gentleness of appearance never left him, even when, as now, his soul was on fire, and tossed hither and thither, and craving for some outlet. He walked slowly on,

looking neither to right nor left, noticing no one, the glittering blue eyes which lit his refined yet eager face looking sometimes on the pavement, sometimes up to the sky, never at the people he met. Yet it was the height of the London season, and every one else looked from right to left, greeting their acquaintances. Perhaps Philip thought he saw enough of these people at home; for they crowded his great house at South Kensington two or three times a week during the season.

"Oh, for some strong one, with brains and a heart, that I might take counsel with!" cried Philip to himself, as many another has cried before him, and will again. But he met none such as he walked along Piccadilly. At least if he did, he knew not of it.

"I cannot go home!" he said, passionately, in his heart. "I cannot go home and face the old struggle and the old difficulty without any fresh light. If I had something to do to take me out of it! — some other interest, — perhaps I should go back better able to deal with it. What useless, aimless lives we rich people lead; what an occupation it must be to have to earn one's own living."

Such thoughts as these showed that Philip Tempest was dissatisfied, uneasy, restless in spirit. But they did not touch on the actual trouble that unnerved him and created the turmoil of mind which made him (a man, as one would suppose, without a care) seem harassed. This he did not phrase or shape, even in thought. It was a great dark cloud

that threatened to blacken all his life. He dared not look straight at it. Yet he knew he could not go on living just as he was without some change, some effort, some way of dealing with it.

He paused a second, glancing at a placard. A name had attracted his attention, "Canon Winterby." "The man of the Christ-life," said Philip to himself. "The one who has led the Temperance Cause in the Colonies. A wonderful man, so it seems. Could he help me? Shall I go and talk to him? I could trust that man, surely, with any secret. And if any man living can help me, he can. Yet it seems odd, to go to him like this, without knowing him at all, without ever having seen him. I had better go home. And yet — no, I cannot — To-day, for the first time, it has become impossible, without some new light."

He had stopped a passing hansom, and, in the second that elapsed between signing to the driver and telling him where to go, had come to this conclusion, that go straight home he could not! So, without any pause or doubt, he said to the man, "Canon Winterby's house, Westminster."

At that moment, Canon Winterby's name was in every newspaper, on every tongue, so that there was no need to be more explicit.

It was very hot, and Philip was tired with walking in the heat of the afternoon, and with the weariness of futile thinking. He leaned back in the cab and closed his eyes. He was glad of the rest, and the drive seemed all too short. The cab stopped at a

door, he got out, paid the man, knocked, and when his knock was answered by a man-servant asked for Canon Winterby. "Yes," said the servant, the Canon was at home; he would see if he was engaged or no. Philip was taken down a passage, and down some stairs. It seemed as if they were descending to the cellars of the house. Then he found himself in a large room, cool and beautiful. The moment he entered it, something seemed to settle gently on his fevered brain and cool it. Was it merely the change from the heat and turmoil of the streets to this cloister-like chamber? It was more as if the atmosphere of a different personality were already affecting him.

Such a beautiful room! Stone arches springing from floor to ceiling, lovely in their grand simplicity. The little furniture that was in the room was of dark oak, evidently modern, and looking so amidst the old stone work, but perfectly in keeping with the whole effect. Over the table was thrown a crimson cloth, forming a brilliant spot of color in the midst of the stately, shadowy room. Architecture and decoration were special delights to Philip Tempest, and he wandered round the walls, noting the detail with so much pleasure that it absorbed him for the moment. A slight sound made him turn, and he saw that Canon Winterby had entered; it was easy to recognize so remarkable a face and figure of which he had seen so many portraits. For a second he looked at him with an interest he did not attempt to disguise. A tall man, this ideal ecclesiastic, with a powerful figure,

yet showing signs of constitutional delicacy; not quite of the thorough-bred type, yet pre-eminently distinguished, and with the carriage of a fighter. The face, rugged and not well shaped; the long upper lip forming a hard and almost repellent line across it; the small eyes veiled by glasses. But in these eyes lay the strange fascinating attraction of the face which took and held the attention of any audience, whether it numbered one or a thousand. Bright, moist, brown eyes, with a singular shadow of poetry in them, and a direct gaze full of infinite pity and sympathy, expressing at first a gentle tentative friendliness as of one who would wish to make friends with all men, were it possible.

Canon Winterby spoke first, glancing at Philip's card, which he held in his hand as he did so, with the manner of one who found it necessary to refresh his memory at the last moment as to whom he was receiving, characteristic of a busy man who was continually being interviewed. He spoke quickly and rather eagerly, as if life were very full for him, and he never had quite time to say all that he desired.

"I am very glad to see you, Mr. Tempest. I know your name very well as one of our great liberal landowners, holding views that make you, at all events friendly to the more advanced party to which I belong. I see you are admiring the walls. Before we go to anything else, do let me point out to you what a beautiful room this is; see the space of these arches. And just imagine that when I came here I found

that this had been used from time immemorial as a coal-cellar and lumber-room. You can see it is thirteenth-century work; no doubt it was done by the monks. Think of the difference between the age which could produce this work, and the age which can only desecrate it. See there, where a square door has been cut right through one of the arches! I was very busy when I first came to this house, I assure you, unearthing its treasures. There is always something to do in this world, something which others have forgotten or overlooked. It is a mystery to me how any one can ever have an idle moment. Don't you find it so with all your responsibilities?"

By this time they were sitting in two oak chairs, drawn up to one side of the table. The Canon laid his hand on the crimson cloth, — a nervous, strong hand, that had no atom of superfluous flesh upon it, and that was full of continual movement and meaning.

Philip hesitated a moment, and then said, "To tell the truth, what I was most deploring as I came to you was my own idleness and the idleness of the class to which I belong. I fancied it must be good to have to earn one's living!"

"Ah! but you forget," said the Canon, quickly, "that all the Herculean labors of the world are left for the rich to accomplish. Poor men have no power, and busy men no time. And yet I am bound to say that they are the men who do the most for all great causes. I have been so hard a worker all my life that I cannot understand it. I regard work as the salt of

life. Why is it that your class is so readily content with amusement? Is it habit?"

"I suppose so," said Philip, "and education. You know we are taught to look on identifying one's self with any cause or cry as a sort of bad form."

Canon Winterby laughed, it was the laugh of a boy, and changed his whole face, flooding it with sunshine. In a second he was serious again.

"You can hardly have benefited much by this teaching," he said, "or you would not be here."

"That is true," assented Philip, a little shamefacedly. He was feeling that already his mood had changed under the influence of this man's personality, — that he would not have the audacity now to tell him of his cowardice, of his hatred of his home, of his feeling that he could not face his trouble. It seemed unmanly to do so. Without any words passing between them on the subject, he had already learned from Canon Winterby that this trouble, which was his alone, it was for him alone to combat.

"Look at the splendid names which are now associated with my great cause," said the Canon.

"You mean Temperance?" asked Philip, in a low voice.

"Yes, I mean Temperance. There was a time when people were afraid to belong to this movement. But that day is over. Strike at drink, and you will find the other vices sheltering behind it. Men must deaden their consciences before they can commit the crimes that darken the world. It is the one great

cause now, till we have made a change in the legislation on the subject."

"You are going to work here, as you worked abroad?"

"Yes, without ceasing. Life is so short, one dare not pause!"

"I should like to join you," said Philip, still speaking in the low voice which, with him, meant intense feeling.

"Was that what you came to say to me?" asked the Canon, as if a little startled.

Philip hesitated a moment; then he said, "No, but I think it is better than what I came to say!"

"Do you mean it?"

"Yes, I know that there is no drawing back with you, it is said. Tell me what I am to do, and I will do it. I take your orders."

"I cannot say how glad I am!" said the Canon, "your name will have so much weight. It is so rare that a great landowner will give his influence to this cause. Perhaps we can hardly expect it. It would be more than human for men to oppose their own interests."

"Then I am going to be more than human?" said Philip, smiling a little.

"Yes. But why not? Is it not the great destiny of man to become more than human? I refuse to be astonished when men do great deeds; it insults humanity to greet such achievements or efforts with surprise. Therefore, I will show no amazement,

though I admit that your philanthropy is extraordinary indeed."

"It is not pure philanthropy. It is that I have seen a part of the curse of the world so close at hand that I can no longer be a mere idler. I came to you to-day because my life terrified me; I could not go on; I wanted to tell you about a trouble of my own. But I can go on now without doing so. Work will save me."

"Yes, it will save you. And remember that there is not one moment to waste, ever. There is always work to be done even when one is not before the public. Never lose an opportunity of making people see life as a real thing. They think it is a toy, and play with it till it is lost."

How often Philip thought of these words afterwards!

There was a moment's pause. Then he rose to go, for he felt that he had taken up enough of the time of so busy a man.

"You will command me," he said. "You will tell me what I am to do, and when — at first, at least; for you will remember I am an outsider and know nothing."

"You speak?" asked the Canon.

"I have made speeches at dinners, of course, and to my own tenantry. But I dislike it, and, for that reason, have never stood for Parliament."

"I fear you must conquer the dislike," said the Canon; "and I fear you must go into the House at

the first opportunity. We want you there; and we want you on the platform. Come to our next public meeting; here is a platform-ticket. I will not press you to speak then unless you wish to; but I dare say you will. In the mean time you must prepare yourself to be laughed at. You must take the pledge of course; but personal abstaining is a mere detail with a man in your position. Example, habit, these are what we want. From this time forward let no wine be placed upon your table, or offered to your guests. I know that you entertain a great deal; I have heard it spoken of. Therefore, you have a great opportunity."

"You set me a hard task," said Philip.

"That or nothing," answered the Canon, his earnest brown eyes fixed unflinchingly on Philip's face; "you will do it."

Philip thought earnestly for a full moment. His mind had gone home, had reviewed his home, his personal difficulty and trouble. Then it returned to the cool chamber in which he stood, to the collected, resolute presence before him. He returned the Canon's gaze direct, and said, "I will."

Alas for Philip Tempest! That "I will" meant quite as much as it had meant for him in the marriage service, and much more than it meant for most men even then.

"You had better sign the pledge now," said Canon Winterby. "It will make it easier for you. Will you sign one of my cards?—the phrasing is my own."

He turned to a writing-table, and took a card out of a drawer, handing it to Philip.

"I promise," so ran the words upon it, "for my own sake, and because I am my brother's keeper, to abstain henceforward from the use of any intoxicant as a beverage."

Philip read it over twice, then, approaching the writing-table, took a pen from Canon Winterby's hand and wrote his signature upon the card.

"There," he said. "Now it is done, and I must live it out! Each man's battle is his own, and I will go back to mine. Good morning, Canon Winterby, and thank you for giving me so much of your precious time." So saying, he shook hands, returning in kind the very thorough and unfashionable grip he received. Then he walked out of the house like one who steps on egg-shells. He looked forward to what lay before him with a sensation as much like fear as any he had ever experienced. Canon Winterby, having rung for a servant to open the door, went back to his study, rejoicing.

CHAPTER II.

PHILIP got into a hansom outside the Canon's door and drove straight to his own. His house was at South Kensington, rather far out, as people thought till they had been there. But there was full compensation found for the extra five minutes spent in a cab or carriage directly the front door opened. There was not room, even in the biggest houses in Mayfair, for such a hall as this. The door was screened by an inner porch of oak; this was necessary, the hall being used as a receiving-room. There was something very hospitable in its aspect, and in finding yourself so immediately in the circle of guests. For there were nearly always some visitors sitting here; if it was not the hour for callers, there were sure to be some of the people staying in the house. The Tempests had generally one or two distinguished guests staying with them, often some one from the Continent, or from America; for they had travelled and visited a great deal in different countries. And this was a favorite room in the house, in spite of all the others, each beautiful in its own way. It was oak-panelled, and very high; on to a gallery at the side some of the doors of the

upper rooms opened, and it was pretty to stand here and look down upon the hall below, which was all darkly furnished with heavy oak chairs and tables. Two wide staircases rose from it at the back, and some enormous palms stood at their base, partly screening them.

When Philip entered, Mrs. Tempest was standing in the midst of two or three persons at a distant table, showing them something of interest, evidently, for they were all bending over what she held in her hand. At the sound of the door she looked round, and, seeing Philip, smiled. She was beautiful, in the style at the moment the most fashionable, — tall, somewhat Juno-like, with Venetian-colored hair, large humid gray eyes, and a vivid flush on her face which made it very attractive. She was Philip's second cousin; standing next to her was Leslie Tempest, who was first cousin to both of them.

Philip went straight towards the group, wavering just for a second, for he had to pass a girl who was quite alone. He saw at a glance that she was quite unknown to him, though she was apparently very much at home. She wore no hat or cloak, and he recalled the fact that some new guests had come to stay that day, Mrs. Monkwell and one of her daughters. The Monkwells were all great friends of his wife, but two of the daughters he had never chanced to meet. This must be one of them. She did not look up at him, or show the slightest interest in what was going on about her, so there was no

difficulty in giving her a glance of scrutiny as he passed her. He thought her rather Amazonian looking; she was black haired and black browed, and had something of insolence and indifference about her which repelled him. There was an uncompromising smartness in her dress and appearance, — an air of being exceedingly fashionable without in the least caring about it.

All this was noted in a second, with the result that Philip just faintly regretted that she had been invited; "one of the very modern young women," he thought, and paid her no further attention. His wife's glance called him, and he went to her; she advanced a step to meet him, throwing aside whatever it was that she had been interested in. It was an engraving; the others gathered round it again, so as not to interfere in the greeting between Philip and his wife. Theirs was well-known to have been a love-match; and they were treated with the tender regard which is given by society to its ideal married couples. Mrs. Tempest had been ill for some days, as every one present knew; and those who had been in the house knew also that Philip had attended unremittingly upon her. Not even her own maid, would he allow to wait on her till she was better; she was occasionally subject to attacks of illness, and his devotion was then always extreme. He could not bear any one else to be near her. It was no wonder, indeed, that she was so fond of him, the others thought, for love like this was not often found after three or

four years of marriage! Not, at all events, in their society.

"I am glad you have gone out, Philip," said Mrs. Tempest, in the soft, very musical voice which was one of her attractions; "you have been indoors so much lately. Have you been to the Club?"

"No, I have paid a very interesting visit. I have been to call on Canon Winterby. He is perfectly delightful."

Everybody gathered round him now, and asked him questions about the popular clergyman, all except the dark girl who had established herself in a large easy-chair, and was doing nothing with an air as if it bored her just a little less than doing something.

Philip described Canon Winterby himself, and his room, to interested listeners. Suddenly Mrs. Tempest remembered the girl who was sitting alone, and said, "Oh, Philip, come and let me introduce you to Laurence Monkwell. You have never met her. She has come to stay," and, with her hand on his arm, she led him across the room.

The girl looked up, and her eyes met Philip's. Something in them startled him, — a flash which was not in any way in keeping with the settled indifference of manner that she wore.

"Canon Winterby is a fanatic, is he not?" she asked.

Philip considered before answering. Then he said, with a smile, "I scarcely think you need use so severe a word. He is an enthusiast, certainly."

"He is a reformer," she replied, with fine scorn. "No word can be too severe."

"Then you think the world hopeless?" queried Philip.

"Quite," she said, with emphasis.

"Explain to me," said Mr. Tempest.

"I don't read the papers. What does Canon Winterby want to do?"

Philip hesitated, and Laurence Monkwell took upon herself to reply: "One of his fads is Temperance reform, — making people sober against their will; treating men and women who wish to behave like brutes as if they were children; taking temptation away — Why was temptation ever invented, and what is it for, if we are not to have it, I should like to know?"

A strange look had come into Mrs. Tempest's gray eyes, — a look of vague apprehension.

"A horrid subject!" said Mrs. Monkwell, who was a quite overpoweringly fashionable lady. "I can't imagine why you should have any views about it, Laurence, one way or the other."

"It is rather a mistake, perhaps," said Laurence, relapsing into her habitual apathy. Mrs. Monkwell had managed to exorcise all vigor and naturalness out of her other daughters; but in none had she produced so successful an appearance of indifference to all things as in Laurence. It was most remarkable that she should have cared to express herself as she had done. Laurence wondered secretly why she had,

and concluded that Philip's abject admiration of Canon Winterby had roused the demon of contradiction in her. How was it that he had been able to provoke her into such quick speech? — she who had schooled her tongue to silence, and had learned, as she thought, not even to sneer with enthusiasm. She was accustomed to think things out thoroughly in her own mind, and she was not satisfied by her first explanation. Mere contradictoriness could not so have shaken her rooted habits. Then she knew that it was Philip's look which had roused her; the flash from his eyes, which glittered when he was interested or excited, had penetrated to her very soul and stirred it. It was only a vague awakening, which made her restless, and more deeply dissatisfied than before. She was not interested in anything that had been said, and she was vexed with herself for having shown apparent interest. She sat in a deep arm-chair, her head leaning back upon a cushion, her eyes half closed, her strong splendid figure in an attitude of profound languor which was made into nonsense by every fine curve and vigorous line in it. Leslie Tempest looked at her admiringly, watching the slow swing of a perfectly shod and perfectly shaped foot. But he did not approach her. He did not feel equal, at the moment, to encountering the disdainful stare of surprise which he would receive if he did so. It was easier to lounge about and let the deep boredom settle on his spirits which attacked him as soon as he had not his cousin Clare

to talk to. And she had gone away with her husband; she seldom paid him any attention when Philip was in the house. He wandered away to the dining-room, to get a sherry and bitters. The dressing-bell rang, and soon the great hall was deserted. Laurence Monkwell went upstairs last, wondering rather bitterly why she was to be troubled to dress herself so many times a day, when she knew no one about whose opinion as to her appearance she cared for in the least.

Philip had gone away up one of the wide staircases with his wife's hand on his arm. "Dress quickly," he said, "and send Marie away. I will put on your ornaments. I want you to wear pearl-gray to-night."

She laughed happily, and said, "How foolish you are over me, Philip. Why is it?"

"Because I love you, my dear," he answered. He went into his own dressing-room, and as he closed the door his face grew strangly set and serious; the tenderness vanished from it as if by magic. He dressed without any conscious thought of what he was doing; his whole mind was pre-occupied with what he had to do, the task that lay before him. Yet he dressed with as much care as usual, perhaps even more. Directly he was ready, he went to the door of his wife's room, and knocked gently, — a masonic knock which she knew always to be his, three little low raps.

"Come in," she said, and the music of her voice

charmed him as it had done when first he heard it. "I am alone, Philip."

He went in and locked the door behind him, to keep out Mrs. Tempest's maid, who was very fond of coming in when she was not wanted. He found his wife sitting in front of a Psyche glass, just where the maid had left her after putting the finishing touch to her beautiful bronze hair. She was dressed in pearl-gray satin which was full of the most lovely lights and shadows. Her arms and neck were bare; the skin was soft and fair, as Nature always makes it with such hair as hers.

Philip came behind her, and looked down upon the shapely head and the fair neck. Then he stooped and put his arms very gently round her, and kissed her neck just where the hair was drawn from it at the back. He kissed it again and again, so tenderly, with so much love, that at last she could bear it no longer — something smote her heart. She turned and looked at him. "Philip," she said, "what is it? You frighten me. Is anything the matter?"

"Why do you ask me that, dear one?" he said, not releasing her; and, being held in such tender arms, she yielded to them and lay back again, her head upon his shoulder. "Does my love frighten you?"

"A little," she confessed, almost whispering the words. "It is so wonderful! — and I am afraid I am not worthy of it. Oh, Philip, if I should not keep it!"

He turned her face up to his, and looked earnestly into her eyes, then kissed her mouth.

"Have you not kept it?" he said; "then why should you not?"

"I don't know," she answered. "Sometimes I am afraid. And you make me so happy, Philip, that I cannot imagine what I should do if I thought you loved me even an atom less than at first — I should die, or go mad, or become utterly bad."

"You must wear pearls to-night," said Philip. "Are they locked up? I want to put them on for you. You are my dove. You look an angel in these dove-colors. Where are the pearls?"

"There, in the case on the table," she said. "I fancied you would want them, and told Marie to get them out."

He opened the case and took out a necklace. His glance lingered on the pearls for a second, while he held them in his hand. They were of perfect color and perfectly matched and he could not deny himself the brief pause of admiration. Mrs. Tempest smiled as she watched him.

"They are lovely, are they not?" she said. "I am almost jealous of them."

"Ah, but they are not perfected till they are on your neck," he answered, and, turning quickly, clasped them round her throat. "Now look at them," he added. Mrs. Tempest looked in the great mirror, and blushed with pleasure, partly at her own beauty, and partly at his pride in it. Philip drew a chair close to her and sat down in it.

"Give me your hand, Clare," he said, "I want your help. I have something very difficult to do to-night; I am going to make a speech at the dinner-table which may startle you — which perhaps you may not like —"

"Oh, Philip! What is it?" she asked, turning to look at him, the vague apprehension deepening to fear in her humid gray eyes.

"Nothing terrible, only a little difficult, Clare —" He went on in a different voice, "You will help me always when I have difficult tasks, will you not? Your love will keep you always at my side?"

"Tell me more," she said, in some agitation, which she tried to suppress; "you have made me nervous."

"Nonsense," he said, drawing her to him again with the strong, tender touch which she found irresistible. "There is nothing on earth for you or me to fear. How should there be? And if there were, is not our love sufficient to make us strong? I like you to be strong and courageous, Clare."

"Alas!" she answered, "I fear it is not my nature. I am only strong in you." She nestled closer to him, and a sense of happiness came over her, so deep that she forgot everything else. Before there was time to speak again, the dinner-bell rang. She rose hastily, snatched up the lace handkerchief and the fan which lay ready for her, and hurried down to the drawing-room. Philip followed her a little more slowly, with the set look upon his face again. But it cleared away like a dark cloud the moment he entered the room.

Perhaps he had never been more delightful, never more genial, or brighter, than he was to-night. His gayety was infectious, and the little party went into the dining-room in a perceptibly brighter mood than that which had been upon it when he entered.

CHAPTER III.

THERE were only two guests at dinner that night, besides Mrs. Monkwell and Laurence, and they were both habitués of the house, both having been college friends of Philip's. He was very fond of new friends, but he never forgot old ones; and though he had long since wearied somewhat of the constant society of these two, yet it was by his influence that they had obtained their present position. One was the incumbent of a fashionable parish; the other was a doctor who owed a very paying connection to the fact that he was constantly met at the Tempests' house, and that they appeared to pin their faith on him. The Rev. Ambrose Grayl was wonderfully changed, as Philip reflected to-night, looking down the table at his old chum, from the bright, enthusiastic boy who used to be such good company. He was getting fat, and the bright face had become a bland one, with the "all things to all men" expression so often to be seen on the faces of popular clergymen. He was decidedly popular; his pretty church was always crowded, and his sermons were considered most interesting. Laurence Monkwell had been to hear him once; and when she found he was to take her

in to dinner, she felt as if the utmost limit of boredom had been reached, and wrapped herself in a more chilling cloud of indifference than usual. This did not trouble the Rev. Ambrose; he regarded this manner as a matter of fashion, and he troubled about it no more than about what style of bonnet was in vogue. He was a bachelor and an habitual diner-out; he was therefore quite accustomed to encounter the coldly critical up-to-date young woman, whose candor amounts almost to brutality, of which Laurence was an exceedingly well-elaborated specimen. Philip took in Mrs. Monkwell, who irritated him by her inane and ceaseless society small-talk. He had never liked her; she bored him to distraction. But she had been kind to Clare before she was married, and he held it his duty to be civil to her. Mrs. Tempest had come in with Dr. Meredith, and sat between him and Leslie Tempest. The table was round, and with so small a party the conversation was general. No one had any wish to make it anything else. Philip talked well, he was in his brightest humor, and Dr. Meredith seconded him. Mrs. Tempest was in one of her sweet, gentle, somewhat silent moods to-night, and talked very little. She glanced, smiling, from Leslie to Dr. Meredith as they talked, with an occasional long look, full of love, directed at Philip. Hers was a charming manner, one that suggested a deep vein of sentiment. She flirted with the men who sat beside her, but her heart was plainly with Philip all the time. Laurence

Monkwell, who had never yet met a man she thought worth flirting with, regarded her hostess from time to time with a certain veiled amusement and disdain. Dr. Meredith derived great pleasure in looking at her while he said smart things; in spite of his habitual devotion to the lady of the house, and the homage he paid to her Juno-like beauty, he evidently admired Amazonian young women with masterful brows, a magnificent physique, and an air of extreme fashion. Laurence barely noticed him, and left some of his remarks unanswered, to the secret delight of the Rev. Ambrose, who hated him with that keen cordiality only possible between old friends. Dr. Meredith was severely smart, thin, tall, angular. When he walked, these characteristics were accentuated by the fact of a stiff leg. He tried hard to conceal this defect, and the result was the appearance as of an affected limp. He dressed in the extreme of fashion, and suffered a martyrdom at this time from the painfully high and stiff collars which it was considered correct to wear. He played constantly with an annoying eye-glass which served no purpose but to point his conversation. He gave the impression of a cynical, self-possessed person, while, in reality, suffering horrors from shyness. This was a secret absolutely his own, not shared even with his oldest friend.

Such was the party to which Philip made a little speech which was regarded as very remarkable by all present.

He leaned back in his chair when he began, with

his most insouciant air and his brightest expression; the glittering blue eyes seemed like sparks of light as he looked round the table, glancing from face to face. Laurence looked up when he began to speak, and, against her will, was compelled to answer his glance and give him her attention.

"I want to tell you all," he said, raising his voice just a little, "the result of my delightful talk with Canon Winterby to-day. I have admired him for a long while, as every one must, even those who don't agree with him, — admired him for his power, his unflinching courage, and his disregard of the consequence to himself in fighting the battles of those who cannot fight for themselves. This is a fine figure on the sordid canvas of nineteenth-century life, where money-getters and pleasure-lovers form the crowd. The Canon stands out among them like a hero strayed from the age of chivalry, when there were knights who devoted their lives to the rescue of the oppressed. I know you have thought me," — here he addressed himself to the Rev. Ambrose, — "rather a sentimentalist in the admiration I have professed for him; yet it has never carried me so far as to support his opinions. I have looked upon the Temperance question without any personal conviction, being inclined to think that every man should be the keeper of his own conscience, and that it is absurd for any one to have the right to order how much temptation any other should have, or how he should have it. I held, with Miss Monkwell, that temptation, like every-

thing else, must have its uses, and that we have a right to plenty of it. In fact, I objected to treating men like children. But contact with Canon Winterby has changed my view. I can't recall any arguments he used that would have the slightest weight with you; I can quote nothing that he said. Yet I am convinced that, if he were here, he would convert you all, as he converted me. It is something personal, something in his atmosphere. Until he looked at me I had never entertained the slightest idea that I was in any way responsible for the doings of others. But in his presence it became borne in upon me; and at last, when he asked me to do so, I signed the pledge."

There was a moment's silence. Then the Rev. Ambrose said, with the sincerest sympathy, "Poor old Phil! However, I don't really think you ever had much taste in wine." And, as he spoke, he raised the wine-glass he held, and looked at the light through it, before he put it to his lips. He had a great reputation as a connoisseur; champagne was his specialty. It was his proud boast that he had never been mistaken in brand or age. The Tempest cellars were noted, and had done their part in making the dinner-parties at Tempest House so popular.

"Alas, dear boy," said Philip, smiling with an amusement he could not repress, "it goes further than that. I have promised Canon Winterby to take part in the public work. Of course I must live according to the principles I profess, and the only

course I see open to me is to clear the cellars and send their contents to the hospitals."

So far his words had not apparently aroused much interest; but now he could congratulate himself on having produced an adequate effect. The Rev. Ambrose put down his glass and stared open-mouthed, with a touching consternation visible on his face.

Mrs. Tempest had looked up at Philip quickly when he had said the last words, with a glance as if she suspected him of some elaborate joke. His gaze was fixed on her, and she dropped her eyes instantly. A heavy cloud passed over her face; she said something in an undertone to Dr. Meredith. He laughed his peculiar little nervous laugh which expressed anything rather than mirth. "Oh," he said, "it's only one of Phil's fads. It will amuse him for a little while, and soon pass over. These are periodical occurrences, you know, necessary to his health." But Mrs. Tempest did not answer or smile. She looked gloomy, and relapsed into a complete silence.

"The worst of this sort of thing," said Mrs. Monkwell, reflectively, "is that society does n't understand it. It 's not fashionable yet."

"I 'll make it so," said Philip, daringly, "if Clare and my friends will help me. Why not?"

"You 'll find it precious hard," said the Rev. Ambrose.

"All the better fun," answered Philip, growing defiant; "you know I am one of those people that refuse to be beaten."

"Oh, certainly," said the Rev. Ambrose, "we all know when you take up a hobby, you ride it to death. But you can't possibly carry this out. You've got a big party on Saturday, have n't you? — you 'll have to do things as usual."

"If I did, I should never dare to face Canon Winterby again," cried Philip. "No, Ambrose, I 've taken the pledge, and must go through with it."

Nothing more was said; and Mrs. Monkwell, who, foolish as she was, possessed the social instinct, began to talk about something else. Philip liked her for the first time since he had known her; for to do this was the one way of making a painful subject appear to be disposed of and finally settled. Her lead was followed, and soon Philip's new fad seemed to be forgotten. But two persons remained quite silent: Mrs. Tempest, who wore an ominous cloud settled on her face, and Laurence Monkwell, who seemed lost in tantalizing thought, and looked from time to time at Philip with a flickering interest. Her mind was trying to adjust itself to him, but unsuccessfully. Why should he do such an odd thing? She wondered if it was only a passing fad, as his friends thought; but she could not forget something in his glance which told her that he was in deadly earnest.

When Philip went into his wife's room that night, he found a different being from the gentle Juno whose arms had clung about him before dinner. Clare was now like the embodiment of a storm-goddess, sullen, brooding, tragical. Her eyes were heavy with a

passion of tears which had come and gone ; but they were as dry now as though none had been shed. She was sitting by the dressing-table in a white dressing-gown, her bright hair loose. It was very hot, and the air that came in at the wide-open window seemed even hotter than that in the room. Philip stooped over his wife, and kissed her forehead ; it was burning like fire. She pushed him away from her with an angry gesture, and turned on him a look of sullen indignation that amazed him. He had never seen her so angry. She burst out at once into passionate speech.

"If you had given me the least idea of what you were going to say," she exclaimed, "I would have stayed in my room rather than sit there and hear you make a fool of yourself. I never heard such nonsense in my life! Why did n't you tell me what you were going to do?"

"I relied on your love," said Philip, gravely, "to make you support me whatever I did."

"But why did you not tell me?"

For one brief second Philip hesitated, a second in which he mentally retreated from his wife, and thought of her without consideration of his love for her; and then he said, —

"I had undertaken such a difficult task that I feared you might try to dissuade me from it, and so weaken my resolution."

"I wish I had had the chance," she said, bitterly; "I certainly would have done my best to save you

from putting yourself in such an absurd position. You don't know how they all laughed at you behind your back."

"I can't help that," said Philip, valiantly.

"Mrs. Monkwell asked me in the drawing-room afterwards how I could have let you do such a foolish thing. She says it will make you so unpopular; that society hates people with fads, especially goody-goody ones. Of course I had to tell her that I had not the least suspicion of what you were going to do, that you had kept me entirely in the dark. It was humiliating; I don't see why you should have subjected me to it, Philip."

She grew more and more angry and bitter as she talked, and Philip saw it was useless to argue with her; so he only said, lightly, "I'm sorry, dear, but what's done can't be undone. I thought it was the best plan; perhaps I was wrong."

"Oh, no," she answered, quickly, "you were quite right if what you wanted to do was to annoy me and make me seem a nonentity in my own house. I suppose that must have been your object — I can't imagine any other."

Philip looked at her in surprise. "Clare," he said, "how can you think such a thing? You have never known me annoy you."

"No," she admitted, "not till now; but perhaps you are getting tired of me. I have had a dreadful feeling lately that you would before long. Why should you go in for anything so ridiculous as this

Temperance nonsense, except for something which will take you away from me, in which I can't be associated with you."

"You are mistaken, dear," said Philip, very gently. "That is just what I want you to be; I want you to help me in it all."

"I will not!" said Mrs. Tempest, violently.

Philip was startled and silenced. The idea of a dispute with his wife, so heated as to be like a quarrel, was one impossible to entertain. He had never dreamed of the remotest possibility of it till this moment; and he stood stupefied before her violence. There was a note in her voice which told him that in another moment it might be raised. The mere thought of such a thing seemed to open a yawning gulf at his feet.

"My darling," he said, gently, "you are tired. You will make yourself ill again, if you do not take care. Come to bed and rest. It will all seem easier in the morning; you know difficult things often do."

She made no reply. It was impossible to answer him angrily, for he had an irresistible manner when he chose. Even in her anger and hurt pride, she could not withstand his charm. She was silent therefore; but the heavy cloud did not leave her face. He came to her and drew her to him, and put his arms round her. She remained apathetic for a moment, then suddenly turned her face and nestled it against him. And so, in silence, they were reconciled. But it was not one of those perfect reconcilia-

tions which touch the very well-spring of the heart, and make a shadow of difference bring forth a new splendor of delight, like the sun after rain. Clare was silenced; but in her heart was a bitter resentment, and Philip was aware of it. It stood between them like an unseen presence in the room. Philip woke suddenly in the night once, wondering what it was that seemed to separate him from the woman he loved, though she lay in his arms.

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. TEMPEST seldom appeared downstairs until the middle of the day, and in the morning her visitors amused themselves in their own fashion. Philip generally breakfasted alone, and was surprised when he went down the next morning to find Laurence Monkwell looking over the morning papers, while she drank her coffee. She caught his glance of surprise, and laughed as she answered it.

"I am a dreadfully early person," she said. "The fact is I am quite painfully well always, and have an amount of energy given me by Providence that is altogether wasted on me. It would have been very useful to a charwoman, or a reformer; for me, it is quite superfluous."

"Don't you use it in any way?" asked Philip. "Surely you like doing something well enough to use up some of your energy on it."

"No, I don't," she said. "That's just the worst of it. I do envy you people who get up interests. It's very clever of you to make yourself believe you care what becomes of a million of drunkards or so. What I admire is your power of make-believe; because of course you can't really care in the very least. Does n't it make life seem colder than before

when the make-believe slips off you? — say in the middle of the night, for instance, if you wake up. That's the time I dread, if I have been shamming about anything in the day. I feel so foolish when I think about it all alone in the dark; in fact, I have such a dread of that experience that I have entirely given up pretending."

"I doubt that, said Philip;" "I think you pretend a great deal. I can't believe such indifference as yours is genuine."

Laurence looked up with an air of surprise.

"Oh, yes, it is," she said. "Certainly I don't see why you should doubt that. Mine is an absolutely useless life. I simply drift on. Things don't rouse me; and the worst of it is, they don't amuse me."

"That's the worst feature about this generation," said Philip, "that it is not amused. The suicidal mania will attack society next; if it goes on being so bored, life will become insupportable."

"Yes, that's what I expect," said Laurence, with an air of conviction.

"Of course there are only two things worth living for," said Philip, —"love and work, or passion and effort — call them what you will."

"Well, the first is a sort of dispensation of Providence," observed Laurence; "you can't love in a society where there's no one worth loving."

"I don't admit that," said Philip, rather warmly; "when you love, you love a person's faults as well as their merits, more, if possible."

Laurence did not reply immediately. Her face wore an expression of profound thought, as if she were looking over the people she knew and wondering whether it were possible to love any of their faults.

"I admit," said Philip, answering her look, "that one must be led up to this possibility by a great personal charm in the other; and that, of course, is a question of what Fate chooses to give us. But in the mean time there is always something to be done."

The breakfast-room looked out on to a sheltered, sunny piece of green lawn, and a window to the ground opened full upon it. Laurence rose and went to the window while Philip was speaking; he followed her, and when he said the last words they were standing outside in the sunshine.

"Something to be done?" repeated Laurence, looking at him. "Oh," she went on, reading his face, "you mean doing good. That seems to me more absolutely useless than anything else. I had forgotten that you have joined the vain army of reformers, and was talking to you as to one of my own world."

Some garden chairs stood on the gravel path in the shadow of the house; Laurence sat down in one and drew a cigarette case from her pocket.

"I am glad you smoke," said Philip; "smokers are always so much more willing to talk a subject out to the end." He drew a chair near hers, sat down and lit a cigarette also. But he seemed to have

miscalculated with Laurence. The turn he had given to her thoughts had thrown her into a moody silence which, if she had not been smoking, would have seemed rude.

"There is something glorious about work," went on Philip. "It is what raises man above the level of the brute; it is the sign of the divinity within him. Animals have no instinct of work; we have, and we ought to be proud of it. I ought not to talk like this perhaps, as hitherto I have led a lazy life enough. But I'm going to cure myself of that; it's altogether too horribly boring to go on amusing one's self always."

"There I entirely agree with you," said Laurence. "But I entirely fail to see work as a panacea. I fear I am on a level with the brutes. One would think so, to judge from my rude health."

"That seems to be quite a trouble to you," observed Philip.

"It is," she replied; "it is just like everything in this badly arranged world, given to the wrong person. Because I began to be bored to death with things at eighteen, I suppose I am doomed to live to a hundred. Now, your hero, — Canon Winterby, — I feel sure he must be delicate, and that his precious days are numbered."

"Well, not exactly that," said Philip; "but still you are not far out. He is not strong enough for his work, I know."

"Work! work!" cried Laurence, with sudden vehemence; "I am getting to hate the word! I

don't believe I ever heard it till you began to talk this morning, and now it seems to be dinned into my ears. What difference would it make to anybody if, instead of sitting here smoking cigarettes, I went and slaved at something?"

"It would make a great deal of difference to you," said Philip; "you would find yourself much hotter, no doubt, but much less bored."

"Do you think so?" she asked. "I really doubt it."

"I really do think so," said Philip; "that is, if the work in question actually had to be done. A clever woman I once knew, who found life very tiresome, after she had exhausted every form of amusement, tried living without any servants. She told me that, at the end of a week, she found her anxiety to equal a professional in the black-leading of stoves, and the sweeping of floors, had given a new zest to existence. And she thought the chief reason for her cure was, that she was always in a hurry, and never had time to pity herself. That's the case with a worker like Canon Winterby; he gets through in a day what we should do in a month, and therefore his life, even if it is brief in years, is, in fact, very long, because it is so full of sensations."

"Ah!" said Laurence, in a low voice. "Now you are coming to the point of the whole matter,—sensation!"

"What do you mean?" said Philip.

"We must feel or die," she answered. "Passion is

usually regarded as the only form of sensation worth mentioning; but it does n't last. Work, on the contrary, grows upon you, like any other hobby, and at last the worker becomes intemperate, and must have more! — till he works himself to death, as the drunkard drinks himself to death. And it is all a matter of temperament, a question of what part of the physique is most greedy of sensation. You are enthusiastic about work just now, because it offers itself to you as a new excitement; it may not please you."

"No, you are not quite right," said Philip; "it has come to me as a possible alleviation to a pain I am tired of."

Laurence looked up at him curiously, and their eyes met.

"You are fortunate," she said gravely, "from my point of view. I have often wished to feel pain for a change."

They had come to a point in the conversation which troubled them both; the reference Philip had made was embarrassing. There was a little silence; then he roused himself.

"Will you come and hear Canon Winterby on Thursday night?" he asked. "He is going to speak, and I have promised to be there."

Laurence surveyed him with a serious look of surprise.

"A Temperance meeting!" she said. "How dreadful!"

"Do come," he said.

"Very well," she replied, "I will — to see your hero."

She got up and left him abruptly. Philip sat a little while longer, till he had finished the cigarette he was smoking. Then he went indoors and upstairs to his wife's room. Mrs. Tempest was sitting in an arm-chair by the open window. She looked up when he came in, but did not smile.

"What have you been talking to Laurence Monkwell about all these hours?" she said; "I never knew of her talking to any one for so long."

"All sorts of things," said Philip, lightly; "she is interesting," he added in a different tone; "she is like a star sapphire, — sometimes all cloudy and obscure; but now and again it is as if a ray of light strikes right into her mind and a star shines out, strong and clear."

Mrs. Tempest said nothing. She turned her head away and looked out into the garden. "We mortal millions live alone," said Matthew Arnold; and nothing truer was ever said, in spite of all the love and devotion which exists in the world. Philip, all unsuspecting of what he did, was lighting a great fire which neither himself, nor any other, would have the power to extinguish. It raged in Mrs. Tempest's heart like an agonizing physical pain. It had been smouldering there for some time, — a vague feeling that he was drawing away from her, that she might lose his close devotion, which had made life so delightful. This fear had burned within her dimly.

and made her restless and uneasy. Now the sharp, fierce flame of jealousy suddenly blazed out and seemed to scorch and sear her very soul. She bore the pain in silence; it was so new that she did not realize it to be anything *but* pain, — a something that caught at her heart and stifled her. Philip went on talking; but he noticed that she kept her head turned away, and was looking all the while into the garden, and concluded that she was not interested. So he changed the conversation, and soon forgot his talk with Laurence, and even Laurence herself, in other interests. Not so Mrs. Tempest. She soon recovered herself sufficiently to answer him; but her mind did not leave the irritating point which had wounded it.

CHAPTER V.

THE next day was Thursday, the day of the meeting, and the thought of it filled Philip's mind a good deal, because he was haunted by the idea that he might be called upon to speak. He made a few notes, from time to time, in case this should be so. He took it for granted that Mrs. Tempest was going, and did not actually refer to her doing so. He was pre-occupied, and did not notice that she never answered him when he mentioned it, but always remained silent for a moment, and then spoke of something else. Not until they met at afternoon tea, did it dawn upon him that he had to face an opposition which had not yet been expressed. As they were beginning, he said to Mrs. Tempest, "I have ordered the carriage for a quarter to eight, Clare. I hope you won't mind going so soon. Mrs. Monkwell will excuse our leaving her alone, I hope, for an hour or two; Miss Monkwell is coming, I believe."

"Yes, I am coming," said Laurence. And Philip, looking at her, noticed that she was very quietly dressed in black. Mrs. Tempest, on the contrary,

was in pale-pink silk. This was explained a moment later.

"I am *not* coming," she said, very decidedly.

"You are not!" exclaimed Philip, in surprise and some consternation. He had never heard her speak to him so positively or so harshly. He looked at her in wonder. Her face was flushed, and her soft eyes seemed full of fire. Philip's surprised look changed to one of apprehension.

"Certainly not," she said, "I am not going to countenance you in such nonsense. If you choose to make yourself ridiculous, I do not intend to help you in it. Will you come to the opera, Mrs. Monkwell? Leslie is coming in after dinner, and no doubt he will go with us."

"Yes, I will come with you," said Mrs. Monkwell.

"And you, Laurence?" said Mrs. Tempest.

"I said I would go to the meeting," said Laurence, "and I have a weakness for keeping my word."

"Don't go, Laurence," said Mrs. Monkwell.

"Why not, mother?" asked the girl, defiantly.

Mrs. Monkwell made no direct answer; it was not easy to do so with Philip there. After a moment she said, "I should think you would like the opera better."

"I am sick of the opera," said Laurence; "I have heard everything a dozen times. Now a Temperance meeting will be something new. I'll come with you, Mr. Tempest."

"Thank you, Miss Monkwell," said Philip, "I be-

lieve you will be repaid; and if you don't mind going with me in a cab, we will leave the carriage for your mother and Clare."

Mrs. Tempest was leaning back in her chair; she did not look up or speak again during dinner. Mrs. Monkwell came to the rescue, as she always did when there were any symptoms of friction, and talked about other things. Immediately after dinner there was a general putting on of cloaks and wraps in the great hall; Leslie had come in and was standing waiting with Mrs. Tempest's pink opera-cloak on his arm, which he had taken from her maid. Laurence ran upstairs and came down again very quickly in a quiet hat and veil; Philip was waiting, and the cab ready, and they were all about to start, when it was noticed that Mrs. Tempest was not there. At the same moment, her maid, Lucille, came back again to say that Mrs. Tempest was feeling ill, and did not wish to go out — would Mrs. Monkwell excuse her, and go without her?

"I'll go and see what is the matter," said Mrs. Monkwell. "It is very sudden; she seemed quite well at dinner."

"No, I'll go," said Philip, hurriedly, from the open hall door where he was standing. "I won't keep you a minute, Miss Monkwell."

He was, indeed, only gone two or three minutes; and he came back with a strange, set look on his face.

"It is a bad headache," he said; "she only needs

quiet, and is lying down. She hopes you will go to the opera."

But Mrs. Monkwell threw off her cloak, and said she would rather spend the evening quietly with a novel, and that no one need trouble about her. And presently Leslie went away to his club. The carriage went back to the stables, for Philip, fearful of being late, had driven off with Laurence in the cab that was waiting for them.

But they were too early instead of being late. Laurence expected this, as she had noticed the time of the meeting in the papers. But she said nothing. She was aware that Philip was in a state of excitement, carried away by a keen enthusiasm, and at the same time pre-occupied with thoughts which took him far away from her. He was but just aware of her presence, and she knew this. It pleased her; it was much more agreeable than the way in which men usually set themselves to amuse her, to have him sit silent and full of feeling and fire at her side. It was a strange feeling that his mind was sealed to her; and yet that she was conscious of the vibration and excitement within him which his thoughts caused.

The doors were not yet open to the public; and Laurence could not be admitted till they were; Philip, having a platform-ticket, could go in. He did not seem in the least disconcerted at having to leave her to wait; his enthusiasm was at too high a pitch to admit of such considerations. This amused and pleased Laurence; it was all part of the new experi-

ence. She was so accustomed to be made much of that the change was agreeable. Philip disappeared, hurrying away down a long corridor, and Laurence remained standing in the crowd at the door. But the porter, who sternly kept the crowd at bay, opened the swing-door wide enough for her to pass through. "You can't go into the hall yet," he said; "but you can sit down here." Laurence looked round the dreary waste in which she found herself, and saw some benches ranged against the walls. So she sat down and surveyed the unfamiliar scene. It seemed to her such an odd time to be in a place that looked like a railway-station, instead of in a drawing-room, or at the theatre. The crowd outside stood patiently, with faces pressed against the glass of the doors; they did not appear to resent the preference shown to her, —probably, she thought, after studying their faces for a moment, because they were too dull to do so. A bustling old gentleman came pushing through them, opened the door, and walked past its custodian with such an air that the man was quite apologetic when he followed him a few steps and demanded of him, "Are you a steward, sir?" and the old gentleman had not even a shilling ticket, only a free one. Laurence thought it funnier than most farces to see how he was politely bustled out after the style in which he had come in. The little incident amused her, and helped to pass the time; for she was sitting there quite in the same spirit in which she would have sat at a theatre and watched a play; and the

little old gentleman who bounced in with the air of a grandee, and had to be turned out to herd with the crowd, interested her as much (if the truth must be told) as Canon Winterby himself. The porter observed to her, after the excitement of this little episode was over, that people were being let in now to the reserved seats; and as Philip had given her a ticket marked "reserved," she thought she would try her luck. She found no difficulty now; a polite person, wearing mutton-chop whiskers which made him look like a character out of one of Thackeray's novels, and a gorgeous red-and-gold band upon his stout body, bowed and smiled, and let her pass in. The splendid decoration bewildered and surprised Laurence, who knew not of such people as the Good Templars and Rechabites, and had never seen their regalia. She found the hall in possession of people decorated in a similar manner, some even more splendidly; they were the stewards and stewardesses. At a glance round, Laurence saw that they all belonged to the lower strata of the middle-class; they were small shop-keepers and dwellers in the twenty-pounds-a-year villa. The only æsthetic or agreeable object in the hall was a great basket of white flowers which stood on the table upon the platform. Philip had brought this with him. Laurence noticed that it was already in the cab when they got into it, and that the fact that he intended to bring it with him had not been paraded at Tempest House. She smiled a little to herself as she looked at it. "Clare would be wiser

to humor him," she thought. There was no one on the platform, only rows of empty chairs which stood facing a nearly empty hall. But the hour announced for the meeting was fully come; Laurence looked at her watch, and, just as she did so, she was startled by a roar behind as of wild beasts. She turned to see what this might be, and saw the rush of a fierce multitude into the gallery which ran round the hall. How they ran! — tumbling over each other, pushing each other aside with hard hands, every one of the mass being determined to secure a front seat if possible. This was the public which entered free. In what seemed less than a second, the entire gallery and the whole of the back of the hall was packed with a perfectly decorous, though entirely selfish crowd. Now some instrumental music was given, presumably, so Laurence supposed, to cover the entrance of the shilling-seat holders, who began to come in rapidly, and fill up all the places round her. They were all of one class: the men, cheerful and plump, quite unfashionable in appearance, all bearded or whiskered, and all wearing an expression of complete complacency and self-content; the women were all quietly, some even shabbily dressed, chiefly in black or dingy brown. They wore funny little out-of-date mantles, and dresses too long behind and too short in front. As there was a look as of a uniform about their clothes, so there was in their faces; there was a similarity of expression which gave a sort of family likeness to women who were total strangers to each

other. On all alike was the slightly worn look which comes from all through a life-time thinking twice before a penny is spent, and of bringing up children with effort to carry on respectably the same life-long struggle. It was the stamp of decent poverty. Laurence drew a long breath of sudden sympathy; she had never been in a crowd of this kind before, and it was a revelation to her. The stewardesses were of the same class, and bore the same stamp. It seemed more noticeable with them, because of the gaudy Good Templar regalia, which they wore over their dingy, ill-made dresses. The music ceased, and some gray-haired veterans collected on the platform, appropriating little groups of chairs, and talking gayly together. It is a cherished characteristic of the oldest representatives of the Temperance cause to be particularly boyish, as Laurence perceived later in the evening when she had heard some of the speeches made by these gay old gentlemen. The proceeding seemed to dawdle rather; and at last this was explained by a very roseate person who wore his whiskers with an air as if he felt them to be quite the latest thing, coming forward to say that the chairman had not yet arrived. To fill up the time, a timid young lady gave a solo; she had a pretty, but not very powerful voice, which was completely drowned at one moment by a stampede in the gallery. Laurence looked round, and was amused to see the whole multitude thrown into an uproar by a determined old lady who looked to be about seventy

years of age, but who showed extraordinary vigor in climbing over everybody in order to get a front seat. There was none vacant; yet she got one by sheer pluck and resolution. Laurence found herself admiring her, and regarded it as an instance of her natural sympathy with wrong-doing. Now two or three smart and rather over-dressed ladies came in, and filled the few seats that remained empty in front, rustling their silks and taking off their gloves to show the diamonds on their fingers. They looked round with disdain and curiosity upon their neighbors, and then whispered together. Laurence found herself quite absorbed in studying their ways and manners, when the great people of the evening came suddenly and quietly upon the platform, and took her attention away. Philip was among them; and Laurence watched him with an interest new to her, and which gave her a sensation of surprise. The chairman began to speak at once, but though a very eminent divine whom she had heard of as a great orator, he seemed to her rather prosy. Probably he was not at his best, having hurried, and being oppressed by the consciousness of having kept the meeting waiting. His withered old face did not attract her as it would have done any one to whom he was more than a mere name, and who knew of his splendid life of devoted work. Her attention wandered from him at once, and settled upon the man who sat next him. At first he repelled her, and she thought him ugly, and with the sharp, disagreeable lines of the hard

ecclesiastic in his face. But while she was looking at him, he glanced up at the audience; his eyes interested her immediately, and sent some kind of message to her, for she, without hesitation, decided that this was Canon Winterby. She found that he not only arrested her attention, but kept it; for there was a strange blending of characteristics which attract and which repel. This blending makes a personality more interesting than simple charm; it gives the element of excitement and of doubt, without which any experience becomes prosaic. His tall figure was angular and ungraceful, and, in spite of his great experience on the platform and in the pulpit, his gestures were as nervous as those of a neophyte. His face was full of severity, the mouth, in particular, when in repose forming a curiously hard straight line. This was caused by a very long and somewhat overhanging upper lip. Such was the man as he sat quiet and unawakened, a mere figure on the platform. His eyes were small and veiled by glasses. All this was unattractive; and the only thing that pleased Laurence, so far, was a delicate flush of nervous excitement which softened all the severity of the face, and gave it a boyish look in spite of the curls of iron-gray hair which told of the many years of effort that had passed over this passionate nature without crushing the youth out of it. While Laurence was wondering at the evident nervousness of this practised orator, something in the chairman's speech roused and amused him; he looked up, laughed, took off

his glasses and laid them on the table. Then Laurence read the secret of that restless soul in the bright, moist eyes, which at the first glance seemed only small and insignificant, and at the second showed a shadow and a light that came from the loftiest intellectual life given to humanity. The man was a poet. A poet in a churchman's dress, forever beating away the splendid images that flitted into his brain, and stripping his language of its glory, in order that he might be understood of the people whom he served. No wonder that here, in the very heart of the church, untouched by the chill of its crystallization, was wide, wide sympathy; for sympathy cannot exist without imagination, and Laurence, looking from the eyes to the forehead, saw the high temples which mean the power of imagery. She glanced at Philip, and saw a certain kinship of face, not in formation, but in expression; and then she began to understand much that had been dark to her before. She waited with keen interest for Canon Winterby to speak; so keen was her interest that she forgot to be surprised at it. But she had to hear a good deal that seemed to her very prosy before he rose. Then she sat absolutely fascinated by this man's ability. His voice was very powerful; his speech so fluent that sometimes the words poured out, and images evidently rose in his mind so quickly that they jostled each other. But his great difficulty seemed to be to contend against his tendency to positively poetic speech. He had to keep himself

within the intelligence of this great lower-class audience which leaned forward and listened in one great breathless mass, as if it were one creature. He had to speak to it and tell it what to do; he was here as a Temperance leader, fighting for an unpopular cause, opposing the privileges of the class to which he belonged, for the sake of the struggling crowd below him. Sometimes he could not hold himself down; his fancy soared away above the understanding of the people, like a bird that will spread its wings; then he held them fast with his now burning eyes, which wandered over the faces before him and held their gaze to his, while he came down to every-day humor, of which he had taught himself the use, and made them all laugh, or to pathos, which was a natural gift, and made them sigh. He kept his voice at a high pitch, which reached right to the far listeners at the back of the gallery; and to Laurence, sitting just below him, his eloquence seemed to flow over her like a great stream in which her spirit bathed. She sighed deeply when he sat down, and abandoned herself to the memory of the novel sensations which she had experienced.

After that, it seemed to her that the meeting was terribly tedious, until, quite towards the end, when Philip Tempest, evidently in obedience to Canon Winterby, rose and came forward. He made a very short speech; but it was manly, simple, and straightforward. He told the people how he was one of the Canon's latest recruits, and that as a Temperance

worker he was only two days old; but that he intended to carry his principles into practice now that he was convinced that it was right to do so. He told them how in the country he owned two or three thriving public-houses, and in London one which was a shamefully profitable property; and that he had determined to turn these into coffee-taverns and working-men's clubs at the earliest possible date, and took this opportunity of publicly announcing his intentions. He sat down amid a thunder of applause, which gave Laurence a quick sensation of pleasure. A few minutes after this, the meeting was over, and Philip glanced at her as he left the platform; she understood that he wanted her to join him at the door, so she rose and got through the crowd as quickly as she could. He was waiting for her; and they were very soon in a cab and driving homewards. Neither spoke for a long time. Philip was, to tell the truth, too much absorbed in thinking of what he had pledged himself to, and of the difficulties which might arise in carrying it out, to think much about Laurence. When they were nearing home, she spoke abruptly.

"I find," she said, "that I have only preserved two sentences intact out of that tide of eloquence. One is 'The power of the Everlasting which works behind phenomena.' Alas! alas! how can he know that it does? What a glorious thing to have faith!"

"It transforms the dreariness of life into one long glory," said Philip, in a low voice.

"The other sentence," she went on, "was of duty. It was this, 'Your line lies clear before you, — it is the rescue of your fellow-men!' Tell me, Mr. Tempest, has he convinced you that this is a duty? I do not believe it in the least, you know. I think it is altogether a wrong idea, tending to destroy individualism."

"To my grief," said Philip, "I have been taught by a practical experience that I am my brother's keeper, and that there is no evading the fact. We cannot divide ourselves from those who stand next us in the ranks, nor yet from the whole army. I had learned this to be the truth before I saw Canon Winterby's pledge, in which the words are used. Otherwise, I do not think it would have been possible for me to sign it."

There was something in his manner which silenced her. She did not understand him; yet it seemed impossible to ask him what he meant. It was fated that she was to learn, but not from his lips.

CHAPTER VI.

WHEN Philip went up to his wife's room, he found her in bed and sleeping heavily; she was very much flushed, and had evidently sunk into this profound slumber after a great deal of restlessness, for her bright hair was in a tangle on the pillow, and the bed showed that she had been tossing to and fro. Philip leaned over her, and put his face close to hers; but though it looked as if he were going to kiss her, he did not do so. He drew back after a moment, and, sitting down in a chair by the bedside with a sigh, fell into a deep reverie, which lasted a long time. But Mrs. Tempest did not stir or wake; his presence did not rouse her, as once it would have done no matter how deep her sleep might have been.

He rose at last and went to his own room, closing the door which led from the one into the other. He had fallen, in one swift moment, from the heaven of enthusiasm into a despondency deep enough to be a part of hell itself; and he found it hard to rest. He only slept for two or three hours, and in the early morning rose and went out. It was not far to walk to the river, which looks its best in London before

the sun reaches its full height; and Philip saw so much to delight him that he entered into another order of enthusiasm from that of the night before, and went home to breakfast well-content with the world because it was so fair.

The breakfast-hour that morning was full of surprises for him. First of all, he was astonished to find Mrs. Tempest pouring out tea. She was dressed in white muslin, and had pinned a bunch of roses in her dress. She looked charming; and it seemed to Philip that she was a different person from the woman whose flushed and disordered beauty he had looked at the night before. Her headache was gone, evidently; and the sight of her bright face, as she looked up and smiled at him, gave the finishing touch to the charm which the world had for him this morning.

"I never heard you come home last night, Philip," she said; "I was so tired I fell asleep, and this morning you were out so early! When I looked into your room, you were gone. I don't wonder; the roses at your window were enough to make one long to be out. I picked these there."

He was standing beside her while she spoke, his arm round her, her head resting against him. At that moment his love for her was too great for words; he could only hold her close and tight with that protecting grasp of his which would have made a woman love him even against her will. It was a moment of joy, and Laurence Monkwell, when she came in

at the door, wished she had not been fated to interrupt it. Philip passed to his place, and, having learned Laurence's love of the morning papers, handed her some of those that lay beside his plate. She took them and turned them over, glancing at the columns with the quick eye of the regular newspaper reader. Suddenly she exclaimed, "Oh, here 's a report of the meeting!"

"I hope there 's nothing about my speech," laughed Philip, rather shamefacedly. He was feeling shy about it, now that he had not the excitement of the crowd and of the other speakers to support him. Laurence gave him a quick glance of curiosity. Her nineteenth-century spirit made her wonder whether he was regretting what he had said. "It is given in full," she answered, looking down the page.

"I did not know you intended to speak, Philip," said Mrs. Tempest. Her tone was quiet, with none of the resentment and anger visible in it which she had shown when the meeting was spoken of at dinner the night before.

"I did not know it myself," said Philip, lightly.

Laurence leaned across the table, and handed the paper which she held to Mrs. Tempest.

"Would you like to read it?" she asked. "It is there, at the bottom of the page."

Philip looked at the two women's faces bent towards each other, so contrasted, so entirely different, and both so good to look at in the warm sunshine.

"It is a new thing to see you reading a paper, Clare," he said.

"I shall have to read papers if you take to making speeches," she answered.

A moment later she dropped the paper on the floor. "Philip," she said, in a very low voice, "it is n't possible you said that! Oh, how could you?"

"It was n't difficult after all," replied Philip, purposely misunderstanding her; "when you are there among a set of people all accustomed to making speeches, it seems quite an easy thing to get up and talk a little."

Mrs. Tempest did not seem to hear him. She sat with her eyes fixed on him, widely open, and full of a vague alarm.

"You 'll never be able to do these things," she said; "you 'll be hated, and — Philip, " she went on, nervously, "do be sensible about the party to-morrow night. We *must* have wine as usual. People will think you are mad."

Philip shook his head. "They would think me madder," he said, "if they read that speech this morning, and found wine on my table. No, Clare, I burned my boats last night. There 's no going back now."

"No going back!" she echoed. "You are in earnest?"

"Yes," he answered, "I am in earnest."

Laurence looked up at him with great interest. She saw that he meant what he said, that here was

a man who actually had the courage to be consistent, who intended to carry his principles into actual practice. This had all the charm of novelty for her; she had never met such a person before. She found, when she reflected upon it, that she really regarded Canon Winterby in the light of a professional philanthropist whose business it was to live up to the level of his preaching. But Philip was an ordinary man of the world, free to say one thing and do another, like other people; and that he should not follow in this familiar path seemed to Laurence very surprising.

Mrs. Tempest rose from the table. "It is dreadful," she said, in a tone of the greatest distress.

"Why, my dear Clare," said Philip, "there is no need to treat this matter tragically. There's tragedy enough about it among the lower classes I admit, and that's where our responsibility lies. But it can make no difference to any of our visitors whether they have a glass of wine or not. Treat it as a matter of no importance whatever, and you will find every one else will do the same."

Mrs. Tempest turned towards him, an angry flush darkening her face, and seemed about to say something passionately. But she checked herself, and went out of the room without speaking at all. Laurence appeared to be buried in the paper; Philip was reading his letters. Mrs. Tempest left hers unopened. She shut the breakfast-room door behind her, and stood still a moment in the comparative darkness of the hall.

"Why is he doing this?" she said to herself. "Why!—if I thought—"

As she stood there, trembling with excitement and fear and anger, all mingled, the hall door suddenly opened, letting in a great broad stream of sunshine. In the frame made by the doorway, black like an etched figure against the brightness outside, stood a man, who paused a second to draw a latch-key from the lock. Mrs. Tempest ran forward.

"Leslie!" she said, "so early!"

"I didn't stay to finish breakfast," he answered, "as soon as I had read the paper. Is Philip mad?"

"He must be, I think," she said. "He has n't the least consideration for any one."

"No, indeed, he has n't," said Leslie, savagely, as he shut the door, and so shut out the sunshine. They stood in the cool darkness, and looked a moment at each other. Mrs. Tempest in her white dress made a delightful figure against the shadowy background; Leslie Tempest was very smart and fresh, and wore a beautiful white rose in his coat.

"He does n't care how ridiculous he makes me appear. Fancy giving a dinner without wine on the table. I have n't the courage to face it. And he is so headstrong when he takes up an idea, there 's no moving him. Leslie, what shall I do?"

"I don't know," he answered. "It 's horrid for you, Clare. You ought not to have to submit to it; a woman ought to be mistress in her own house. At least, *I* think so. Is Philip in the breakfast-room?"

"Yes, but Laurence Monkwell is there. Don't talk before her. She went to the meeting with him last night. I hate that girl!" she added, with sudden vehemence. "I wish I had never asked her here."

Leslie put his hand on her arm. "Clare," he said, in an altogether different tone from that in which he had been speaking. She turned quickly away from him. Leslie had been Philip's rival long ago; he had never forgotten this, or allowed Clare to forget it. He admired her even more now that her beauty had developed. Flirt though she was, she preferred not to provoke any expression of feeling from him.

"See what you can do with Philip," she said. "Do implore him not to be so ridiculous."

"I've come to talk to him very seriously," said Leslie, relapsing into the savage manner he had been speaking in at first. "I don't suppose you understand what he is proposing to do."

Just then the breakfast-room door opened, and Laurence came out with a newspaper in her hand. She bowed to Leslie without speaking, and then went away upstairs instead of sitting down to read, as she usually did, in a chair in the hall. There was the unmistakable feeling in the air of a discussion among the Tempests which concerned themselves alone, and Laurence, without exactly thinking about it, instinctively left them.

"Phil's in the breakfast-room alone now," said Clare, hurriedly.

"Come with me," said Leslie.

"No —" she answered, "I — I dare n't! Don't quarrel, Leslie."

She went quickly upstairs, and down the broad corridor to her own rooms. She found Lucille in her dressing-room, busy over some lace.

"Lucille," she said, "quick! — get me some brandy, I feel ill. I am sure one of my attacks is coming on."

"You do indeed look ill, madame," said Lucille. She went to a little cabinet, and taking out a beautiful Venetian glass, made in it a mixture of brandy and water which she was evidently accustomed to preparing, for she asked no question about it. She brought it to Mrs. Tempest, saying, sympathetically, "You seemed so much better this morning, madame, I thought you were going to be well to-day."

"I am tired of not being well," said Mrs. Tempest. "It is tiresome."

She looked at the glass as she raised it. It had been a birthday present from Philip, and she loved to use it because it reminded her of him.

Philip, meantime, sitting quietly looking over his letters, was much surprised by Leslie's abrupt entrance. "So early!" he said, using Clare's words. Leslie had a latch-key, and came in and out as he chose, for he and Philip had been brought up together, and had always been as intimate as brothers. But he seldom came in until the afternoon; he was generally out late at night, and up late in the morning.

He came in now, with a look on his face which Philip had not seen there since they were at school

together, and one day had fought a battle over some disputed possession, which became historic. Leslie had been in the wrong, and fought like a tiger to get the thing he wanted; Philip was maddened by a sense of intolerable injustice, and his anger enabled him to thrash his cousin, though Leslie was by far the bigger and stronger of the two. He could recall now the sensation of rage which had possessed him; how his sight had become blurred, and all the world appeared to turn red. Yet he had fought as though a greater than himself had fought for him. He hated the recollection, and prayed that this dreadful feeling might never be provoked in him again.

Leslie sat down at the breakfast-table.

"Look here, Phil," he said, "it appears to me that you are acting rather unadvisedly in making these platform announcements."

Philip threw his head back with a defiant gesture peculiar to him.

"What's wrong?" he demanded. "What have you come to say?"

"Why, this," said Leslie, "that you don't seem to remember that I happen to be your heir, and that an heir has got something to say about depreciation of property. You imagine because you have taken up a new fad, that you can close the public-houses on the estate, without a word to me, or any one else?"

He paused; but Philip made no answer. They regarded each other fixedly for a few seconds. Then Leslie went on: —

"You can't do it, you know; the thing 's unheard of. There 's only one course open to you. Write at once to the papers, and say that you were wrongly reported, that you never made any such statements as to your intentions."

"I shall do nothing of the kind," answered Philip, instantly.

"Nonsense," said Leslie, "you must."

"No one has the right to use those words to me; certainly not you."

"Then I don't agree with you. I believe I have the right. And I am strongly of opinion that the law will be on my side."

"The law!" repeated Philip, in a low voice; and a dark flush began to rise over his face.

"Yes, if you don't back out of this, I must find out what the legal position is, and that at once. Great Heavens! look at the money that comes in from the Tempest Arms alone! You can have no more right to destroy that source of income for your heir, than you would have to cut every tree down on the estate. You can't have, it is n't in reason."

"I intend to do it," said Philip; "there will be more money than will be at all good for you without any of the public-houses."

He answered resolutely, but without as much anger as he might have shown, because Leslie had presented to him an entirely new view of the subject, one that had not occurred to him before, and he was pre-occupied in turning it over in his mind. But his

anger was only held in check for a moment. He and Leslie regarded life and its duties from absolutely opposite standpoints, and a deep anger could only be the result of their entering upon any discussion upon practical matters. As it chanced, however, without actually intending it, he made exactly the speech to excite Leslie Tempest to the utmost.

"You are a selfish devil," said Leslie; "you have always taken everything you could get for yourself, whether by fair means or foul. You have no consideration for any one."

He used Clare's words; and the thought of Clare came into both men's minds. They rose simultaneously and looked steadily at each other. The first quarrel between them had been over a schoolboy possession of no value, and it had been fought out fiercely. The second had been about Clare; it had never found any open expression, and the jealousy was as bitter as at first. Now the question of property rose like a great evil spirit between them, and each knew that he hated the other. Words were inadequate, and blows were only for children. After a second of this silent survey, such as two dogs who mean to fight to the death take of each other, Philip said, in a cold voice, "I will go down and see Dillon at once."

Dillon was the family lawyer. "Very well," said Leslie, "I know a man worth two of Dillion. I'll go straight to him."

War was declared.

At that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Tempest came in. She had come back for her unopened letters, and she had felt a little curiosity as to how the interview was going on. She had heard no uplifted voices, no rapid talking, and she hoped that this meant peace, that, as she would have expressed it, Philip was going to be reasonable. But she knew them both too well not to be perfectly aware, at the first glance, that what she saw meant war.

There was a moment's ominous silence while she glanced at each set face. Then she closed the door behind her, and came forward a step or two, stretching her hands out to Philip entreatingly.

"Philip," she cried in her soft voice, vibrating now with feeling, "for my sake do not go on with this; do not cause all this misery and bitterness!"

Philip had not been looking at her; he turned now suddenly, and with his eyes upon hers addressed her in a tone she had never heard from him before.

"Clare," he said, "you, at least, should help and support me in a difficult task. And you should know why I undertake it."

She drew back from him, and the vague alarm which had been in her eyes ever since his visit to Canon Winterby was replaced by a flash of intelligence, followed by a look of deep resentment. Her face hardened, and she answered him coldly.

"I have told you to look for no support from me. I consider all you are doing ridiculously foolish. To Leslie, it may seem more serious."

"I should say so," observed Leslie.

Clare took her letters from the table, and left the room again. Leslie followed her; but she had gone away so quickly that he saw no trace even of the skirt of her white dress upon the stairs. So he took his hat and left the house. Philip, moving more slowly, for he was lost in thought, did the same; and both drove straight to their respective lawyers. Philip was one of Mr. Dillon's most important clients, and was immediately attended to. The two were shut up together for a long while. Philip came away from the interview more pre-occupied than before. He went for a long walk, and lunched at his club alone. He was thinking without ceasing, anxiously trying to see his way. At last he came to a conclusion.

"I will talk to Clare," he said. "I must risk her anger. 'T is the first chance of any rift within the lute, and I have been perhaps too great a coward in dreading it so, and am reaping my punishment. If I did but speak out to her, without flinching, perhaps all might yet be well. Surely she is strong enough to bear the test!"

So thinking, he went quickly home, in haste to act upon his resolution while it was still hot within him. It was nearly three when he reached the house. Mrs. Monkwell was alone, in the easiest chair in the cool hall, reading a novel. She told him Clare was in her room; Leslie had been in asking for him at lunch-time, and had now gone. Laurence had gone out alone, to see pictures somewhere, her mother said

vaguely. Having heard this report of the household, Philip went upstairs to look for Clare.

When he reached the door of her room, he paused a moment before he went in. Heaven help those who hesitate thus doubtfully before entering the presence of the one they love best on earth!

He knocked, and received no answer. The door was not fastened; after a moment's uncertainty he went in.

Mrs. Tempest lay on the couch near the window, fast asleep. He stood still a few steps within the doorway, and looked at her. Then, without approaching any nearer, turned and went out of the room again. He went down to the library, his favorite room in the house, where he always read and wrote his letters. It scarcely deserved its name, as there were not many books in it; but it had a dignity greater than was visible, in the fact that here the books were looked over, and chosen for the really fine library which Philip had in the country, and which had been the pride and pleasure of three generations before him. Philip was one of those fortunate people to whom books are as friends; and, therefore, when troubled or perplexed, he preferred this room. He sat down at his writing-table, and thought very earnestly for some moments. Then he took up a pen and wrote this note: —

DEAR CANON WINTERBY, — I should like to see you for a few moments, as soon as you can spare them to me. My hands need strengthening. I find the action I have

taken, and its consequences, involving me in a perfect maelstrom of bitter feeling and family warfare. I hardly know how to shape my way. Yet I am more than ever convinced that your principles are right. But is not some compromise possible in action? I fear I spoke too soon in public as to what I was going to do.

Yours very truly,

PHILIP TEMPEST.

Having written this slowly and thoughtfully, he very quickly put it in an envelope, which he addressed and sealed. Then he went out himself and posted it. There was a letter-box just opposite the house, on the other side of the road. He dropped in the letter, and stood still a moment in the sunshine, looking towards a figure which was approaching him, and which seemed to him to be familiar, — a plump, waddling shape clothed in clerical dress. Yes, it was the Rev. Ambrose. He had seen Philip, and hastened towards him, his face very red with heat and hurry.

"I was coming to see you, Phil," he said. "I want a few moments alone with you."

"Well, here I am," answered Philip. And, by one accord, they turned and walked slowly down the road together, instead of going into the house immediately. They were on the shady side of the way, and it was very quiet.

"I am being badgered out of my life," began the Rev. Ambrose, "about that speech of yours." (Philip groaned in spirit.) "You know one or two

of our influential people go in for this Temperance rot, especially Merton, one of the churchwardens. You know him; he's been at me before, but saw it was no good. He had no sooner read your speech than he called on me. I would have escaped him if I could, but he was too early. I had seen your speech reported; and I saw at once the hold it would give him over me. My aim was to avoid him till I had seen you. But he gave me no chance. He met me on the doorstep when I first went out this morning. Of course, he, knowing that I owe my living to *your influence*, expects me to follow your lead, and adopt your principles. He wants me to preach on it this next Sunday! Heavens, Phil, what a position you have placed me in! You must find a way out of it for me. I don't know what to do. I only know it is quite impossible for me to preach this kind of thing. Why, just look at my interest in the Grayl breweries! It brings in the largest part of my income. It would be absurd for me to talk against my own interests. Of course I can't. But I don't want it to seem that you and I are opposed. I have told Merton that you will see him and explain. You must find something to say to him that will keep him quiet, I can't. He's a perfect nuisance."

Mr. Grayl poured out this rush of words as fast as possible. He took off his hat and mopped his heated brow, put it on again, and then caught hold of Philip's arm. He evidently regarded Philip as his saviour, and bound to act in that capacity. But

Philip did not see the situation quite in the same light. As soon as the Rev. Ambrose paused for breath, he observed, —

"But I agree with Merton, and I think you had better preach the sermon."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed the amazed clergyman. "Why, Philip, dear boy, you must be mad." (Philip began to calculate how often he had been told this in the last few days.) "Merciful powers! don't you see that there would be letters in the papers directly, pointing out that I am part-owner of the Grayl breweries? A hypocrite is the least of the hard names I should get."

"I 'm afraid you must get out of your difficulties as best you can, Ambrose. I have enough of my own."

"But you 're not going *on* with this thing, Philip," demanded Mr. Grayl, his voice rising like an angry woman's. "You can't be *serious!*"

"I've told you before that I am," said Philip, a little impatiently.

"Oh, but I took that to be in the first fever-heat of a new craze."

"What I said then I say now," interrupted Philip.

"Then what on earth 's to be done," said Mr. Grayl, in a tone of dismay. At this moment, to Philip's relief, Laurence Monkwell drove up in a cab. They were so near the house, that it was plainly only civil to go and help her out. So he quickly crossed the road to do so, and Mr. Grayl followed him, looking very disconsolate.

"Come in," said Philip to him, as he opened the hall door, "it is just tea-time."

Tea had just been brought into the hall, and Mrs. Monkwell was sitting there alone. Philip said nothing about his wife's absence, but presently Laurence remarked it. "Lucille told me she was lying down with a headache," said Mrs. Monkwell, "and that she was going to take her some tea. She seems to have a great deal of headache just now," she added. "I suppose it is the heat."

"Yes, she always feels it very much," said Philip, and then spoke of something else. Laurence was full of the pictures she had been to see, and talked of those a little. Mr. Grayl sat in silence, occasionally fixing a look of despair upon Philip, which struck him as very comical, and gave him a desire to laugh in spite of all his serious perplexities. He succeeded in avoiding another tête-á-tête with the clergyman by devoting himself to Laurence. They talked for a long while, one of those delightful, discursive talks which are too light to bear writing down, and yet which enlighten new friends about each other. These two had this power of interesting each other, whether about great things or about trifles, which constitutes the strongest bond in friendship, and they were beginning to discover this with mutual delight. Mrs. Monkwell, finding that small talk was not required of her, relapsed into a novel in which she soon became absorbed. Mr. Grayl found himself quite out of it; and, as the time went on and the dressing-bell rang,

and Philip was still talking to Laurence, he saw that there was nothing to be done but take himself off.

Mrs. Tempest did not appear at dinner; Philip apologized for her, and seemed a little anxious and worried.

"It 's to be hoped she will be better to-morrow!" said Mrs. Monkwell. "It is so trying to be ill when there is a big dinner-party, I know. Clare does not seem at all strong."

"No," said Philip, with a sigh; "she is not as strong as she was."

CHAPTER VII.

PHILIP seemed as uneasy as a perturbed spirit the next day. He was down early; he wandered about the house; he talked to every one; he visited his wife's room a dozen times in the course of the morning. For Mrs. Tempest was still prostrated with a headache, and did not appear. At lunch-time Philip did not come into the room until quite half an hour late. He looked so distressed that Mrs. Monkwell at once said, "I am sure you are anxious about Clare. She is really ill."

"Yes," he answered, "I am very anxious. I want to send out telegrams and put off every one to-night; but she declares she will be well enough to come down."

"Oh, it would be very late to do that, unless she is dangerously ill!" exclaimed Mrs. Monkwell.

"Yes, it would be, I am afraid," said Philip. He scarcely ate anything, and soon went upstairs again.

"It's very odd, Laurence," said Mrs. Monkwell, as soon as he had gone. "I don't understand what can be the matter with Clare. I wish Mr. Tempest would let me see her. Why doesn't he send for a doctor?"

Laurence had nothing to suggest. The house was full of an uneasy feeling. Philip met Lucille on his way to Clare's room.

"Lucille," he said abruptly, after she had passed him, as if the idea of speaking to her suddenly formed itself in his mind. "Do you think your mistress will be able to come down to-night?"

The woman hesitated. "I think, sir," she said, "that if you will leave her to me this afternoon, she will. I have known her recover before when she has been as bad as this."

At that moment another servant came to him with a telegram. He opened it, and found it was from Canon Winterby.

"I am free between three and four, if you can call."

Philip looked at his watch. It was half-past two now. He hesitated, but only for a moment. He had never left Clare before when she was as ill as she was now. To-day he felt as if he could not help her, as if he needed help himself.

"I must go out," he said. "I will trust you to attend to Mrs. Tempest. I will be back at five. Don't leave her a moment; you know it is too late now to put off the dinner, and she must come down."

"I feel sure it will be all right, sir," she said; "if you will leave her to me entirely."

Philip nodded, and, turning back, went downstairs again. He went out immediately, and drove straight off to Canon Winterby's house.

The house was very still that afternoon. Laurence went out for a long walk. Mrs. Monkwell sat in the garden reading and dozing. The servants were very busy preparing for the dinner and for the evening. Upstairs all was silent. Lucille moved to and fro softly, only leaving Clare's room for a few minutes at a time.

Philip did not return till six. He went straight up to Clare. Lucille met him at the door.

"I would not disturb her, sir, if I were you," she said; "she 's asleep."

His mind was full of other matters, and he was glad to be able to attend to them; so he went away, and left Lucille in charge.

He found he was late, when he went to dress for dinner, so he hurried, intending to go to Clare as soon as he was ready. He had to go downstairs first, however, the servants needing some question answered about the flowers and the arrangement of the table, — matters which Clare always looked after herself. The butler professed to be entirely bewildered by the order he found himself compelled to obey, of bringing out no wine; he said he did not see how a table could be "set" without wine-glasses. Under these circumstances, Philip thought it best to go down and endeavor to calm the ruffled spirits before going to Clare. As he came up again — two steps at a time, for there were sounds which told that the first arrivals were at the door — he met Lucille on the stairs.

"Oh, sir," she said; "it's not my fault. I have done my very utmost, and given her everything to do her good; but, indeed, sir, she must have something I don't know of."

Philip stopped dead, and looked at her, his face growing gray as he took in the meaning of her words. "Where is she?" he said.

"In the drawing-room, now, sir, surely. I was keeping her back, and praying you might come; but Mr. Leslie was going into the conservatory for a flower, he said, and she would go with him."

Without a word, Philip turned and went quickly to the drawing-room. Some people were just being shown in, whom he had to greet civilly, while at the same time looking round for his wife. She was not there. The conservatory opened into the drawing-room on the other side, and he looked anxiously at the doorway; he could not go across, for it was now the dinner-hour, and guests were arriving quickly, one after the other. He was obliged to receive them, and they all looked round for Mrs. Tempest in vain. He was just about to break away and go in search of her, when she came in through the conservatory door. Leslie was following her as closely as her long train would permit of. She was dressed entirely in black velvet, and wore a quantity of diamonds. She was flushed, and looked magnificently handsome. The brilliant color in her face was repeated by some large blooms of crimson geranium which she carried in her hand, having

evidently just gathered them. In the other, she carried a black lace fan, which was starred all over with small diamonds. She was playing with this, and looking at the crimson flowers, and did not seem at all aware of the necessity of advancing to meet her guests.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE moment was a very awkward one for everybody, though not alarming to any one but Philip, who turned cold. With scarcely a second's pause he hurried to avert a catastrophe, and took the lady he was speaking to across the room to Clare. The others, seeing that their hostess made no advance to meet them, followed this example, and went to her. Thus she was surrounded at once by a little group, and Philip stood at her side, talking rapidly. She smiled vacantly, and shook hands with those who came up to her, then broke away and threw herself upon a chair. One of the ladies had followed her, and said something to her.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Mrs. Tempest, speaking in a loud tone that startled everybody, for it was not in the least like her usual voice, — "I don't really know who 's coming or who 's not. I hate this dinner-party altogether. Phil 's managing things all his own way, and making a pretty mess of it."

The buzz of talk ceased for a second, as these words, uttered loudly, penetrated all ears. Glances of dismay were interchanged. Then the talking recommenced, rather more loudly than before, for

every one made an effort to cover the general embarrassment. No one knew what was the matter, yet all felt alarmed and uneasy.

Laurence Monkwell was standing very near the chair in which Mrs. Tempest had thrown herself, and she remained fixed with amazement, gazing at her with dilated eyes. Suddenly Clare raised her voice, and began to speak so that she could be heard above the general hum of talk. At the first sound of this lifted voice, which had something ominous and strident in it, Laurence instinctively started forward as if to silence it, or screen it, she knew not how, and Philip did the same thing from where he stood, beyond her. They got in each other's way, and for an instant they stood face to face.

"What am I thinking?" said Laurence, quickly, in a low voice which he heard perfectly, but which reached no one else. "Am I wicked to think what I do?"

"No," he answered, in the same tone; "you are right. You know my secret. I suppose all the world must know it to-night; yet I would give my life to shield her."

"What can I do?" said Laurence, and in those four words, said as she said them, was a promise of devotion and of help such as had never come to him in his life before.

"Don't let any one talk to her; at dinner monopolize Lord Shortlands, if you possibly can."

Hurriedly saying this, he passed her, and, stand-

ing in front of Clare, spoke to the person she was addressing. She relapsed at once into a sullen silence, looking angrily at him. Lord Shortlands, for whom they had been waiting, now came in; and dinner was immediately announced. Laurence understood Philip's request as soon as she remembered that Lord Shortlands would take Mrs. Tempest down. She herself was allotted to a guardsman who evidently thought himself simply too handsome to live. Her quick intelligence told her that he would need very little attention, and that to devote herself to Lord Shortlands would not be difficult. The only doubt in her mind was, could she entirely distract his attention from Clare, to whom he properly owed it? Her whole nature was strained with anxiety to do what Philip wished, and in the way he wished it. For the first time in her life she felt anxious as to her own powers of attraction; for the first time in her life she wished to please a man, and wondered whether she was sure to succeed, and reflected as to her best plan of attack. Her glance rested on Lord Shortlands as they sat down at the table. He was a very smart man, not looking at all young, and yet looking much younger than he was. He was a bachelor, a diplomat, a courtier, with a thin, almost emaciated figure carried with dignity, and dressed to perfection; his face seemed carved in wood, and its skeleton-like look gave it an ascetic expression. He would have looked like a fanatical monk if dressed as one. His reputation was about as bad as

it could be, and was overlooked because he was very rich, and, politically, somewhat important. Laurence had heard of him as one of the most fastidious men in the world, and as a great match (from the marriage-market point of view) who had escaped the matchmakers of Europe during fifty years, and had long since been given up to his cynical bachelordom. She feared her task of keeping his attention during a whole dinner would try her strength to the utmost; but she did not intend to fail in the first task Philip had set her. Her sudden consciousness of her overmastering desire to help Philip, which would have troubled her terribly at another time, was now lost sight of in the horror of her recent discovery, and, in the excitement of the moment, she forgot altogether to take herself to task for it.

Everybody present had of course read Philip's speech, and understood his position. There had been much curiosity beforehand as to whether he intended to carry his theories so far into practice as to deprive his guests of an accustomed luxury; and a swift comprehending glance from each one took in the fact that wine-glasses did not decorate the table. The subject was carefully avoided, and the talking was even more voluble than at most dinner-parties, as if all were anxious to show that their wit did not depend on wine. In reality, this was only because all present were nervously conscious of something wrong.

Laurence began to talk at once to Lord Shortlands, hardly taking any notice of her guardsman. She soon managed to get up an animated discussion on some subject of the moment, half her attention being fixed all the while on Clare, whom she watched with incessant anxiety. Whenever Clare was about to speak to Lord Shortlands, Laurence made some daring, funny remark which forced him to turn to her. She foiled every attempt of Clare's, who at last recognized that she had no chance. Neither had she on the other side, as the man who was in that place was nervous, and took refuge in a very pronounced flirtation with the lady he had brought down. So Clare sank into silence, looking up now and again at Laurence with a glance of growing hatred. Sometimes this glance travelled up the length of the table and settled upon Philip. For the rest, she leaned back in her chair and played with her glittering fan. She did not attempt to eat any dinner, simply refusing each dish as it was offered her. This course made the nervous man very uneasy. He looked from the corner of his eye at the plates which were put before her and taken away unused. At last Lord Shortlands, in a moment of opportunity afforded him by Laurence helping herself from a dish, turned to Clare, and said:

"You are not eating any dinner, Mrs. Tempest."

"No," she answered, "I'm not, nor would you, except for politeness. Nobody cares for dinner without any wine."

The same startled hush passed over the table which she had caused when she spoke in the drawing-room. It was more the sound and tone of her voice than what she said which caused this. There was something unusual and alarming about it. The hush lasted barely a second, and then the general buzz of talk became louder than before. Nobody looked at Clare, or addressed her, yet every one at the table was thinking of her. Most of them thought she was in a very bad temper, having evidently quarrelled with Philip over this wine question. There was a sense of relief when the ladies left the room. Clare moved with the air of a scornful beauty, which fitted in well with the general theory of what was wrong; and the women whispered together on the stairs and in the drawing-room, "What bad taste to let every one see." "Fancy treating us to a scene." "I always thought her too well-bred to go on like this." She disappeared for a few moments after they reached the drawing-room; and when she returned Mrs. Monkwell caught her alone for a moment.

"Clare," she said, in an undertone, — "you must forgive an old friend — don't let any one see how vexed you are; it does n't make it any better. Heavens! my dear girl, how flushed you are!"

"Leave me alone," said Mrs. Tempest, "and look after Laurence. The way she flirts is a *disgrace!*"

She swept on, leaving Mrs. Monkwell looking after her, transfixed with amazement. This was a Clare hitherto unknown to her.

"Mother," said Laurence, close to her, "what can we do?"

Mrs. Monkwell turned to her. "My dear," she said, almost gasping, "her cheeks are turning purple — and Laurence! — she smelt of brandy — horribly!"

"I know, mother, I know. What can we *do?* Let you and I keep by her, and prevent the others talking to her."

This they did, with fair success, till at last Philip came into the room. He came to Clare at once; and when he was close to her she was quieter and more manageable. She grew sullen; but she appeared to be afraid of him. The three, without interchanging a word, formed a species of guard for her all the evening. There was a large reception, and little was expected of Clare beyond shaking hands and smiling; and this she managed to do tolerably, as the others invariably took away each new comer before she had time to say or do anything extraordinary. It was an awful evening for these three, none of whom ever forgot it. The strain was so great that it appeared to them as if the evening was interminable. Laurence began to feel at last as if she were a lost soul doomed to stand forever amid passing shades, all gorgeously dressed and talking unmeaning platitudes, while she watched another unhappy soul burning itself out. For, as the hours passed, and Clare had no means of escape, and no opportunity of taking anything which would hinder this most miserable moment for her, she began to recover. Return-

ing intelligence brought with it an overpowering weariness; the dark flush died out of her face, and she grew white. Her eyes, losing their stony, angry expression, gradually assumed an anxious, furtive, deprecating look. She began vaguely to wonder whether she had been talking too loud; whether she had been laughing; whether she had been rude to any one; whether Philip was vexed with her! It was awful to have to suffer like this among a crowd of people; she longed to escape to her room alone, but for a moment, and bring back the confusion of mind and defiant anger which had carried her through the evening. But her guard was too vigilant. If Philip was compelled to leave her side, Laurence instantly took his place; and Clare recognized that to her, at all events, her secret was known, and that she was being watched. Mrs. Monkwell had long since wearied out and gone away; but Laurence never flagged, and Philip felt a profound sense of relief in finding he could rely on her.

At length it was over. The last guest was gone. And the moment Clare had smiled wearily, and said "good-night" for the last time, the tears rushed into her eyes. Philip, coming back from the hall, found her in a perfect paroxysm of sobbing, and the tears, with difficulty kept back for an hour past, were now raining down her face.

"You are all cruel to me; you all hate me. Oh, what a weary, tiresome, stupid party! Why was I ever born to lead such a life!" So far as her gasp-

ing utterances could be understood, they ran like that. Over and over again, she poured out a similar complaint. It seemed that she felt all the world to be against her. Laurence was quite powerless before this childish passion.

"Good-night, Miss Monkwell," said Philip's voice, very softly, "you are very tired; I will take care of Clare now."

She said good-night, and hurried away to her own room. She was full of a feverish excitement; she had never dreamed that any experience could move her so much. She had nothing more to think about Clare; in the long, weary hours of the evening, she had exhausted that subject. But her mind was full of Philip, — his position, his overwhelming difficulty, his endurance, his pluck.

This seemed a subject with which her thoughts would never be satiated. She recalled his face, with the new expressions she had now seen on it, — of pain, distress, despair. She heard again his voice as he had spoken in a whisper to her amidst the unheeding crowd. She leaned back in her chair and let the dark hours of the night slip away while she pondered over this absorbing image.

CHAPTER IX.

FOR nearly an hour Clare poured forth a stream of passionate reproaches upon Philip, sobbing bitterly the while. She walked to and fro, restlessly, in the drawing-room, trailing her long velvet dress after her. Philip sat in a chair near the door, into which he had dropped when he returned to the room. He was very tired. He watched her as she went backwards and forwards aimlessly; but he said nothing. This evening she had seemed to him like some dreadful figure in a nightmare, not like his wife at all. Gradually the bitterness of the hysterical sobbing died away, and then the sobbing itself ceased. There came a pause. Philip was a little bewildered by the silence, which seemed strange and new. Surely he had been listening to Clare's voice for ages. He was just beginning to realize how tired he was. And it struck him that he had better get Clare to bed at once, now that she was quiet. He rose with this intention; and, as he did so, Clare came to him.

"Philip," she said, "why don't you speak?"

"Go to bed, Clare," was all he answered. "It's too late to talk."

But her fears had suddenly become aroused; she would not be put off like this. She had passed into another phase, and it must be gratified.

"Philip, you are angry with me!"

"No, Clare, I am not. Come, let us go upstairs."

"Oh, Philip, I know what it is! I have not been myself, and you are vexed. Lucille has been giving me some horrible medicine that confused me."

"I don't think it was the medicine," he answered. He crossed to the side of the room, intending to put out the electric light. She followed him, and seized his arm. Her eyes were wild.

"What do you mean?" she exclaimed, in a hoarse voice. "Speak out, and tell me what you mean."

He turned, put his hand on her shoulder, and looked her full in the face. Her eyes, wild, appealing, with a desperate expression in them, seemed to devour him. He gazed steadily at her.

"Do you want me to speak the truth in plain words?"

"Yes, Philip, yes."

"I have never found the courage to do it yet. Perhaps I have been a coward. I have loved you well, Clare! and you, that say you value my love, are trying to kill it, trying to crush it out. I thought that was impossible; now I cannot tell —"

"Oh, Philip!" her voice had become a wail of agony.

"You must know yourself, Clare, that you are trying it almost beyond what human love can be expected to bear. While your secret was known only

to me, — while it was unacknowledged even between us, — it was easier to ignore it. But now, every one who knows us will soon know that you drink."

Clare shrank back with a sharp cry of pain, and put her hands to her forehead. It was as if she had been struck.

They stood thus a moment; then her hands fell helpless at her sides, and she repeated, in a tone of absolute stupefaction: —

"That I drink."

The amazement at hearing the words plainly spoken having passed away, she burst suddenly into heart-rending sobs. She was too worn out to be able to put any face on the matter at all; she simply sank into an abyss of grief. It was useless to attempt to speak to her; she appeared to understand nothing. Philip gave his whole attention to getting her up to her room. Lucille was waiting there, very sleepy and cross. Nothing was said. Lucille took no notice of Clare's tear-stained face and broken-hearted sobs. She simply began to take off her jewels, and to put her things away as quickly as possible. Philip went to his own room. He was of no use to Clare that night. For the time, she was scarcely an intelligent being.

He lay down with that weariness of spirit upon him which made him dread the next day, which reminded him that the night was nearly spent, and that there was but a very brief interval left before the difficulties of life would have to be faced again.

CHAPTER X.

THOSE difficulties turned out to be heavier and more dispiriting than even he had anticipated. Usually midnight weariness makes one fear the dawn more than one need; when the troubles of the day are greater than the fears of the night, then it means that life has put on the tragic mask in earnest.

Philip thought a great deal over what he should say to Clare. He expected to find her tearful and repentant. He resolved that now the blow had been struck, the ugly word spoken, he would not allow her to fall back for want of resolution on his part. He would talk to her plainly; he would compel her to begin to form new habits, and so recover the charm of character which it seemed as though she were about to lose. He felt profoundly thankful that he had spoken out at last, so that now he could use his influence steadily. And perhaps it was as well, bitter though the humiliation was, that she had made this public exhibition of herself. It might save her, when nothing else could have done so. Poor Clare! What a horrible thing for a woman such as she was, — a woman formed for love and for social success, born to be adored, — to awake to such a memory of dis-

grace and shame as must come to her this morning. The thought gave him a sharp pang of sympathy, and softened his heart so that he suffered. He felt a longing to hurry to her, to take her in his arms and comfort her. He repented sorely that he had let Lucille attend on her yesterday; surely that had been his duty! It had not seemed possible at the time; he wondered now whether he ought to have *made* it possible. How often had he done so; how often had he sacrificed other interests, put off engagements, broken appointments, in order to be with her! And of what avail had it been? This much — there had never been a scene, a shameful exhibition, like that of the night before. Perhaps, as he now began to hope, this might effect a cure. Perhaps he had shielded her too much for her own good. She had learned to rely absolutely on his protection. His heart went out more warmly than ever as he thought of all this, and of how she had suffered for her folly. He went to her room before going down to breakfast; but Lucille came to the door, and said she was asleep. He went away, but paused a step or two from the door in surprise; he heard her speak; she was not asleep. Perhaps she had but just wakened. However, he thought it best not to go back. He went down to the breakfast-room. He was later than usual; and he had grown accustomed to see Laurence Monkwell down before him. But she was not there this morning. Of course, he asked himself, how he could expect such a thing after the terrible

evening they had passed. She must be worn out. He was surprised to find how much he missed her presence. Very dark and blank the morning seemed without her, in spite of the sunshine outside. The atmosphere of the house was depressing in the extreme. The servants waited on him in an awe-struck way which attracted his attention at last. Of course he quickly remembered that they had probably been talking of nothing but Clare's condition last night since they woke that morning. For if the greater number of the guests had been fairly well deceived, there was no hope whatever that any one of the servants had been. Of course they knew everything, and more too. He buried himself in his papers. This was one of the ills of life which it is useless to resent; it must be met with philosophy. Yet it was hard for him, who, as he had said to Laurence, would have shielded Clare with his life, to know that she was the talk of the servants' hall, and that she deserved to be. It was worse than hard, it was humiliating. Humiliation is more difficult for most of us to bear than acute pain; and in Philip's proud nature it was an agonizing point to touch. He resolutely refused to think of it, and looked forward to his meeting with Clare as a compensation for what he was suffering for her sake. She would have recovered by now; she would be tender and repentant as he had often seen her before. When he had waited on her during weary days, she had always rewarded him by an access of affection, an abandon-

ment of tenderness, which had won him back in spite of what she had made him endure.

The reality was very different from the anticipation, as it is so often in life. This was the first time that Philip had found his expectations so completely at fault, and it was a shock to him. Clare was dressed, and sitting by the open window in her room, reading. She seemed languid but she was quite quiet and collected. She received Philip with great dignity and extreme coldness, hardly answering him when he spoke. He was amazed. This was a new mood to him. He was not experienced enough to know that it showed she had fallen a step further. A bitter resentment rankled in her heart, as she thought over what he had said to her the night before. To-day, having recovered from the hysterical phase, she marvelled at herself for the tears she had shed when he made his accusation. Why had she not torn him to pieces? Why had she not silenced him by her cold dignity? Why had not she done anything but cry, — cry like a fool! She had been asking herself these questions over and over again ever since she woke, and had completely hardened her heart before he came to her. Philip was quite in the dark as to how to approach her. For at the first glance — or, was it at the first feeling rather, a matter of actual magnetism — he knew that she was not in the mood for gentleness. There was neither love nor repentance in that coldly beautiful face. He spoke of the heat, which continued to be very great, of the book she

was reading, or rather looking at; for though she pretended to be interested, and kept glancing back at the pages, she betrayed the fact that she did not even know which she was reading by the way she turned them over. He asked her if she would go out, and she said, no, it was too warm! He said nothing of the night before; there was something in her manner which froze the words on his lips. This handsome, indifferent, silent woman, with the sullen look on her face, seemed to be a stranger. It was not any Clare that he had known; it was not even the Clare of yesterday. Last night she had appeared to him as a figure might in a horrid dream; this morning she was like a shape cut in stone. Where was the woman he had loved? What had become of her? It seemed that he had but her outward semblance left. The strangeness of this experience soon made him as silent as she was herself. He sat looking at her, watching the heavy eyelids and long lashes which persistently drooped and would not be lifted, so that their eyes should meet, — eyes that had always loved to look into each other's depths, now for the first time averted. At last, the difficult conversation ceased, and a complete silence fell between them, — a silence so hard to break that it stood like a palpable thing, like a wall of separation. They had always been gay or tender together, as lovers are, and babbled easily of little things, as lovers do. Now this seemed as impossible as though it had never been. He saw that which had been the comfort and

joy of years gone from him as though it had never existed. He imagined that it had faded for the moment, and that it surely would return. To live without love was to him an inconceivable state of existence. It was as necessary to him as sunshine to the sunflower. He would sacrifice anything for it. While he and Clare loved each other, he could suffer all and everything for her sake. But it was dreary, after the long hours of endurance, to meet this cold-eyed indifference. He rose with a faint sigh.

"Come out into the garden, at least, Clare; the warmth is so delicious. Let me take your books and parasol for you. It is shady now at the back of the house."

"No," said Clare, "I prefer to stay here. I am not in the humor for talking. I think Laurence is in the garden now."

The insinuation was quite lost on him. That Clare should be jealous was the last thing he would ever have dreamed of. He forgot, or did not know, that this jealousy was a result of the vice which was destroying her. He understood what she said, as a hint that he should leave her and attend to the social duties which she was not in the mood to fulfil herself. So he went, without making any further effort to rouse her. What was the use? She would not respond in any way, therefore it was best to leave her to herself.

He left the room, and went downstairs, and out into the garden. Laurence was walking up and down on the grass. She looked rather worn and grave; her

eyes were on the ground; but, at the sound of his step on the gravel, she glanced up, and all her face was alight instantly, as with a ray of sunshine. Philip saw this and was glad. Mrs. Tempest, looking carefully round the curtain of her window, saw it too, with rage. Her face flushed suddenly, and she clenched her hands with a fierce, passionate movement.

"What shall I do?" she said to herself in a hoarse whisper. "How can I repay them? Wretches!"

She watched them meet, walk on together, and disappear into the shadow of the house, where they passed out of her sight. A moment later, and she caught the sound of the front door, and then heard a familiar footstep. She sprang across the room and hurried downstairs. Leslie Tempest was standing in the hall, doubtful for a moment where he would look for Philip, whom he had come to see, when he heard his name called in a loud whisper, and saw Clare coming down to him. He was surprised at the state of excitement in which she seemed to be, and went quickly to meet her.

"What has happened?" he exclaimed. "What is the matter, Clare?"

"Everything 's the matter," she said, passionately. "Come upstairs; I want to talk to you; they are out in the garden." She led the way to a little room next the drawing-room which she often used in the morning. Her eyes were aflame; her face was flushed; Philip would have hardly believed it possible that she could have changed so quickly.

"Leslie!" she began, the moment they were in the room, and the door shut, "I don't know what has come to Philip. He was never like this before — until lately, that is. It has been coming on for some time now; and it all seemed to come to a head the day he went to see Canon Winterby, and that hateful girl came to stay here. I am counted for less than nothing; I am nobody in my own house. I suppose men always get like that after they are married; I have heard other women complain of it; but, oh, Leslie, there is more than that! He has begun to accuse me of horrible things; last night he made a dreadful accusation against me; I shudder when I think of it. I can't be called upon to bear so much! I will not bear it — Leslie! What shall I do?"

"Tell me what he has said," asked Leslie, who was greatly perplexed by this sudden outbreak, for which he was entirely unprepared.

"No, no, don't ask me to do that! You would be shocked, horrified, as I was; indeed, I can't repeat what he said. It is not right that my devoted love should be repaid in such a way. But I will make him suffer; I will not rest, night or day, till I have made him suffer for the humiliations he has put on me. Leslie," turning on him suddenly, "I 'd like to go away from home. I wish you 'd take me."

"My dear girl," said Leslie, who was thoroughly alarmed now by her excitable manner, "you seem to me to be very odd and wild to-day. You 've — you 've not been taking any chloral or anything, have you?"

"Chloral! Certainly not."

"Well," said Leslie, apologetically. "You told me once that you took sleeping draughts sometimes; and really, you know, for you to talk about going away like that—"

He left his sentence unfinished, and stood looking at her.

"You think I must be crazy? Well, I'm not. I'm in earnest, Leslie. I can't stand being treated like this. I thought last night that it was more than I could bear; and when it came to the last, and he said those dreadful things—"

"Last night," said Leslie, "you were a little excited—"

"I was not," cried Clare, with sudden anger. "I was unhappy; and you men are all so stupid, you don't know the difference."

Leslie saw that he had made a mistake, and hesitated as to how to remedy it. If Clare had been a man, he would have said simply, "You were a bit on, and perhaps didn't understand what was said." But it was evident that the "brutal truth" might get him out of favor; and he would not risk this. For to see Clare as he had seen her the night before did not affect his admiration for her, except perhaps to increase it. He liked a woman to be what he would have called "human;" he was a hard liver himself, and he hated nothing so much as superiority. He detested Philip because he had no vices. He detested women who appeared to be superior to all

temptation. Some weakness in a woman's nature brought her more within his range, and made her more attractive to him.

But he was alarmed at the humor he found Clare in to-day. There was a recklessness about her which made him cautious. For he really cared for her, and had no wish to see her do anything foolish or compromising. It was fortunate for her at that moment that he cared for her as much as he did.

His hesitation gave her time to walk the length of the room and back again. She was very much excited, and very angry; but it seemed impossible for her to stand still. As she was turning away from him again, he caught her arm.

"Come and sit down, Clare," he said; "you are wearing yourself out!"

He drew her to a sofa near which they were standing, and they sat down side by side.

"Yes," she said, "I am tired. It is terrible to live like this, unloved, full of suspicion, accused of horrible things."

"No," said Leslie, "not unloved. You know that, Clare!"

He took her hand, and held it tight between both his. Clare turned her face away and sighed.

Very different things from love were being talked of in the garden, where Philip and Laurence, after walking up and down for some time in the shadow of the house, had subsided into garden chairs and lit friendly cigarettes.

"I have long surrendered the idea that there is any meaning in life," Laurence was saying; "I cannot see the smallest reason to suppose there is."

"The dignity of the life after death necessitates a meaning in the life before it."

"Oh, but one cannot accept the fact of immortality without proof," said Laurence; "and we're so absolutely without it! No Spiritualist or Theosophist or fanatic of any sort has ever given us one little atom of proof. That we shall live after death is much too wonderful and mysterious a thing to accept so lightly."

"It is no more wonderful and mysterious a thing than the fact that we are alive now," said Philip; "and the odd thing is that we cannot prove that."

"True," answered Laurence, "life and death are conundrums which we are left in the dark to guess. But it is a very tiresome occupation. I am glad I don't have to preach about these things, like Canon Winterby."

"Come and hear him this afternoon," said Philip; "he preaches in Westminster Abbey."

"Yes," said Laurence, after a brief hesitation. "I should like to. I think it is a waste of time listening to these professed optimists; nevertheless, it is pleasant."

"I'm so glad," said Philip, with delight. "I must persuade Clare to come."

Laurence made no answer. Clare was a difficult subject to-day, and one that she preferred to avoid.

She wished Philip had kept away from it altogether. And yet perhaps it was best to speak of her in this way, without any reference to the awful experience they had been through together. At all events, Philip thought so; he felt it to be more loyal to Clare to ignore all that had happened, even with Laurence, to whom he had been compelled to speak openly the night before. Laurence understood this; and though she felt embarrassed, she admired and respected him for making the attempt. Silently she followed his lead.

Philip looked at his watch. "It's late," he said. "I hope lunch won't be very late; I'll go and ask Clare. It generally is on Sunday, and we can't expect the servants to be very wide-awake after being up so late last night. We must go very early if we are to get within hearing distance. The Abbey is so crowded when he preaches, I know people go quite an hour before the time, and take books to read till the service begins; and those that come late stand all the while. Fancy what a power that man has! The worst of him is, he is so strong, he makes one feel like a fool."

He rose as he spoke, and went indoors. Laurence lit another cigarette, and fell into a fit of profound thought, — one of those states in which one questions one's self, and answers back as to another person, in which the "I" talks to the "me." The conversation was something like this: —

"Am I getting fascinated by Philip Tempest?"

"I don't know; if I am, I am a fool. Of course he is a fascinating person; but surely I am not to be carried away by bright eyes and a charming manner."

"Then, how is it that he makes you feel as if you could even try to do good in order to please him?"

"I cannot tell. I am afraid he could make me want to do anything that would please him."

Philip, meantime, looking for Clare, met the butler, and learned that lunch was to be ready at two. This was quite natural, but very unfortunate, as the Westminster Abbey service began at three, and it would take half an hour to get there. "Try and have it ready at a quarter to two," he said, and went on to look for Clare. But he did not find her. He had no idea where she had gone, or that Leslie was in the house. Finding that she was not in her own room, he went out into the garden again, where Laurence was still sitting, alone, looking rather grave and a little vexed. The conversation she had been holding with herself had not pleased her. Philip's return was a welcome relief, and, with all the perversity of human nature, although she had just been taking herself to task for her folly, she abandoned herself with delight to the pleasure his presence gave her. The break in their talk had destroyed the momentary embarrassment which the mention of Clare's name had produced, and they immediately plunged back into a discussion which had been carried on at intervals, for days, as to the value of good works. This was only interrupted by the gong.

"Lunch," exclaimed Philip, starting up. "We must be quick, or we shall never get into the Abbey. I'll tell them to have the carriage ready in a quarter of an hour. Do you think you can eat lunch in so short a time?"

"Yes," laughed Laurence, "or go without it, if you like."

"Oh, we need n't go without altogether; but we can't stay out the function, I fear."

They entered the dining-room through a glass door which stood open; and, as they did so, Clare and Leslie came in from the hall. Philip was surprised, he had not known Leslie was in the house; and he had not at all expected to see him, as their difference had rapidly reached the point when it is wisest not to meet. In fact, both had already pledged themselves not to communicate except through their lawyers. Leslie had hit upon some scheme of compromise which he thought worth proposing direct to Philip, and had come to the house that morning with the intention of holding a brief and warlike interview; but since he entered the house, till now, other thoughts had driven this entirely from his mind. When the gong sounded, he proposed to go; it seemed to him quite impossible to eat at Philip's table. But Clare implored him to stay; and he reflected that immediately after lunch would probably be a good time for the interview he desired. Partly because he wished to speak to Philip, but chiefly because Clare begged him to do so, he stayed,

and followed her into the dining-room. He wished he had not done so, the moment he met Philip's look of surprise. However, it was too late to draw back without being absurd. The meeting was constrained and disagreeable for everybody. Mrs. Monkwell did not appear, and Philip asked for her. Laurence said that her mother was very tired, and would probably not come down till the afternoon. The conversation dragged fearfully; Clare relapsed into her sullen humor, and the men avoided addressing each other.

"Clare," said Philip, breaking a disagreeable silence, "I want you to come to Westminster Abbey this afternoon. I have looked for you several times this morning to ask you if you would come, but could not find you. Where have you been?" (Leslie and Clare both found their plates of absorbing interest at this moment. But Philip went on without waiting for any answer. His interest lay in what the day held for him, not what was gone.) "The carriage will be ready in about ten minutes; it's a little bit of a rush, I know, but Miss Monkwell is coming and does n't mind the hurry, so I am sure you won't."

"Westminster Abbey!" echoed Mrs. Tempest, in a voice of amazement. "Church! my dear Philip! What possesses you?"

It is perhaps hardly necessary to explain that the Tempests were not church-goers.

"I hardly thought of it as church," said Philip, to whom this word represented, as it does to most

of our latter-day indifferentists, a phase of boredom. With Clare he went in an orderly manner to morning service, when they were at home in the country, and listened, with spiritual resignation and a mental fatigue that was like a temporary illness, to the platitudes of the rector of the parish.

Laurence looked up smiling. "That is delightful," she said, "I had really thought it was going to church, this expedition of ours. Do explain the difference."

"Well, you see," said Philip, answering her smile with one of his own brightest (and when he smiled brightly the effect was as of a gleam of sunshine which suddenly entered the room), "to begin with, the Abbey is a poem in itself, and one that never comes to an end, because every change of light in it brings out new beauties. Then the music is delicious; to hear the Abbey choir sing a fine anthem is worth the pilgrimage in itself. Then Canon Winterby preaches to-day; and to hear him is to hear an intellectual giant wrestling with the problems of the age."

"Oh, Canon Winterby!" exclaimed Mrs. Tempest. "No, I am not going. I don't want to hear him or see him. I am sick of his name," she added, violently. Philip looked up quickly at her, and seemed about to speak; but he said nothing. The disagreeable silence which seemed like a definite thing in the room, always waiting its chance, again fell upon them. The moments passed; the servants

brought another course; the carriage could plainly be heard at the door, the horses restive with the heat. Philip looked at his watch.

"I fear we must go," he said. "Do come, Clare; I'm sure you will enjoy it."

"No, thank you," she answered coldly, "I am rather hungry, and we have only just begun lunch."

This was not quite true, but near enough to the truth not to be open to dispute. Leslie was quietly discussing chicken and salad; Clare was just putting salad on her plate. The sweets were being brought into the room. Philip looked at Laurence.

"I am ready," she said, in answer to his look, "if Clare will excuse me."

"Oh, certainly," said Clare, with a coldness that had now almost reached freezing point. Laurence quickly left the room; Philip followed her. Two minutes later the carriage drove away from the door.

Clare looked across at Leslie, who suddenly seemed to have lost his interest in chicken and salad. She laughed,—a gay and musical laugh; yet even he heard the reckless note in it that jarred.

"We'll have coffee and brandy upstairs," she said. "It's cool and pleasant in my sitting-room."

CHAPTER XI.

TO Laurence, the experience of that afternoon was as novel as that of the evening when she had attended a Temperance meeting. She was even less accustomed than Clare to go to church. But, as she had said to herself, with anger and surprise, she found herself anxious to do anything which Philip wished her to do. And she found herself rewarded, as she had been on a previous occasion, by novel sensations.

"I should like to show you the cloisters," said Philip. "I think we could spare a minute or two," and he told the coachman to stop at Dean's yard. He did not ask Laurence whether she wanted to see the cloisters; he took that for granted. This compelling force was one of his peculiarities which pleased and rested her. To a rudderless, indifferent modern, nothing is more agreeable than to be led by the hand of a delightful and desirable person. It was nothing to Laurence, what she was expected to look at, so long as to look was expected of her. All the other men she knew would have apologized for asking her to look at anything. And cloisters! "Mother would ask him if he imagined we were

miserable tourists," Laurence thought to herself, smiling with amusement as she stepped out of the carriage and went with him into the quiet retreat of Dean's yard. The situation seemed to her as quaint as the place.

"There 's Canon Winterby's house," said Philip, as they crossed the yard; "that arched window that is only partly above the pavement is the window of the wonderful room he received me in the first time I saw him."

"I remember," said Laurence. "I heard you describe it."

"Did you," said Philip, with surprise; "you certainly did not appear to be listening."

"Perhaps not, but I was. Your description of the room interested me very much; and it gave me an odd feeling that some day I should see it. A ridiculous idea, for nothing can ever bring me into Canon Winterby's way."

By this time they were in the cloisters, and stood still to look round at the crumbling arches, and to realize the poetic dreariness of the place. The silence which fell upon them was very different from that which had come like a cloud upon the four together at lunch. This was a silence of sympathy, of a quiet pleasure that was of too delicate a texture to be expressed in words.

"We had better go into the Abbey," said Philip, after a moment's delightful pause. "It is twenty to three."

They went back across the yard, and found the carriage standing at the entrance, so they got in and were driven round to Poets' Corner. People were going in quickly; but there was still plenty of room to get near the pulpit. Laurence felt quite ashamed, as she glanced round, to think that she had never entered this glorious place before. Her eyes travelled round the walls; and, looking behind her, she was quite surprised to see that the seats, which a moment ago were empty, were now full; the crowd was gathering quietly, but very rapidly, as the hour of the service grew near. Had they been five minutes later, they would have had to sit far away. It reminded her of the incoming of a tide. It seemed strange to her, to look across this great crowd which was so perfectly silent. A vast throng of people, filling a great building and waiting in absolute silence, fills an observer with a certain awe, a respect, which a noisy crowd does not arouse in the least. It seemed very wonderful to Laurence that any one should have the courage to speak to such a congregation of all sorts and conditions of men and women, and tell them of right and wrong, of good and evil. It appeared to her suddenly as a godlike thing to be able to do this. How splendid to have faiths and beliefs so firmly fixed as to make it possible! Laurence became aware of a strange sort of pity for herself, and her own aimless, useless, drifting life. She wondered if there was something in the atmosphere of the Abbey

which made her feel almost ashamed to be the thing she was. "Perhaps so," she thought; "for there must be glorious ghosts here, if there are any anywhere!" Lovely gleams of sunlight fell through the high windows, on to the dark arches, changing and moving every moment; they were passing down a row of statues, making each one in turn shine out like a living figure lit with a ghostly radiance. Sometimes as the sunbeam wandered over the marble face it would produce the effect of a smile on it, which was startling and fascinating. It was delightful to Laurence to sit quietly by Philip Tempest's side, and look at these things. She knew he was watching the sun-rays too, and noting the tricks they played; the feeling of silent sympathy, and the sense of infinite comfort that it gives, was again upon them both. The great circular window opposite them glowed with its rich, dusky colors, dark and warm; it looked like a large old barbaric jewel. The narrow window below it was very vivid and bright, like a piece of modern jewelry, with brilliant rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and turquoise all massed together. By this time, not only were all the seats full as far as Laurence could see in every direction, but people were standing, closely packed, all down the aisles, silent, motionless, patient. The stroke of three came at last, and as it sounded the murmur of the choir was heard. Laurence gave herself up to dreaming until the anthem came. Then she was roused to a point of pleasure that was

almost pain, for the anthem was "Hear my prayer," and there is something in the piercing sweetness of the melody which goes beyond the ear into the very soul, and stirs and startles it. Laurence was in the mood to feel such impressions keenly; she did not dare to look at Philip, though he glanced at her as the first exquisite notes floated through the great building. She knew well that he wanted an answering glance; but she dared not give it, she feared her eyes might say too much. So she stood motionless, looking up at the jewel-like windows. The next thing she realized was becoming aware of a figure in the pulpit, — of the erect bearing, the silvered curls, the glittering, keen, poetic eyes. She was glad at seeing this figure again, and surprised at herself that she was glad; still more surprised to find that now such faults as she had noted at first sight had vanished. Her gladness at seeing the man glorified him and made him a hero. It is in this way that heroes are made. We poor work-a-day mortals want something or some one to give us delight, and raise our ordinary mood to one of exultation. It is the men who do this (no matter what their faults may be) who are heroes in our eyes. Canon Winterby was of the order which inspires hero-worship, — the most enchanting of all religions. Then, as these thoughts passed through Laurence's mind, came the great tide of his eloquence, — a stream that swept away all thought of any other thing. He plunged at once into an ex-

panse of speculation and doubt, and passed over it, touching it here and there, leading his hearers on from one painful familiar point of scepticism to another, and then turned back and showered upon this arid space a rain of tender optimism. It seemed to Laurence sometimes that he positively pleaded the cause of the God in whose name he spoke, imploring people not to misunderstand Him, not to judge Him hastily, to give Him a chance, in fact. This was a way of putting things which was new to Laurence, and therefore interested her; she soon recognized that a keen thinker, such as this man was, can only apologize and entreat, standing up to justify the existence of a world full of injustice, as he himself described it. She felt the same kind of admiration for him that one feels for the courageous leader of a forlorn hope, as he stood there towering over the immense congregation, and said, "The optimist's answer is always, I do not care for the injustice and the undeserved suffering, because I *know* God exists and is good; therefore all must be well!" Was not this intellectual heroism? Indeed, yes. Laurence glanced round, as she reflected on this, to see how his poetic speech, his golden words, his stalwart loyalty to a God, left by the unbelievers without an existence, and by the pessimists without a character, were received by the mixed multitude who listened to him. She saw every eye fixed on him; women listened, carried away by the succession of poetic images and a flow of stately language;

men stood, close packed, motionless, seemingly breathless, gazing on this preacher of good and of glory, who, while he held his flag high, yet acknowledged that the way all had to tread was horrible. For, if the flag-bearer chance not to suffer himself, his footsteps must pass among those who do and inevitably; and every step must pass over places where hearts' blood has been spilled many a time. She saw nothing anywhere but profound, absolute attention and interest. What a power! What a gift! She found herself so much interested in thinking about this wonderful man that she was forgetting to listen to him, when suddenly an epigrammatic sentence brought her attention back sharply, "Cease to be a nonentity, and you become a criminal." The great preacher had apparently no better opinion of society and the world at large than she had herself. Yet he worked for humanity ceaselessly. Why was that? — she asked herself. What led him on — or compelled him? To her, effort seemed motiveless — however desirable for its own sake; but he appeared to be driven on by some overpowering motive. While she was thinking this, his own words answered her: "*The unmanifested is always so much greater than the manifested — the power that works behind phenomena.*" Here was the key to the whole situation, — it was the man's superb spirituality which made him live in this ceaseless activity; it was his consciousness of a supreme fact behind the changing uncertainty of material life. He possessed that

magic talisman which to her was as a fable, a pretty legend, — belief in the unseen so vital as to be knowledge. To her, there was nothing beyond the weary round of material life; all else was unknown and unknowable. She was in a condition of highly developed intellect simply; she saw in him the same condition, intensified and greater, but absolutely dominated by spirituality. She become absorbed in contemplation of this glorious miracle, as it seemed to her. Philip had to touch her arm in order to rouse her, when all was over, and it was time to go. They found the carriage waiting, and were quickly driven home, the horses, tired of standing about, being eager to get back. Neither Philip nor Laurence spoke the whole way. But this silence did not lessen the sympathy which had sprung into life between them; it deepened it.

Arrived at the house, Philip went straight away to look for Clare. She was in her own room; the door was locked; and she gave him no answer. He came slowly downstairs again. Laurence had stayed in the hall, where Mrs. Monkwell was sitting reading. She put down her book when they came in, and, directly Philip had left them, said to Laurence: —

"My dear, I think we had better go home. We were to stay another week; but Clare is so odd I 'd rather go. There 's something wrong in this house; and though Clare is an old friend, I must say I am sorry for Mr. Tempest. Clare seems to me to be becoming quite another person. I 'm afraid

Leslie's influence is very bad for her. They've been together all the afternoon till now; he's just gone — and Laurence, I almost believe they've been *drinking!* — it sounds so horrid I'm ashamed to say it; but I saw Clare for a moment, when he went away, and she was so flushed — and *odd* — she went off to her room with hardly a word. I'll say to-morrow we've had a letter calling us back; that Jim is coming home sooner than we expected, — that is, if you don't mind."

"Oh, no, I don't mind," said Laurence.

CHAPTER XII.

THE Monkwells lived in a great old house at Wimbledon. As the girls were in the habit of observing bitterly, they might as well live in Cornwall. It was out of the question to ask people to dinner, and they could not be expected to call; while it was hardly possible to have guests to stay as if at a country house, when Charing Cross was only twenty minutes distant. So that, in fact, socially speaking, it would have been better to live in Cornwall. The only entertaining the family attempted in the whole year was a garden-party, which they gave towards the end of the season. The state of the weather was a subject of agonizing thought to every one for a week beforehand; for though the house was big enough to hold a crowd, and they were not at all dependent on the garden, who could be expected to drive to Wimbledon on a wet day?

From the day of her husband's death, Mrs. Monkwell had been trying to let or sell this house; but it lay beyond the new district of villas, and was too far from the station to tempt anybody. It had belonged to the Monkwell family for generations, and had all the characteristics of an old home. When it came to

James Monkwell, at his mother's death, it was found delightful that it was so near town; it was a perfect retreat in which to go and recover from too many parties, for Mrs. Monkwell and her daughters, and from overwork for James Monkwell himself. He was an eminent surgeon, making a large income, and full of honors. Mrs. Monkwell was perfectly happy, as they lived in a fashionable square, and gave smart dinner-parties, and were in what she called "a very good set." She was sure the girls would marry young, for they were all good-looking and popular. So she did not trouble at all about living up to the income, and sometimes over it. It was a different matter when, suddenly, James Monkwell broke down. The circumstance was looked upon by the whole family with immense surprise. Willing horses usually drop in harness, and their drivers are always immensely astonished when this happens. We have a tendency to look upon anything which goes on working incessantly as automatic, and not liable to the weariness which falls upon lazy people when they do anything. But it even happens with a piece of mechanism that the mainspring will wear out, and it was some such catastrophe as this which fell upon James Monkwell, as he stood at the very summit of his profession. He had to give up work, to take absolute rest; the house in town was let, and the family retreated to Wimbledon. Of course this was supposed to be quite temporary; but there was no change for the better, and there was nothing to be

done but make the best of living upon Mrs. Monkwell's own comparatively small income in the old house. The boy, called James after his father, and apparently endowed with his father's genius, was at college, and was kept there with difficulty. The girls had to accept invitations without any hope of returning them, and to make their dresses last as long as possible. Then the father died, which made little difference one way or the other, except to Laurence, who loved him and missed him sorely. From then till now matters had not altered much. None of the girls had married, for none of them had had any good chances, except Laurence, who, as her mother indignantly said, had absolutely flung them away. Selfishly too, as she often added; for how *useful* a wealthy married sister's house would be to Gertrude and Marion! However, Gertrude and Marion had to do without this useful article, in so far as Laurence was likely to provide it; and their own opportunities did not seem equally great. This they attributed to their not having long come home from school when the town-house had to be given up. Laurence was the eldest of the family, the boy coming next, and then Gertrude. Laurence had had a season, and refused several proposals before her sisters had had any chance at all, — a fact they never forgot, and always counted as a crime on her part. Why, why, why, they frequently demanded, had she not married this man or the other man who had been known to have admired her. It was Laurence who

got most of the invitations now; partly because she was the eldest, and partly because she had more acquaintances. For this reason it was thought extremely unjust that it was she who had been asked to the Tempests. She was, therefore, welcomed home with black looks. But this made no difference to her. She did not take her sisters seriously.

The house was a great square building of dark-red brick, almost covered with ivy and other creepers; it stood in a high walled-in garden, which was a paradise for any one disposed to enjoy it. The drawing-room looked onto quite a stretch of grass with some large trees on it. In these hot days, the three long windows of the room stood wide-open; Mrs. Monkwell lay on a couch, in a cool corner, and read novels all day. Chairs and little tables were carried out onto the grass, and here the others passed most of their time. To the boughs of a large walnut-tree a hammock was hung, in which Laurence lay for long hours, slowly swinging herself to and fro, smoking a good deal, and pretending to read. Gertrude and Marion sat near, doing fancy-work or sewing, and talking all the while. Laurence had acquired a habit of never hearing anything they said. She and they were as different as the player's crown of mock jewels from the queen's diadem. She was gifted with a mind, and neither of them appeared to have any at all. Yet Laurence had managed to conceal this fact from most people; that Philip should have discovered her secret was an event in

her life. Most of their friends thought the three young women were all of one type,— fine, well-grown, well-dressed, and empty-headed. Laurence had practised the art of effacing herself ever since she had been in the nursery, and was now an adept at it. She had found it the only means of getting through life in anything like a well-bred way, since she never agreed with her mother or sisters on any subject.

She lay in the hammock all through the slumbrous afternoon, gazing up at the tracery of the gray-green leaves against the blue sky. She had walked herself weary in the morning; she would walk again in the evening. She was full of a restless energy, craving for some outlet, and finding none. And she was plunged in an abysmal solitude which made her feel as if the world were a burned-out shell, and these people about her the ghosts of its inhabitants.

She was finding out what it was like to have known Philip Tempest, and to have to do without him.

Her soul was all in rebellion. She had to cope with a pain which grew in intensity, and for which there was no alleviation or any hope of any. All she had to do, was to find out how to bear it. Her whole being was in a state of suffering, — that acute suffering of the emotional and magnetic nerves which is only known to passionate and sensitive natures. There is no pain to equal this, for those in whom it is possible. All the world is darkened, and the sun and the face of God are veiled, because the one we love is not with us. It had come to this with Lau-

rence, and she knew it. It was love which had burst into life within her for the one noble and delightful person whom she had ever talked with. She knew it in the instant when her mother asked her if she would mind going home at once; before, she had wondered at herself, and doubted her own heart; in that instant, she knew finally, and there was no more doubt. The passion of a lifetime had sprung into dominant existence, and she had got to live it down. How was she to deal with this splendid, shameful secret of hers? She quivered with the joy of it, and struggled blindly with the pain. Already she knew that she would rather endure anything than not have known Philip Tempest. And it was useless for her even to try and imagine having known him without loving him, — that was inconceivable. She accepted her misery as inevitable. It consisted simply in his absence. If she could have stayed in the house, and seen and talked with him every day, and felt her mind in contact with his, and her whole nature exalted by the magnetism of his presence, she would have been perfectly content. She would have asked nothing more of life. A thick black cloud fell upon her like a pall when she left Tempest House, and she knew not how to lift even a corner of it. She could not read; books were dull in comparison with the experience she was passing through; she could not study or work at anything, for she was too restless. It was just possible to endure her existence if she kept herself utterly weary by walking. When quite

worn out, she went and lay in the hammock, as now; the slight movement was a relief. The murmur of her sisters' voices reached her hearing, without their words troubling her mind. It was quite pleasant to hear them talking, for they had naturally tuneful voices, and they had been trained to speak low.

"Lots of people will be at Scarborough, this year," Gertrude was saying. "I am sure we had better go there."

"We must have a week in Paris while the Doriscourts are there," observed Marion. "I shall hear when they are going for certain."

"They will be in Rome for a good while, I think," said Gertrude, "and a good many other people too, about the same time. I must ask mother," she went on very thoughtfully, "whether we could n't manage Rome this year. If we found some nice rooms, it would n't be very expensive. Of course we would not attempt to go to a hotel. Yes, I must talk to mother about it. Now the Ellisons live there in the winter, there is always so much going on."

And so on, planning and scheming. Laurence listened as to the chatter of children. The door-bell rang with a loud clang; everything in the house was of an old-fashioned pattern, and this bell, as Gertrude sometimes said, was worthy of a convent gate. No interest was shown in the sound; no callers were expected, or were in the least likely to come.

Presently a voice was heard in the drawing-room talking to Mrs. Monkwell.

"Ah," said Gertrude "it's Jim."

In a few minutes he came out through the open window, and walked across the grass to his sisters. He was not greeted with effusion. This was much too modern a family to own to anything approaching affection for each other. Devotion to one's relatives is quite out of date. Perhaps it will come into fashion again with small sleeves and sloping shoulders.

"You look very lazy, Laurence," said Jim, looking down at her.

"I am," she answered briefly.

Gertrude laughed.

"Laurence is either in for a grand passion, or determined to have a small waist," she said; "I can't quite make out which. She walks like a person in training."

"Oh," said Jim, "I see this laziness is an afternoon pose."

"That's all," replied Laurence. She suddenly realized how insufferable one's family is. She thanked Providence that she was so accustomed to wear a mask, that she was able to preserve her sleepy voice, and did not turn crimson. She felt as if her heart blushed.

"The grass is very badly kept," said Jim.

"We haven't got a regular gardener now," answered Gertrude. "It must be attended to before the garden-party."

"You can't make grass look decent except by attending to it all the time, like everything else," said

Jim. "What muffs you girls are! Why don't you cut it yourselves? You 've got a machine, and you 've nothing to do."

This remark did not call forth any answer at all; no one thought it required one. So Jim strolled on down the garden to the shrubberies at the end of the grass, and then into the kitchen garden, looking round with practical eyes as he went. Laurence turned her head to watch him. He was outwardly very like his sisters, tall, graceful, very slight, with a finely cut face, a very pale skin, and black-brown hair. He was alert, active, self-possessed, self-absorbed. Laurence wondered vaguely whether the unspeakable torment of hopeless love could ever come to him, and how he would bear it. He had a passion for work, as his father had had before him. Laurence thought of this as she watched him; and the phrase, as it formed itself in her mind, reminded her of some of her conversations with Philip; of how he insisted always that work was the only salvation. She had laughed at this as a dreamer's theory. Now she began to wonder whether work would be any help to her. But how could she find any? What was there to do? What lay before her but going the weary round of visiting and travelling, dressing, dining, dancing? Oh, intolerable! Would it be easier to stay alone in the old house, mark out for herself some course of study, and follow it? Work and walk, and eat her heart out alone? Yes, it would be almost unbearable; yet it would be the easier of the

two. The next moment she knew it would be impossible. Her suffering was too great for that; she would go mad. What then was she to do? She put the tormenting question aside, and yielded to a sudden access of pain, of longing that was like a physical agony. Oh, to hear his voice! She would not ask that he should speak to her. Just to hear his voice! Just to see him move in the distance! No one, no one, was like him in all the world.

"Are you asleep, Laurence?" asked her mother's voice.

"Nearly," she answered, "what is it?"

"Won't you pour out the tea? You seem to have nothing to do."

Laurence roused herself at once, and sat up, swinging in the hammock. A servant was bringing out the tea; Mrs. Monkwell was finding the easiest chair in which to ensconce herself and her novel; Jim was coming back across the grass. Laurence lifted herself from the hammock, and went to the tea-table. Jim came up to the table to hand the cups.

"I am going to Birchampton, mother, for six months," he observed, as he took Mrs. Monkwell her tea.

"You have quite decided," she said.

"Yes, quite. There 's no operator in the world to equal Culverton Brand; and I should never feel satisfied that I knew anything if I had not been with him. He has done some marvellous things lately."

"You 'll have to keep your going there a secret,

won't you," said Mrs. Monkwell, "if he's so unpopular as you say in the profession? I know how bitter doctors can be against each other."

"Yes, it must be kept a secret," said Jim. "It'll be all right, if the girls don't talk."

"Why must it be kept a secret?" asked Gertrude.

Jim, having fulfilled his duties, sat down at his ease to take his own tea. He did everything, however trivial, in a serious, self-absorbed way. Other people evidently did not count for much with him. He was polite, as being a duty to himself rather than to others. He now set himself to talk down to Gertrude's capacity, because he wished her to understand the situation.

"Culverton Brand," he said, "is so clever at surgical work that he has distanced the whole profession; consequently they hate him. It has been made a rule by the trades-unionism of the profession that English surgeons are not to study under him. He is boycotted in his own country, and run down, and abused simply because he is too clever, and succeeds where other men fail. Of course it would n't do to send him cases when he is a generation or two ahead of everybody else in the matter of skill. And if we cannot count him as one of us, of course we must not learn from him. A pupil of his is boycotted just because he *is* his pupil, and knows more than other students. The consequence is, the young American surgeons come over and study under him, and get all the benefit of his skill;

and the next consequence is, that when we have a case we are afraid to deal with ourselves, we have to send it to America. Now I propose to learn everything Culverton Brand can teach me. They say that his fingers are made differently from other men's, that they are more sensitive, have more delicate nerves. But he himself says he can teach a good operator to do all that he does. He shall teach me. If I can keep it dark that I have been with him, at all events till I have done all my hospital work, it will be an immense advantage. Otherwise, every possible difficulty will be put in my way."

There was silence for a moment; then Gertrude said, "It all seems very extraordinary."

"Yes," observed Jim, "I have noticed that plain facts do seem very extraordinary — to outsiders."

"Then the hospital at Birchampton is his own? — is a private one?" asked Mrs. Monkwell.

"Yes, his own hospital, his own rules, his own trained nurses. He won't have a nurse that has been under any other surgeon. What an opportunity for a great man! No wonder he succeeds; granted, first of all, his marvellous genius, for nursing, and feeding, and all the rest of it are so important."

"Trains his nurses!" said Mrs. Monkwell; "most surgeons like experienced nurses, just as housekeepers prefer experienced cooks."

"Not this man. He knows too much. The others teach them all wrong. He takes women who are

entirely new to the work, so that they learn the very a-b-c of his method."

Here the conversation came to an end for lack of interest, the others having nothing further to say. Nobody gave a second thought to the whole matter. All they knew was that they were not to say anything about Jim's going to Culverton Brand's hospital. That was simple enough; and all that three of the persons present did was to make a mental note. The other, Laurence, had a further thought. But she said nothing about it.

CHAPTER XIII.

THAT thought was brought to the surface in Laurence's mind, and put back again a great many times in the next day or so. And something happened which brought it to the front in earnest, and shaped it into action.

It was late one afternoon, about a week after Jim came home. The house was as quiet as any convent could be; Gertrude and Marion had gone to town to some function or other, and to pay calls. Mrs. Monkwell was reading, as usual; Jim was shut up in a remote room which he had converted into a study. Laurence had been out walking before breakfast, and had spent the day in the hammock under the walnut-tree. At last she could bear the quiet no longer, and fetched her hat to go out again on one of the solitary rambles which prevented her from going mad. In a few minutes she went out at the front door, which opened straight upon the road. The great garden lay all at the side and back of the house; its long wall stretched some distance, as far as the next turning. Laurence walked under its shade. She carried no parasol; the clear pallor of her face was tanned with exposure; her hands were

brown too, for she wore no gloves. Her plain dress was of brown holland; her hat was a black straw sailor. She moved with a long, swinging step that seemed slow, while it really carried her along at a considerable pace; her bearing was upright almost to a fault. The uncompromising fashionable air which had annoyed Philip when he first saw her, stamped her even more markedly than ever. No one meeting this severely well-equipped young woman, and glancing at her grave face and proud eyes, which had in them a reserved expression that seemed like a veil, would have dreamed it possible that a fire burned within as fierce as any that ever tore a passionate Southern woman's heart. She walked alone; she had not even a dog as a companion. Mrs. Monkwell, who hated bother of any sort, had forbidden pets always; and her children had never had any. Her creed was the worship of self, and she had taught it thoroughly. The roads were hot and very dusty. There were crowds of cyclists out, rushing along in groups. Laurence met a ladies club, all in the dress that so startled Paris when it was first brought out there. They were talking and laughing together merrily; they all had pretty figures, and looked extremely graceful in their gray coats and knickerbockers, flying along with ease, and evidently with pleasure. Laurence paused, and looked after them. Was it possible that any of these light-hearted young women had ever faced the thought of a death-like life, life-long solitude. Utter loneli-

ness of heart has something appalling in it when one dwells in the midst of a busy, peopled world. How was it that these women were happy and gay and satisfied; and she never could be, because there was not one human being in the whole, weary, wide world who could give her happiness or gladness or contentment. She was pondering over this, standing still and looking down the long road, now empty, for the quick wheels had passed; when suddenly her heart contracted, and stopped beating for a second of agony. Some one was standing by her. She knew without looking that it was Philip Tempest.

He did not speak. She felt he was looking at her, and at last compelled herself to turn and lift her eyes to his. He wore a suit of smooth, silver-gray cloth; in his coat was a white rose-bud. Laurence wondered vaguely whether the light cloth made him look so very pale. In his white face, the eyes seemed to glitter strangely, like burning stars.

"I was coming to call at your house," he said. "I have been wanting very much to see you. We are going to shut up Tempest House, and go into the country."

"What, so early?" said Laurence.

"Yes," he answered, "it seems best."

Close to where they stood was a green field, across which was a footpath. The field was bounded by a hedge, in which stood some tall trees, and an old-fashioned stile admitted to the pathway. It was very hot where they stood; and Laurence moved into the

shade of the trees. Something in Philip's tone made her wish for a few minutes' delay before going into the house. She recognized the presence of a tragedy, and dreaded the jar of her mother's small talk.

"Is there anything wrong?" she asked; "you make me feel as if something had happened."

"Nothing new has happened," he answered, gravely and simply; "you know the trouble of my life. It is the same as it was; that is, it is the same thing. But it is growing like a great poisonous weed, and blotting out the very sky, choking one like a grasp upon one's throat, making all life into darkness and despair."

Laurence found that she was trembling. She put her hand upon the stile to steady herself, and then sank down upon the step. She remained sitting like this, looking up into his pale face. He leaned against the stile, and looked across the field as he went on talking. And as his sad words dropped like stones upon her heart, Laurence felt ashamed of having thought so much of her own suffering. It was dwarfed into nothingness by the side of his.

"The Clare I loved," he said, "appears to have gone from me forever; another being has taken her place. The change is so complete that it seems like obsession, as if a different spirit were in possession of her body. It seems that this is the case, when the vice which has ruined her is as deep-seated, and as hopeless as it is — God help us! — with her. Since you were staying with us, she has sunk much deeper

into the mire; I fear now there is no hope but that it will suck her down utterly. When I first went to see Canon Winterby, it was because I had begun to realize that this danger existed; I wanted to know what was my duty. He told me, though I said no word of my trouble to him. I *am* her keeper. I must guard her against all ill; I must shield her with my life from the shame and the disgrace of it. I have learned lately that it is hereditary; I suppose she cannot help it; only a very strong nature could; and she, alas, is weak. I cannot give her to others to guard, for I have loved her. I do not love her now; I have seen" — his voice dropped and faltered a little "another ideal — another type — not a mere woman, but a star-soul, and that has taught me that there is a nobler love than she had ever had the power to inspire. And that which was hers, she has destroyed, killed out. I have tried to save it; but she has torn out the last shreds that were left. In these last weeks I have lived in hell. I do not see that it is possible for me to suffer more, or for her to sink deeper. What lies before me now, is to give up my life to her; to take her away from temptation; to guard her continually; and to save her from herself, if I can possibly do so. I cannot trust any one about her but myself; no servant can resist the bribes she offers. I thought I could trust her maid; but I discovered accidentally that Clare had given her the rings off her fingers. This meant, of course, that the woman had obeyed

Clare and deceived me. They all will. I must be her keeper, or let her die a drunkard's death. Is it not horrible, incredible! — yet it is absolutely true, as the most incredible things are, it seems. Now I have told you what I wanted to tell you; you knew so much, I wished you to know all. You will hear people wonder what has become of Philip Tempest; they will think it strange that a man with every advantage and opportunity life can give should become a recluse, and should devote himself to an unpopular cause. You will know, you will understand; that satisfies me. I could not let you be in ignorance."

He looked at her as he spoke the last sentences, and their eyes met. Soul spoke to soul in that regard which lasted but a moment. The understanding between them was complete. Laurence saw her knight go to his life's battle, and gladly would have buckled on his armor, could she have done so. But this was no task set for her; she could only give him that long look of absolute confidence, trust, and love which lingered always in his memory.

He turned and went into the road; Laurence rose and followed him.

"It is a very short way to the house," she said; "and I know mother is at home."

They walked on together in silence. It was impossible to speak of any trivial thing. But they had long since discovered that they could be silent together, — a mark of the most profound understanding

between friends or lovers. And they were both, — that delightful combination which is as rare and precious as a perfect string of pearls.

Mrs. Monkwell rose from her easy-chair in great surprise at the sight of a caller, and made much of Philip. He explained that he had come to tell them Clare was not well, and that he was going to take her into the country immediately; perhaps they should go abroad; at all events, they would be in town no more this season. He spoke absently, making this set speech in a very different manner from the outpouring of feeling which Laurence had listened to. She stood looking out into the garden while they talked. She was in a state of rebellion against Fate, against the whole condition of things, which could permit such a sacrifice as this. It was a hateful, hurtful thought that Philip Tempest's life was to be given up to taking care of a weak, worthless woman. Such a life as his! — the most precious that the world had ever produced, as Laurence felt it to be. She paid no attention to what was being said; she knew, without listening, that Philip was giving her mother the merest superficial glimpse at the situation. She was glad of the moment in which to stand still and think, and try to discover whether there was anything she could do or say before he went. For he would go soon, she felt sure of that; he would not be able to keep up the sort of conversation he was now engaged in very long. But she could think of no word of help or comfort that she

dare utter. She was like two beings: the outer one sunk in a hopeless apathy; the one within all fiercely alive, struggling like a caged animal that sees its master and cannot reach him, — fighting to get free, and turn and fling itself into his arms, and say, "My life is yours! I desire to serve you." Motionless she stood, and looked out upon the garden, now growing dewy and shadowy; for the evening was falling with infinite softness upon the parched, hot earth. She never forgot the look of the grass and trees as they were at that moment; she noted every detail, and it remained like a silhouette in her memory.

"Laurence!" her mother's voice, calling her sharply, penetrated through her absorption. Philip had risen, and was standing, evidently wishing to go.

"Mr. Tempest has brought you a most charming present, Laurence," said Mrs. Monkwell. "I don't think I ever saw anything so pretty in my life!"

Philip came to her, very quietly and gravely, and put something into her hand. She did not look at it; her eyes were on his face. She had an awful feeling that she might never see it again.

"I brought it because it reminded me of you," he said. "Good-by."

He was gone.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Monkwell. "He seemed to me very odd and absent. What in the world did he mean about the bracelet? It 's very pretty and very unusual; but how it could remind him of you I

can't imagine. Perhaps if you had gray eyes, it might, — though that would have been very absurd; but I can't see the slightest point of resemblance. I only hope Clare's strange state is n't driving the poor man out of his wits. I can see he is dreadfully troubled."

Laurence looked down at the jewel in her hand. It was a star-sapphire set in small diamonds. As she moved it, she saw the vivid six-pointed star flash out and then disappear again in the cloudy grayness of the stone, and then flash out again. What had he said, "I have seen a star-soul — "

She clasped it on her wrist, thanking him that he had not done so, but had gone so quickly. It would have been more than she could bear. She put it on; and there it remained always, ever afterwards.

A little later in the evening Laurence knocked at the door of the room which Jim had made his study for the time-being. He said, "Come in," looking up, surprised, to see who would enter; for, until now, none had interrupted his studies.

She came close to him before she spoke; and then, standing there, looking down at him where he sat at his writing-table, she plunged straight into the heart of her subject.

"Jim," she said, "I want to go to Culverton Brand's as a nurse. You must help me."

He pushed away the book he was reading, turned round in his chair, and surveyed her with curiosity.

"Is this a joke?" he asked.

"Certainly not," she answered, with a simplicity of manner that carried conviction with it.

"Then have you taken leave of your senses?" he demanded, after a second's pause for consideration, in which curiosity became partly converted into interest.

"No," she said; "I almost wish I had. I suppose the stupidity of life would be bearable then."

"Why, what 's the matter?"

"I want something to do."

Several remarks of a more or less contemptuous character rose to his lips, and were dismissed unuttered. There was something in his sister's aspect which silenced him. The fever that burned within her was beginning to show in her eyes, in spite of her habitual reserve. Those "windows of the soul" will sooner or later baffle even a life-long actor, and will reveal the story of the heart to a sufficiently acute observer. Jim was not clever enough to read so much, or perhaps it would be more correct to say, not old enough; for he was a born observer, and saw clearly that Laurence exhibited unusual symptoms. With the instinct of the scientific mind, he gave his attention to her immediately, with the desire to know what these symptoms might indicate. And he went warily to work, for he saw this was necessary.

"You won't like nursing," he said, with a glance at the slender hands, which showed the delicacy of idleness under the sunburn.

"Perhaps not," said Laurence; "but I can't tell till I try."

"Culverton Brand is a brute to work under. They say he swears horribly at operations. And you are sure to faint."

"I should like to go when you do," said Laurence; "so do something about it directly, there 's a good boy."

He looked her up and down. "You 're just the figure," he said; "he always will have tall girls with small waists; he says they lift the patients well. And his nurses are always good-looking."

"You seem to know all about it," said Laurence.

"Lord, yes, every detail about that hospital is discussed: there are men who will tell you what Brand has for his dinner every day; and how he eats with his elbows on the table. To be a great surgeon is as good as being a pretty woman, so far as chattering goes. I wonder what they 'll make out of me when I 'm famous!"

"You mean to be, then?"

"Of course," and he turned back mechanically to the book he had been reading, with the gesture of the student who feels he has not a moment to lose. Laurence was interested in her turn. She wondered what it felt like to be ambitious. She had never thought of it. Now it occurred to her that men cured love by ambition. Could she? Would it be possible for her, by-and-by, to want notoriety and success, and to be cleverer than other people?

These all seemed to her very cold and uninteresting desires. Philip had taught her to hope for comfort in work, for its own sake. She had never discovered in his mind even the thought of ambition; therefore, it did not please or attract her. Attract her! Nothing could do that. All she asked for or aimed at was relief from pain. No picture of the difficulties which might lie before her could turn her from her effort, because what she desired was difficulty so great as to absorb her whole attention and enable her to forget.

These thoughts passed through her mind in the moment it took Jim to turn to his book, and to turn back to her again. The break in the conversation had weakened his belief.

"You can't mean what you say, Laurence. You're guying me."

"Don't waste time, Jim," said Laurence, with that patient impatience which makes the trifler ashamed.

"Well—" said Jim, feeling himself brought to book. "The first thing is to find out if there's a vacancy. The second is to consider whether you are willing to sign for three years. I happen to know he insists on his nurses doing that."

"Oh, I'll sign," said Laurence. "If I want to come away in three weeks, or three days, I must pay a forfeit. I suppose I could do that."

"Oh, I daresay," said Jim, rather dryly; "but you'll have a hard bargain to drive,—Brand's a

man of business, and loves money. Am I to write to him?"

"Yes."

"Am I to tell him who you are?"

"Oh, yes."

"What 'll the mother say?"

"We 'll see about that later. Write the letter, and I 'll post it. I am going out."

Jim, who was not given to wasting words, without more ado, dipped his pen in the ink, and wrote this note.

DEAR SIR, — My sister wishes to enter your hospital as a nurse, and desires me to ask if you have a vacancy. She is tall, slight, very quiet, and is entirely ignorant of the work, which, I have been told, you consider a qualification. I should be exceedingly obliged if you would give her a chance.

Yours faithfully,

JAMES MONKWELL.

"Is that too curt?" he questioned, as he read it over. "No, it will take so little time to read — " He put it in its envelope.

"Thank you, Jim," said Laurence, taking it from him. She went away without any further word.

"Odd," said Jim to himself when she was gone. "She 's different from the others; a pity she was born a girl! But there 's something wrong to make her do this; I must try and find out what it is."

With which reflection he dismissed the matter from his mind, and returned to his work.

There was a letter-box in the wall of the garden,

and Laurence went down the road to it without even taking the trouble to put on a hat. The dark road was deserted. In the blue blackness of the summer night the stars shone out brilliantly. Laurence looked up at them, and stood in wonder at the gorgeous pageant of nature, at the mystery and pain of life. Was suffering and hopeless longing hidden in that brightness as in her soul?

CHAPTER XIV.

THE answer to this letter came by return of post. Jim handed it across the breakfast-table to Laurence. It was written in a fine, delicate hand, like cobweb tracings, but very legible, on a half-sheet of note-paper.

DEAR MONKWELL, — As it happens, I want a nurse. I should like to see your sister. Your father's children should know how to work. Very few people do. I shall be in town on Saturday. Bring her to me at the Victoria Hotel at three o'clock.

Yours truly,

CULVERTON BRAND.

Jim watched her read it, a slightly derisive smile on his face. Truth to tell, he expected to see her courage visibly ebb away. But there were no signs of this. She nodded, and handed him back the letter. Nothing was said, as the whole family was present. Later on, Jim came down from his study and went to look for Laurence, hoping to find her alone. In this he was successful. She had the garden to herself, and was walking slowly up and

down the long path under the wall. He crossed the grass and joined her.

"Well, what 's to be done?" he said.

"What about?" asked Laurence, whose thoughts were very far away. "Oh, Culverton Brand. I forgot. Write and tell him I will keep the appointment on Saturday."

There was a moment's pause. Then said Jim, "Are you in earnest about this thing?"

"Yes, quite."

"What 's to be said to the mother?"

"If Mr. Brand will take me, I propose to say nothing about that part of the affair to her; but to tell her that I am coming to live with you for a while. She knows you will have to live in lodgings."

Jim kicked at the gravel; his head was bent down, his hands were in his pockets.

"Hitherto," he said, "I have attempted to sustain the character of Truthful James."

"Truth is all very well," said Laurence, "when you are talking to people who can understand it. I defy you to tell mother the truth. She would put an interpretation upon it which would make it the very opposite of itself. I could not possibly discuss with her my motive for doing this without leaving her under an absolutely wrong impression. I tell you, simply, that I want work; and I think you are sensible enough to understand me."

"Thank you," said Jim, who felt for the moment as if he were in the receipt of a compliment.

"If you leave me to explain everything, it will be all right," said Laurence.

Such an idea as leaving one of his sisters to manage anything had never occurred to Jim before; but there was something so queerly masterful about Laurence in this matter that he felt inclined to let her go her own way. After a moment's consideration he merely said, "All right," and went back to his own work.

On Saturday they went to town together, immediately after lunch. No one showed any curiosity about the expedition, as Jim occasionally went with one of his sisters to see pictures or to a concert.

They were shown into the large general drawing-room, and left for a long time. So long, that at last it began to seem scarcely reasonable, and Laurence said, "Perhaps he doesn't want to see me."

"Don't get impatient," said Jim. "We must wait the great man's pleasure."

"Oh, I am not impatient," said Laurence, relapsing into the large armchair in which she was seated. From it she could see the street, and her attention was attracted by a cab which drove up at that moment.

"What an extraordinary-looking man that is!" she exclaimed, in a tone of such surprise that Jim got up and looked out.

"By Jove, it 's Culverton Brand!" said Jim.

Neither of them said anything. There was some-

thing rather crushing in finding that the man they had been expecting a summons from every moment had not been in the hotel at all. "And it 's a quarter past four," Jim observed, a little later, after looking at his watch. Laurence, meanwhile, was looking at Mr Brand, who was paying his fare with great deliberation. "I really never saw any one so striking," she said. "And yet he is very ugly."

"So he is, now you mention it," answered Jim. "But, dear me, what does that matter? Who thinks about the looks of the greatest surgeon in the world? He can cut people up and put them together again like no one else; and while that 's so, who cares how ugly he is?"

"I 'm sure I don't," said Laurence. "In fact, it is rather interesting. I am in the humor for extremes."

"Then you 'll get what you like. This man is extreme in everything, and a man of contradictions. I have heard him called a genius and a fool, lavish and parsimonious, delightful and hateful. Great operators are generally odd characters; but he 's the oddest of them all."

In a few minutes they were asked to go upstairs, where they found Mr. Brand in a private sitting-room. He was amiability itself, smiling and good-natured, very friendly to Jim, whom he patted on the back and called "dear boy," and very polite to Laurence. Her description of him was not amiss. Something in the way the great head was put upon

the shoulders, without any neck, though ugly, gave a sense of power. He was very short, very broad, with extremely short arms. Laurence was struck instantly by the hands, — large and broad, with thick fingers, flat at the ends, clumsy looking like a workman's. Were these the hands that could do such marvellously delicate work that it was said they must be gifted with more sensitive nerves than other people's?

The interview was a very short one, for Mr. Brand was full of appointments and engagements, being in London only for two days. He was a past master in the art of being agreeable; and he managed to make a pleasant impression even upon Laurence, who was very hard to please. She went away with a feeling of interest in the great man uppermost in her mind. She was glad it was decided that she was to go to his hospital and see him work. She thought very little of the details of the engagement which she had made; how she was to receive twelve pounds a year and her washing, wear a uniform, and contract to remain for three years.

"I would suggest," said Mr. Brand, "that the other nurses do not know Miss Monkwell is your sister."

"Really?" said Jim. "Oh, very well," he added, seeing that Mr. Brand did not seem inclined to explain his reason for making this suggestion. "Then she must use another name."

"I should advise that," said Mr. Brand. "Call

yourself Miss Smith," he said to Laurence. "As you possess a distinguished name, you can afford to take an undistinguished one."

"I don't quite like the idea, Mr. Brand," said Laurence; "and I don't quite see the necessity for it."

"Well, I only advise it," he said. "I think the other nurses may make it rather uncomfortable for you if they think you are made of different stuff from themselves."

"Oh, I see," said Laurence; "very well."

"I 'll tell Sister Valentine, who has charge of the hospital, that I have engaged a nurse in town. Come as soon as you can, for we are a hand short."

"I don't think I can leave home until my brother does," said Laurence.

"In a fortnight I come, you know, Mr. Brand," said Jim.

"Very well, that 'll do," said Mr. Brand; and so it was settled.

That evening Laurence prepared her mother's mind. Jim was in the room, and listened with some admiration.

"I am thinking of going to Birchampton with Jim," said Laurence. "He 's going to live alone, and seems to think it would not be much of a bore to have one of his sisters down there."

"My dear Laurence!" exclaimed Mrs. Monkwell, in amazement. "Whatever will you find to do in a dirty, horrible, provincial town where we don't

know anybody, and where nobody ever goes except on business?"

"I am interested in the hospital," said Laurence, quietly, "and think I should like to study it."

"Well! you *are* an odd girl. Very like your father in some things, and I suppose you have some of his queer tastes. I suppose I'd better let you go."

"I think so," said Laurence.

"Jim must look after you," said Mrs. Monkwell. "There are no very good invitations for you at present, and of course you can join us when we go to the sea."

To this Laurence made no answer, and nothing more was said. She quietly made her preparations, and was ready to go with Jim the day he left home.

CHAPTER XV.

LAURENCE never forgot the effect of her arrival at Birchampton. It had rained very heavily in the night, and, for the first time since the summer had fairly begun, the air was chilly, and everything looked dull. Perhaps the dreary appearance was partly due to the smoke of the great manufacturing town, which tinted the air for miles round. Possibly in a Devonshire lane, or even in the old garden at Wimbledon, of which she was so weary, the dampness of the atmosphere and the cloudy sky would have seemed delightful. Not so here. Laurence shivered a little as she stood waiting while Jim found their luggage; and she was jostled roughly by the crowd of North-country folk, who seemed to her to talk an unknown language.

There were only two cabs waiting at this large station, and these were hansoms; the luggage was arranged upon one of them with a little difficulty. Fortunately Laurence had much amazed her mother and sisters by coming away with very few clothes; she knew they would only be in her way. Jim admired her little trunk very much, and thought it workmanlike.

Evidently most travellers who came out of this station walked, carrying all kinds of bags and bundles and baskets; Laurence saw them going in crowds along the streets, all more or less laden, the men smoking, the women dragging children along, all busy and fairly tidy, but very shabby and uninteresting. It was like the crowd in an Australian street; there were no good-looking people, no well-dressed ones, and no beggars or paupers. It interested and surprised Laurence very much at first; but very soon it wearied her. Nothing so soon tires the observer as monotony of this sort. The dramatic contrast between riches and poverty helps to make up the exciting and artistic effect of the streets in the great cities of the world. Towns populated with this squalid well-to-do class are never eminent, though they may be large. Laurence felt the dulness which the atmosphere of these people creates, without exactly knowing what it was. She thought it was the lowering sky which weighed her down. But as they drove on — up-hill all the way — she could not help saying, at last, "Well, this is an ugly town."

"I can't say it is beautiful," agreed Jim, looking rather dolefully at the dreary squares and crescents they were passing through. They resembled some of the forgotten corners of London to be found near the Euston Road, in Islington, and amid the slums of Westminster, which seem to be given over altogether to decaying landladies and wandering lodgers.

The whole of Birchampton seemed to have this God-forsaken appearance. Laurence looked at the dingy houses they passed, wondering what sort of lives were lived behind those dark blinds and dirty curtains. They drove on, a long way, and always up-hill, till suddenly they turned out of a square into a long terrace which stood as though it crowned a cliff. Houses stood all along one side, on the other was a railing, and then a steep rock-face. Below lay a dreary canal, and all the yards of a great brewery were grouped about it. Beyond, where, if this had been a cliff, the sea would lie, stretched the lower part of the smoky town, showing a perfect forest of chimney-pots, and little else. Evidently these houses on the height had been built when there was a view of the country, and they were then probably the dwellings of the great people of Birchampton. The aspect of the place struck Laurence with amazement. Half the houses were to let, and looked rather ruinous, with broken windows and damp walls. Those that were occupied looked unutterably dreary.

"The hospital surely can't be here," said Laurence, who had formed one of those unconscious pictures we all create of a place we are going to see.

She had never really thought about it; but she found now that she had imagined a bright-looking, red-brick building with clean-curtained windows. There were none such in this crescent. Jim stopped

the cab. "I 'll get out here," he said. "Take this lady on to No. 14," he told the driver, and gave him his fare. He took his bag, and got out; and the cab went on. When it stopped again, Laurence looked up at the house with a feeling of dismay. No. 14 was written on the door, otherwise she would not have thought of getting out. The windows upstairs did not look as if they had been cleaned for years, except one immediately over the entrance-door, which was wide-open, and from which a group of white-capped nurses looked down. The sight of them convinced her that she must be right, improbable as it seemed. She rang the door-bell; and the door was opened by a little page-boy, who at once summoned Sister Valentine. She came immediately, for she was close by.

"Oh, you 're the new nurse!" she said, in rather an off-hand manner. "Yes, Mr. Brand told me he had engaged one in London; and I 'm glad you 've come, for the house is full of patients, and it 's something dreadful to be a hand short. I 'll ring for Nurse Hammond; she will show you everything."

The hall was a large square place, with dark-blue tiles used as a dado, and some fine oak chairs. Laurence remained standing where she was while the boy brought in her little trunk; and Sister Valentine rang a bell which sounded in some far-away region. Then she opened a baize door and called "Nurse *Hammond*" at the top of her voice.

This being done, she came back to look at Laurence, who was much the taller of the two.

Sister Valentine was not the regulation height, but made up for this lack by her sharpness and vivacity. She was a little black-eyed brunette, very good-looking, and with a most decided manner. She was quite young, and some old ladies (the kind of old ladies who are not always old in years, and do not always wear skirts) said she was much too young to have the management of a place like this, and look after the nurses. The nurses themselves would have said that perhaps if she had been a bit older her sight would n't have been quite so sharp.

"I hope you 'll take to the work," she said to Laurence. "The first few days are generally very disagreeable. It 's all so new, you see. I don't suppose there 's a nurse here who can truthfully say she would n't have run away the first day. After that one gets used to it. You must be prepared to feel like that; but I think you look like a sensible girl who won't be disheartened at the first start. Let me see; Mr. Brand did tell me your name; ah, I remember; Smith, is n't it?"

Just then a tall, nice-looking girl in the nurse's uniform came into the hall, smiling pleasantly, and a little shyly. She had bright hair brushed off her face, a fresh color, and soft gray eyes. "Here is Nurse Hammond," said Sister Valentine to Laurence. "If you will go with her, she will show you

just what to do. Nurse Hammond, this is the new nurse; you know you have to take charge of her."

"Yes, Sister," said the girl. She went through the baize door again, and Laurence followed her. It shut the staircase off from the hall. They went up the carpeted stairs, Nurse Hammond leaning back and speaking in a whisper.

"No. 1 is dreadfully ill," she said. "We must be very quiet just here. She can't live through the night, I 'm certain; I went in to look at her a little while ago. Nurse Purvis is worn out; I should n't wonder, now you 've come, if I have to take No. 1 to-night, and you stay with my patient. You would n't be frightened; my patient is nearly well."

Laurence noticed that the doors they passed were all numbered. No. 1 was on the first door they passed; they had reached No. 3 now.

"This is mine," said Nurse Hammond; and she opened the door and put her head in.

"Do you want anything, dear," she asked. "I shall only be gone a few minutes."

"Ah, nurse, don't be long," said a soft Irish voice, pitched on a very wailing note.

"Only a few minutes," Nurse Hammond repeated; and then she closed the door and went on upstairs. The staircase was all thickly carpeted, and pictures hung on the walls; it seemed to Laurence just like a private house, save for the all-pervading odor of

some strong disinfectant. They went to the very top of the house; and here Nurse Hammond opened a door, and took Laurence into a narrow room fitted up as a dressing-room for several persons. It rather resembled the dressing-room for the "supers" at a provincial theatre; but as Laurence had never seen such a place it reminded her of nothing. There were three little wash-stands, three little mirrors on the walls, and five sets of hooks, under four of which stood a trunk. Pointing to the fifth space, Nurse Hammond said, "Your box will stand there, and those hooks are for your things. It 's rather a shame to put us all five to dress in this little room, is n't it? But there 's a bath-room up here, fortunately; and we can use that when we like."

"And where are our bedrooms, then," asked Laurence, while she took off her straw hat and hung it up.

Nurse Hammond laughed out.

"You *are* green," she said. "Why, we have n't got any. Nobody but Sister has a bedroom, and when the house is very full, and Mr. Brand wants to take another patient in, she has to give it up; for he won't send any one away if he can help it."

Laurence said nothing, and, thanks to the mask she habitually wore, Nurse Hammond did not guess that she had suffered a sharp disappointment. Truth to tell, she had cherished visions of some small space to be her own, and of the possibility of a locked door for a few minutes in the twenty-four hours.

Nothing else that she experienced here seemed to her quite so dreadful as the lack of this. "There used to be a little bedroom kept for the nurses to have sometimes," Nurse Hammond went on, "when Mr. Brand had three houses here; but now he has shut one up, there is n't a room to spare. *Hooray!* there 's the tea-bell. I 'm dying to run out and see my mash to-night, just for an hour; you 'll stay with No. 3 for me, won't you; she hates being left alone. Sister 'll let me go then. And I 'll tell you what I 'll do for you, if you like, — send you a sewing-woman who will make up your first uniform dress quick; you must have it to-morrow evening, for there are two operations the day after, and you must be in the room. Shall I?"

"Oh, please do," said Laurence. "But how shall I get the stuff?"

"Sister 'll give it you this evening," said Nurse Hammond. "Come along, quick," and she ran off downstairs, looking back at the landing for Laurence, who came down more slowly. They passed through the baize door, and went down a stone passage into the large old-fashioned kitchen which stood at the back of the house, and looked out on to a neglected, walled-in garden, where the grass grew ragged and rank. In a bare room next this kitchen a long table was set out for tea. Nobody was sitting down as yet; the cook and kitchen-maid were busy pouring out tea and milk; and the other three nurses were already there, cutting thin bread

and butter to put on little trays. These trays were carried off to the patients; Nurse Hammond got hers ready very quickly, and ran away with it.

"Sit down there, Nurse Smith," she said to Laurence, pointing to a chair at the table. "That 's your place."

Laurence took it, and watched the scene with an odd feeling that she was looking at a play. She did not feel herself to be part of it in the least.

"So your name 's Smith?" said a black-haired young woman as tall as herself, who took the seat opposite her. "I hope you won't mind being called Smithy; the girls are sure to do it."

"'The village blacksmith,'" said a very buxom nurse who came and sat down next her. This remark appeared to be accepted as a joke, and everybody laughed. Laurence found later on that it was considered the correct thing to laugh at all that was said by the buxom nurse; not because she was regarded as a wit, but because she was looked down upon as a fool.

The table was set for ten persons. When the party collected, Laurence found it consisted of the five nurses, the cook, the kitchen-maid, the page-boy, and two other women-servants whom she learned afterwards to be the housemaid and the laundry-maid. This was the entire strength of the household staff, excepting Sister Valentine, who paid for her dignity of position by having to take her meals in solitary state in the one general sit-

ting-room of the house, where she did her letter-writing and received visitors.

Laurence thought her best plan was to remain very quiet, and let them make what they could of her. She answered when spoken to, with careful pleasantness, and smiled a little now and then for the sake of seeming agreeable. But, after the first few minutes, her mind became a blank to what was going on about her, and she filled her part mechanically. Fortunately, though something of an epicure, as every healthy and well-educated person must be, she had a tendency to every-day asceticism. Therefore she drank weak tea, and ate stale bread and butter without any rebellion of spirit. Such food seemed to her as good as any other for the mere restoration of nature. She was beginning to find out that she was tired, not from physical fatigue, — a sensation she had never yet experienced, — but from a vague sense of depression. Since the moment when she had stepped out of the train into the ugly, crowded station, she had felt as if she had plunged into some dull, dark pool where the sun never shone, where no one ever thought, where no one even tried to be beautiful. She did not mind this; on the contrary, there was a certain negative pleasure in the dreariness of the mental and physical atmosphere. It removed all strain. There was nothing to appreciate, or understand, or admire. She only realized now how extreme was the state of excitement and exaltation in which she had lived

ever since the beginning of her visit to Tempest House. She had been stirred, and roused, and startled by contact with Philip Tempest's simple, yet noble nature, and by his compelling her to contemplate the ideal figure of Canon Winterby. The mental excitement had lasted until now, when suddenly it ceased, and her brain rested, asking no questions for the moment. Something in the conditions in which she found herself made it seem as if there had never been any questions to ask; as if the hunger of the mind for knowledge had been an idle craving, and the thought of the unseen, the belief in the infinite, mere childish fancies. She had passed from one world into another in more senses than one.

Nurse Hammond came hurrying back to the table.

"No. 3 nearly always wants another cup," she said. "If she rings, I told her you 'd bring it," to Laurence, "else I shall be late in going out."

At that moment the fifth nurse came in, and took her place at the table. She was a little woman, no taller than Sister Valentine, and very pretty, with well-shaped, almost classical features, charming blue eyes, beautiful fair hair, and a very sweet smile. She was perhaps the neatest and smartest of them all, too, though they were all very clean and trim; but she looked wofully tired. Her eyes were heavy, and her face drawn. She only just glanced at Laurence; evidently she was too tired for more than a moment's faint curiosity. She

smiled at Nurse Hammond, and then asked for her tea.

"I 'm in a hurry," she said. "I must only stay two or three minutes. I dare n't leave her longer. Poor thing, it 's awful."

"You 're getting knocked up, nurse," said Nurse Hammond. "I 'll ask Sister to let me take No. 1 to-night, and you shall have a sleep. You can't do another night without a rest."

This was addressed to pretty Nurse Purvis. She and Nurse Hammond were what they called "chums" in the hospital. At the present moment Nurse Purvis was regarded with interest, as she had the worst case in the house, — a patient who was suffering agonies, and who was expected to die every moment. This was a position of hard-earned glory, which was the lot of all the nurses in turn. The one who had it was looked upon somewhat as the star-actress of a theatrical company is by the other members, — with a mixture of jealousy and envy. After an ordeal of this kind the heroine of it (that is, the nurse) was usually given, by way of a rest, what was called a simple case. Patients of this order always thought it very odd that they should be thus classified; because, to themselves, their sufferings appeared unexampled.

Laurence looked with interest at Nurse Purvis. Surely it must be very delightful to be as tired as that. Surely the brain must cease troubling almost as completely as if one were dead. She felt as if

she would like to ask her. She would not have learned much, for Nurse Purvis had never been troubled by her brain even when most entirely free from fatigue.

While Laurence was thinking about this a bell rang sharply. There was a row of bells on the wall with numbers written against them, so that it was easy to see at a glance what patient was summoning a nurse. But no one moved; no one except Laurence took the trouble to look up until the bell had rung several times. Then Nurse Hammond said, "It 's No. 3; cook, give me another cup of tea, and Nurse Smith will take it up."

Laurence rose, and, taking the cup handed to her, left the kitchen. Before she could close the door behind her she heard some one say, "Well, of all the disagreeable stuck-up cats! She fancies herself, don't she? I 'll bet she ain't no better than she ought to be —" Desiring to hear no more of these interesting remarks she hurried along the passage and through the baize door. Sister Valentine was standing at the foot of the stairs, and Laurence fancied she looked at her curiously as she passed. This may have been only fancy; but it may have been fact, for Sister Valentine watched events very keenly when there was a new nurse, on the look-out both for her delinquencies, and those of the old nurses with regard to her. She expected Laurence to be badgered and worried because she looked like a lady. Not even pretty Nurse Purvis

had the presumption to look like a lady, and of course such audacity would have to be punished. Having been a nurse herself, she knew all this very well. She did not say anything to Laurence, who went by her in silence, carrying the rather over-full cup of tea with great care.

CHAPTER XVI.

LAURENCE went on upstairs to the door marked "3," softly opened it, as she had seen Nurse Hammond do, and went in. She felt herself to be a professional, and rather liked the sensation.

A little woman sat up in the narrow bed, leaning against a bed-rest which supported her, and propped up by pillows. She was deathly white, — the sickly white which indicates chronic ill-health, — a color quite different from the clear pallor of Laurence's face. She had the pretty dark Irish eyes with black lashes, and short, dark, curly hair. Long ago, when she had not forgotten how to smile, and when the pink rose-flush was still on her cheeks which makes Irish youth so beautiful, she must have been charming. Now her face was not only drawn and haggard from pain, but spoiled entirely by a fretful, peevish expression. This was so habitual that it had created marks and lines which would never be effaced.

"Ah, you 're the new nurse," she said, speaking with a strong brogue and the pretty, soft Irish voice. "How fresh you look! What 'll ye say to a poor creature like me? Ah, come and sit down now, and let me tell you about meself; and don't go away

again in a hurry like the other nurses always do; they 're heartless creatures, the best of them! You 'll come and talk to me a bit, won't ye, now? Is that my tea? Preserve us, but it 's nasty stuff, is n't it, now? I 'd never drink it, but that I 'm dying of thirst, and I can get nothing else. Will ye buy me some tea when you go out? I 've asked Nurse Hammond many 's the time, but she forgets. And when she does bring me any 't is worse than this, which is saying a great deal. When me sister was here in Birchampton she did get me some that was decent; but now she 's gone off home, the heartless creature, — says her husband and children want her. Mercy on us, they don't suffer like me! Ah, come and sit down, and I 'll tell ye how I suffer. Will ye believe it, Mr. Brand says I 'm to go home; why, it 's terrible! What 'll me husband say — me poor dear husband — when I 'm sent home in this state? I 'll have to have a nurse for sure; and a misery a nurse is in your own house, where they always want to be mistress. Will ye believe it, I 'm helpless and can do nothing at all for myself; yet he says I 'm to go home. Ah, he 's hard. I 'll have to come back, for there 's another operation for me to go through. It 's true I 'll be glad to get away out of this dirty room; for, will you believe it, I 've been here six weeks, and it 's never been cleaned! They say I 'm too ill to have it cleaned; yet I 'm well enough to go home. I can't make that out, can you? and then I 'll have to come back and go under

another operation; and that 'll kill me for sure, if I don't die of fright before — I know I 'll die — Sit down here, nurse dear, and let me tell you — "

The soft voice was rising to an hysterical scream, the dark eyes were full of tears of self-pity. The opportunity to tell all her sorrows and sufferings was very exciting to this unreasonable little Irish woman, who could not be made to understand that she could not be kept indefinitely in a hospital that was for operations only, and that rooms cannot be cleaned when patients are lying dangerously ill. Mr. Brand sent away his patients as soon as they were so far recovered as to allow of room-cleaning. But this was unintelligible to her, as also was the fact that the history of her illnesses was really rather dreadful, and calculated to terrify a new nurse. All she thought of was that she had a new listener. But at this moment Sister Valentine, who had been close outside the slightly open door, came in. She did not want her fresh hand frightened away too soon.

"Won't you drink your tea, Mrs. FitzGerald?" she said; "you know you don't like it when it 's cold."

"Ah, but Sister dear, now — " began the little woman, instantly and eagerly, "just see what they brought me for tea! I could n't eat it, if it was ever so, now could I? Nothing in the world but a sardine, that I 've had every day this week, and you know, Sister dear, those sardines were n't good at all — "

"These are out of a new box, Mrs. FitzGerald," said Sister Valentine. "And you would n't have an egg, or salad, or anything. And you know you 're the only patient that ever has anything but bread and butter at tea-time."

"Ah, but, Sister dear, you know I must have something to make me eat, — the bread 's such queer stuff that you get here in Birchampton; when me sister was here she did get me some that was nice, — heartless creature that she was to go away and leave me — "

"Oh, come, Mrs. FitzGerald, she was here five weeks; and I don't, indeed, think she could stay away from home longer. Show nurse the beautiful watch she gave you."

Mrs. FitzGerald drew out from under her pillow a little watch which was all crusted with jewels, that flashed as she flung it down. "Ah, the heartless creature," she cried; "she thought to please me when she went away, as if I was a child; who cares about a watch when they 're in pain like I am! I 'll send her a cheque for it the minute I get back, and never speak to her again — " here the tears came and choked her utterance for the moment.

"Go back and finish your tea, Nurse Smith," said Sister Valentine, who saw a bad attack of hysterics coming.

Laurence had finished her tea, and was not at all anxious to rejoin the company downstairs. But she had the instinct of obedience which belongs to all

naturally good workers, and which is one with the instinct of command, and so she went instantly.

Thereby she gained a point in Sister Valentine's favor, who was wont to say that if she was more weary of one thing than of another it was of telling people things twice.

Laurence would have liked to go up to the dressing-room, on the chance of finding it empty, in the hope of a quiet moment alone. But she did not do so; because she did not yet know the rules of the house, and feared she might be breaking one. She felt sure her simplest plan at first would be to do just exactly what she was told, even in the smallest detail; and then she could not very well do wrong. So she went down to the kitchen after this first experience of a sick-room. She found it deserted save for Nurse Purvis, who was sitting by the table crying bitterly.

"Oh, what is the matter?" asked Laurence.

"Nothing," said the girl, who was so pretty that she was pretty even when she cried. She wiped her eyes and laughed. "It 's only that I 'm so tired," she said; "I do wish I could go out for an hour. Nurse Hammond would have taken No. 1 for me; but she is going out herself. Oh, dear, oh, dear, I wish I could go out with her!"

"Could n't I take your place for so short a time as that?" asked Laurence. "I 've no experience; but I don't think I 'm stupid."

"Oh, would you?" exclaimed Nurse Purvis, bright-

ening up instantly. "You would n't be frightened? I 'll go and ask Sister."

She rushed off at once. Laurence sat down in the now-deserted kitchen, and regretted that she had not told her where to find Sister Valentine. She wanted to be at work; she wanted to see a different kind of sick room from the one she had been in. A sense of curiosity and awakening interest was stirring in her, and she felt also that in this house she could only be content when at work. She would like to be in charge of what was evidently looked upon as a very wearying case. Perhaps fatigue would come to her then; she thought of fatigue only as meaning oblivion, — that precious forgetfulness which she was buying at so dear a price.

In a few minutes Nurse Purvis came running back, breathless, her face all alight, all traces of tears gone.

"Yes," she cried, "Sister says you may take No. 1 for an hour. She will give No. 3 a call to see she 's getting on all right. *She* really can be left, you know. Come quick, and I 'll tell you what to do. Don't waste a second; I must fly if I 'm to go with Nurse Hammond."

She took Laurence's hand, and hurried her down the passage, through the door, and up the two or three stairs to the room door numbered "1"; then she suddenly became as quiet and soft in her movements as a little mouse; and Laurence imitated her as well as she could.

This room was very little above the ground-floor, and had only one high, narrow window looking out on the neglected garden. The smell of the disinfectant which pervaded the house was so strong here that it made Laurence feel quite faint for a moment. As in the room upstairs so in this, two little beds stood side by side. All the rooms were furnished in this way; one little bed was regarded as the nurse's. But times of great pressure were not infrequent when both beds were occupied by patients. This was when they were well enough to talk to each other of their woes. But it was, all the same, a little trying for the nurses. This room was at present entirely given up to the tendance of the one patient for whom Death was waiting, ready at the least access of weakness to lay his cold but merciful hand upon the bed.

It scarcely seemed to Laurence to be a human being that lay there. Yet it was a woman as young as herself, and with the remains of a royal beauty about her. She lay there like a stately ship that has met with wreckage, and waits only for the final sinking below the waters. The hands that lay upon the coverlet were waxen white. The face was waxen too; only a little dew that lay upon the forehead showed that life was still there. Little ringlets of hair lay wet upon the brow. All the longer hair, which had once been a dark splendor, was pushed back, and lay in a tangled mass beneath the weary head.

"Sit here," said Nurse Purvis, in the softest whisper, pointing to a chair beside the bed; "don't take your eyes off her face. If she moves in the least, ring instantly, and Sister Valentine will come. See, here is the bell; keep your hand on it. If she lies still like this till I come back, all you have to do is to moisten her lips with this brandy and water. See, like this; it must be done every ten minutes —"

She was gone, and Laurence found herself alone with the strange, silent figure that lay so like a dead shape in the bed. She took the bell-rope in her hand, and set herself to watch that pallid face. The room was as quiet as if it was already a tomb. It was very dark, for the window was one of the dirty ones. Laurence saw that it was nailed up, and conjectured, rightly, that this had been done to prevent some draught. She had never watched the approach of death before, and the enthralling interest of it made her forget even the dreadful closeness of the room, after the first shock of it. She felt no alarm, only awe and interest. It seemed so strange that this passing soul should go in such silence to the great gates which admit to the mystery of mysteries. Not one word, not one sigh, not one flicker of intelligence. The face seemed to grow more beautiful as Laurence watched it. Who was this woman whom she was set to watch in these, the last and the most tragic hours of her life? Why was she away from all who knew and loved her? Had she none such? Impossible! Surely a woman so young,

and who possessed so much beauty even so close on death, could not be utterly alone in the world?

A little clock on the mantelpiece ticked, and, as the silence grew more and more monotonous, it seemed as if it ticked and ticked louder and louder. It seemed to Laurence as if its noisy note of passing time was an insolent interruption to this still approach to that which was beyond all Time. She began to suffer a craving to make it cease, to stop its foolish small reminder of the little moments which were now of no more importance to the one who was leaving time for Eternity. Could she not stop it or put it out of hearing? No, she dared not move. It must be borne. And as the quiet moments passed on, she grew to have a personal hatred for that little clock. It seemed to her to have all that impertinence of triviality which some people show in the presence of great realities. And how slowly those moments went by which this bit of mechanism made so much noise about! Was each one being protracted by some dark magic into a little eternity in itself? A quarter of an hour — twenty minutes — half an hour — Laurence found herself longing for the end of her vigil, longing as if she had watched a night instead of half an hour. She could only marvel at the endurance of the nurse who had lived through hour after hour of this silent anxiety. The house was perfectly quiet; this was the time when the nurses were out who were not in close attendance on their patients Then came a sound

outside; she heard wheels; and a carriage stopped at the door. Then there was a little bustle in the hall. In listening to this little diversion a whole quarter of an hour flew by, its moments uncounted. She was just reaching out her hand to moisten the white lips once more, and found herself hoping that Nurse Purvis would be in to do it the next time, when the utterly prostrate figure, that had looked as if movement was over forever, lifted itself, and stretched out a slender arm and quivering hand, and the eyes opened and fixed themselves on Laurence, — great dark eyes that already, as it seemed to Laurence, were full of knowledge and of mystery. They appeared to her to hold in them a still, beautiful light, — a light that burned with the steadiness that is only in things eternal. After a swift second of awe-struck wonder she pulled the bell violently. Its crash sounded all over the house. In the space of a second's time the room seemed to be full of people; Laurence realized that the agonizing sense of sole responsibility was over, that help was there. Sister Valentine was there first, and Mr. Brand followed. He gave one glance at the bed, and turned to give an order to some one behind him, "Tell John to drive as quickly as possible to the Grand Hotel, and to bring Mrs. Wainwright's husband; she 's going — "

Then he came to the bed and leaned over it for a moment. He put his hand on the forehead, and, passing it down, closed those dark eyes forever.

CHAPTER XVII.

THERE was an awful silence in the room. All were subdued for a moment by the certain and new presence of death. To Laurence a strange experience had come. She was conscious of a grief as deep as though she had known this strange woman. This sense of sorrow was a definite lesson to her. It opened her heart and soul, and taught her that which some spend a lifetime in learning, — that separation from one's kind is impossible. It made of her a humanitarian.

Mr. Brand was silent for a long moment, looking on the fair shape that lay before them in the final helplessness that closes all activity.

"Too late," he said at last; "she 's gone."

Then Sister Valentine ventured to speak.

"You need n't stay here, Nurse Smith," she said. Mr. Brand then noticed for the first time that Laurence was there; and he looked across at her and smiled, almost as at something rather amusing.

"This young lady," he said, "has gone to find out, in one moment, what I shall never find out, with all my skill, till I go that way too. Queer, is n't it?"

Then he looked again at the dead figure, and the second look seemed to bring present realities before

him suddenly. He appeared to forget Laurence altogether, and she stood, in uncertainty whether she ought to go or stay, as she had been addressed by the great man. He turned to Sister Valentine with a startling change of manner.

"D—— it all," he exclaimed. "This is the second death in the hospital this year;" and the thought seemed to make the man, all in a moment, in a raging fury. "They 'll have it in all the local papers," he cried out angrily; "and then it 'll be copied into all the London ones." And to Laurence's complete amazement, he poured out a torrent of oaths.

"Go when I tell you," said Sister Valentine sharply to Laurence, who turned and fled, waiting for no further telling. She only went as far as the hall, for the excellent reason that she did not know where else to go. She sank down on a chair there, hoping Nurse Hammond would come in soon and tell her what to do. But the first arrival was Mr. Brand's carriage back again. From it descended a very dapper, smart young man, who looked excited. He came in; and Mr. Brand, coming out of that (always to Laurence) terrible No. 1, met him.

"She 's gone," said Mr. Brand, abruptly. "It 's your fault. You should never have insisted on that second operation. I told you it would kill her. And it 's I that will get all the blame."

"Gone!" exclaimed the young man. Evidently he had not believed the final reality possible. "Oh,

my God!" he said; "my beautiful Gertrude!" He looked wild for a moment, and then suddenly burst into tears.

At that moment Nurse Purvis and Nurse Hammond came in. And close after them came Jim. He looked in some surprise at Laurence, who was standing like a statue, watching the scene.

"Nurse Hammond," said Sister Valentine, "take Nurse Smith upstairs."

Laurence gladly followed her guide. All the others went into No 1. In a few moments all the house was quiet again. Nurse Hammond, less talkative than usual, led the way up to the dressing-room. "Here 's your box," she said to Laurence. "You 'll like to open it. Were you with her when she died?"

"Yes," said Laurence.

"Well, you 've taken it nice and quiet. I expect Mr. Brand was pleased with you."

"He did n't seem to me to be pleased with anything," Laurence said.

"Ah, that 's because he hates a death. It always makes him furious. But he won't forget you were quiet, you 'll find. I hope you 'll get through the operations as well. How that Mr. Wainwright did cry! I don't like to see a man cry, do you? I think it 's dreadful. I 've seen my mash, and had some cream tarts at the restaurant; was n't that nice? And he gave me this rose. Is n't it a beauty? Have you got your dress? I told the dressmaker to come

before bed-time. I don't believe Mr. Wainwright cares very much, you know. At least, he may now; but he 'll soon get over it. He 's been flirting with me and Nurse Purvis no end, all the time his wife 's been ill. Is n't Nurse Purvis pretty? I should n't wonder if he marries her; she 's not got a young man, you know — she 's so particular. I suppose you will sleep with No. 3 to-night; she sleeps well enough, though she always says she does n't."

Laurence had opened her box, and was getting out what she needed, thinking the while of the tragedy of Gertrude Wainwright's death. How had this stately, deep-eyed woman come to marry this barber's block? Why had she been made to undergo that second fatal operation when Mr. Brand himself was afraid of it? Why had she been sent so young into the great beyond? It was no use asking these questions of any one and so Laurence kept silent. She was gone, gone forever, this beautiful woman whose gaze had so fascinated her, gone into the unknown, without a word of explanation, or of greeting. That seemed to Laurence quite strange; for she felt that she could have loved that woman, and felt, too, as if the passing spirit had recognized in that long direct gaze that here, though too late, was one who would have been her friend.

But she was silent; for she was well aware that no time was to be given here to thoughts of the dead.

It was arranged that she was to sleep in No. 3

When she went into the room she found Mrs. FitzGerald fast asleep; and so she remained all night, until about six in the morning, when she woke up suddenly, in great pain. According to orders, Laurence rang the bell, and Nurse Hammond was soon in the room, and giving Laurence her first practical lesson in nursing. For the poor woman, who was indeed a mere wreck of a human creature, had to be lifted and tended like a helpless infant.

"Ah, but I don't believe," she wailed, in her pretty Irish voice, "Mr. Brand knows I 'm as ill as I am. You don't tell him, nurse; I 'm sure ye don't. And he won't listen to me; if he knew he 'd never send me home to me poor dear husband like this — "

"You run down to the kitchen," Nurse Hammond said to Laurence, taking no notice of these oft-repeated plaints, "and see if the early tea is ready. We 'll all have a cup."

Laurence went, but it was not ready. The kitchen-maid, yawning and dirty-faced, was lighting the fire. Laurence sat down and watched her, shivering, in spite of its still being high summer.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE day that followed was somewhat apathetic, or seemed so to Laurence. The other nurses appeared to enjoy themselves very well. They went about the house singing, paid a barrel-organist to grind out waltz tunes, and danced to them in the kitchen while Sister Valentine was out shopping. They counted baskets of clean clothes, and had altercations with the laundry-maid. This person, it seemed, had only just come, and had already announced her intention of going. The cook also gave notice that morning, on the ground that Mr. Brand had ordered dinner so late in the afternoon that she had not had proper time to get it ready. Sister Valentine had a trying interview with her, and induced her to stay a little longer, and put up for a while with what the cook called Mr. Brand's "onconsideration." Sister Valentine assured her that such a thing did n't happen once in three months; so she agreed to stay. She had no sooner come out into the kitchen than the buxom nurse, who happened to be there, informed her that Mr. Brand usually ordered unexpected late dinners two or three times a week. "He will come in the hospital all hours," she said; "he has his latch-key, and some-

times he comes in the night; and no one knows anything about it till he rings for hot water and orders breakfast in the morning, — and he likes a good breakfast, I can tell you, whether you 've got the things or whether you ain't. No miserable breakfasts like ours. And if he takes it into his head to come in the afternoon, he always orders late dinner —" the cook put an end to this history by going back to Sister Valentine, and insisting that her notice should stand, and, without waiting to obtain permission, gave the buxom nurse as her authority for these statements. Sister Valentine and the buxom nurse then had a terrible scene, which seemed to Laurence quite Homeric. So the day wore on. Early in the afternoon two new patients had come in, and were placed in rooms in the second house, where Mr. Brand had his own rooms. Laurence saw nothing of them. She helped Nurse Hammond all day to wait on Mrs. FitzGerald. Nurse Hammond was to take one of the new patients after the operation, and Laurence to have charge of Mrs. FitzGerald; therefore she had to learn all that would have to be done by her for that poor lady, in the course of this one day, and her mind was absorbed in the task. The day was soon gone, what with one kind of work and another, and the various trivial excitements, of which the nurses made the utmost. Early to bed was the order that night, so as to be ready for heavy work the next day.

"We never quite know," said Nurse Hammond,

"whether Mr. Brand will come to operate at eleven or at two. So we have to be ready for eleven. And then he generally comes, of course, exactly as we are sitting down to dinner. It 's because he 's so uncertain in the morning. He does n't have breakfast till about half-past eleven; and if he happens to get up early, he comes up here and does his operations before breakfast. If not, he comes later — in fact, always just as we are sitting down to dinner."

Laurence had seen nothing of Jim all that day; but just as she was going to bed a letter came to her through the post. She was surprised to find that it was from Jim. It ran thus: —

DEAR LAURENCE, — I hope you are all right. Don't forget my number is eight, and you 've only got to run down to me any moment if things get unbearable. I 've walked enough hospitals to know what nurses are. I dare n't speak to you when I come, and I 'm doubtful about sending a letter by hand, women of that sort talk so. My diggings here are perfectly abominable, and frightfully dear. I don't know how Mr. Brand could have told me to come here. On the whole, I think Birchampton the beastliest place I ever set eyes on. I daresay you have come to the same conclusion. I shall be at the operations to-morrow morning. For goodness' sake don't faint if you can help it, because they all do; and if you can keep steady, it is such much better form.

Your aff. bro. JIM.

Laurence found this letter rather cheering; it was pleasant, after all, to know that there was some one in the great black town who cared a little whether

she lived or died. She thought to herself that she believed Jim would care more what became of her than Gertrude Wainwright's husband had cared for his wife's fate, spite of his tears. It was odd how the eyes of that dead, unknown woman still seemed to look at her and tell her things. As she lay in the narrow bed in the faintly-lit room, that serious, illuminated gaze still appeared to be fixed on her. How terrible it must have been to go away alone into the great darkness! Laurence, thinking of this, suddenly knew that if she might die with Philip Tempest, she would be willing to live without him. The passionate desire for a perfect sympathy, for a hand resting in utter content within her own, had grown into an ever-present pain since the day when she had learned to know Philip. And now that she had seen and realized death, she felt that she would need his rare, intelligent companionship much more urgently when that ordeal should come, than while life lasted. Sleep came to her at last, after long delay, and she was wakened from it by Nurse Hammond's coming in fully dressed in a clean print gown, white cap and apron.

"Wake up, nurse," she said; "we must be early. It 's operation morning. Mrs. Fitz still asleep? You drink this tea I brought for her then; it 'll do you good. You look awful pale. I 'll stay with her while you dress."

Laurence drank the tea gladly, for her head ached with the disinfectant and the closed windows. Then

she went to dress, and for the first time put on her gray print gown, white cap and apron. She looked in the little glass with a smile of amusement. What would happen to her mother could she see her? — she wondered. Then she went downstairs. It was just eight o'clock, and the breakfast-bell was ringing. Everything was done with great punctuality to-day. Sister Valentine seemed to be all over the house that morning everywhere at once. Before breakfast was over she was out in the back-yard, scolding the boy for having knocked, or marked in some way, a large, long board which he had been busily engaged in scrubbing and drying. Laurence heard her say, "I know Mr. Brand will be very angry," words which seemed to induce a general solemnity. The boy came in to breakfast, wearing a very serious air. His proper name was Percy, but the nurses had given him the ridiculous nickname of "Married Life," because of some high-flown sentiment he had been heard to utter, to the effect that he thought "married life must be perfect bliss." Laurence had been a good deal confused at first by this expression being actually used as a name. Poor Married Life was a little inclined to tears this morning, said that the board was really too long for him to carry alone, and that he could n't help getting it knocked sometimes. "Nurse Hammond," he said, appealingly, "you 'll help me carry it upstairs to-day, won't you? Them akard stairs in the next house is so bad it 's sure to get knocked again."

And then Laurence knew, with a little pang, that this was the operation board; and when it was carried through the kitchen she glanced at it with a slight shudder which she was ashamed of, but could not help.

The next excitement was the preparing of two great silver trays full of instruments, and a basket of small sponges. Sister Valentine did this herself, with Nurse Hammond and the buxom nurse to help her. Laurence was pressed into the service to fetch and carry, and was told a little by first one and then another the while. It seemed that the nurse who was to take the case was held responsible for the instruments and sponges; for their being in right order, and being the right number. They all appeared to Laurence to be perfectly clean, but every one was dipped into turpentine and then into water; and after the instruments were laid in the trays they were covered with fresh water. Laurence was amazed to see so many. There were about fifty altogether. Sister Valentine said that she thought this was about the worst piece of work they had to do. "This afternoon," she said to Laurence, "these will all have to be disinfected and washed properly, before they are put away. It will take about two hours. You must help me with them, Nurse Smith; no one else will have time to-day."

Laurence began to have a feeling of anxiety, a hope that she would do things right, which blotted out all other thought. She was beginning to taste

the luxury she had so much desired, of being too busy to think. She asked herself once, as she hurried to and fro, whether it was worth while, whether it was as good as she had expected; and the answer was, "Yes." Infinitely better, she knew it to be, than the weary idleness of the Wimbledon garden, followed by the still wearier idleness of a round of visits. Philip was right, indeed; work is the one effectual solace for a troubled mind.

Sister Valentine seemed very much vexed about something; not, Laurence thought, about what they were doing at the time. She seemed absent, and said very little. Presently Nurse Hammond spoke to her in a low voice.

"I know, Sister, you don't like that case that 's coming to No. 5."

Sister Valentine looked up apprehensively at the door before answering. It seemed as if she feared some one might overhear them. "I think she ought to be sent to the women's hospital," she said, speaking very low, too. "It 's not a case for us to have here."

"Mr. Brand did n't quite like telling you she was coming here," said Nurse Hammond.

"Take care," said Sister Valentine; "we never hear the front door when he uses his latch-key. It is a shame, you know; Mr. Brand ought not to have taken her in here."

"I suppose there 's something very special the matter with her," asked Nurse Hammond, in a whisper.

"Oh, well, of course you know what 's the matter with her," said Sister Valentine, scornfully.

"Ah, but there must be something more than that," said Nurse Hammond, with conviction, "or else he 'd never take her in."

"I heard Mr. Brand say," Sister Valentine answered, in a whisper, "to the other doctor who came with her, that he thinks she could n't be suffering so much if it was n't one of those complications he has found out how to operate for. That 's why he wants her here; but I don't think it 's fair to make you nurses wait on a girl like that, even if she has got something that interests him. And a free case, of course — "

By this time the instruments were ready, and Sister Valentine hurried from the room to attend to something else. Laurence looked in amazement at the silver trays, marvelling that so many instruments could be used. There were all sorts and kinds, and in several instances a dozen of a kind. While she was looking at them in somewhat awed curiosity, she heard "Nurse Smith" called, and was quite proud of herself to find that she remembered the name to be hers, and answered to it at once. She found she was wanted to carry some chairs away that were in one of the patient's rooms in the other house. She was glad to go and see the preparations that were being made; for an insatiable curiosity had begun to burn in her about the ways of this place, where everything was subordinated to the one great

worker, and to the one great moment in which he did his work. There was no more nonsense talked, there was no dancing or laughing. The expression in every face was that of anxiety and increasing excitement. There was a tense feeling in the whole hospital as of a dead thing that was coming to life. Laurence vaguely felt as if she were a part of some hibernating animal which awoke at stated intervals, and was now just beginning to stir.

The housemaid was busy dusting Mr. Brand's consulting room. He had not arrived yet, and the final preparations were being made hastily. Laurence, accustomed to the habits of a comfortable and easy-going house, in which, when a room had to be cleaned, a couple of housemaids were given a morning to do it in, wondered at the work accomplished by the solitary woman who, armed with brushes, and flannels, and pails of water which smelled strongly of disinfectant, had cleaned and scoured the two rooms in which the new patients now were; and who was responsible for all the sweeping and dusting done in the whole house. The door of a room on the first floor was open, and Laurence could hear Sister Valentine's voice inside, so she went in. Sitting up in the bed was a rather stout and florid lady whose hair was all tumbled about her face, and who was so flushed that Laurence looked at her in wonder. She held Sister Valentine in a firm grasp that left marks on the little wrists for some days. The miserable woman was in a perfect paroxysm of terror.

"Come, come," Sister Valentine was saying, "you will make yourself so ill it won't be possible to do anything for you. Don't go on like this, — I assure you it 's foolish; yours is n't at all a bad case; there 's no risk at all. Nurse Smith, can you loose her hands? I don't believe she knows how she 's gripping me."

Laurence went to the rescue, and had to loosen two strong hands that clutched with the force of madness. The terrified woman turned from red to white as she thought she heard a step outside. "Is that Mr. Brand?" she cried out. "I know he 's going to kill me! Nurse, help me; I won't go through with it — I dare n't; I 'm afraid of death. I did n't know I should be so frightened till I came here. Nurse, tell him I can't go through it now — to-morrow — some other day — "

"He 's not here yet," said Sister Valentine, as she succeeded in escaping; "and he 'll be very angry if he sees you in this state. Do, for goodness' sake, control yourself."

At that moment a bell rang, and she ran away without another word. It was Mr. Brand's summons for her; and she was obliged to attend to it at once. Laurence did not know this, and wondered at her leaving the unfortunate patient in such a plight. She did her best for her; but it was of no use. The unhappy woman was now deathly pale instead of florid; she tried to speak, but no sound came; her face worked convulsively. It was dreadful to look at

her. Laurence was at a loss how to act. She found herself in a quite unexpected position, and with no orders. She took the cold hands that lay on the bed, and held them in her own, trying to warm them, and spoke such words of encouragement as she could think of. But she spoke to deaf ears; she began to think this must be a fit, and to wish very sincerely that some one would come in. Some one did, just as she was almost praying for it, — Mr. Brand himself. He gave but one glance at the bed, and turned to Sister Valentine, who was following him.

"We shall have a death here from fright, if we don't look out," he said. "Call Mr. Mendell; she must be put under chloroform instantly."

Sister Valentine hurried off, and soon came back with a little dark gentleman who was evidently the chloroformist, for he carried the apparatus with him. The patient was now in the state of terror which sometimes seizes on animals, but rarely on human beings. It was useless to speak to her or touch her. In a moment Dr. Mendell was administering the anæsthetic, and it was with a sense of infinite relief that Laurence saw the effect of it. There was a great deal to do now, very quickly and quietly; the operation-board and all the things necessary were standing on the landing. They were to have been taken into the other room first, but now they had to be brought into this one. The poor terrified creature had lost half an hour of life by her fit of fear, if her fate was to be death. Mr. Brand put on a large black apron;

as she was covertly watching him while he fastened it, Laurence heard Jim's voice talking to some one. Looking round, she saw her brother come in with two young men. A little behind them came a much older man, whose appearance struck Laurence as singularly poetic and artistic. He might have been Shelley or Keats. Laurence learned afterwards he was considered the greatest surgeon in the world next to Culverton Brand. He was an American, and had come over for a visit, during which his chief pleasure was to watch the work of his great rival and colleague. The other two were German doctors, who also found in Mr. Brand's work the principal attraction England had to offer. Jim turned an inquiring and rather anxious look upon Laurence, which she understood to mean, "Are you going to be all right?" and a feeling of amusement at his anxiety about her made her smile a little. This was evidently a great relief to Jim, and he nodded approval. She had but a moment in which to notice him, as quick, sharp-murmured orders came from Sister Valentine, which she promptly obeyed. The board was placed in position under the one clean window in the room; there were three, but the other two were black with dirt, and appeared to be hermetically sealed. The trays of instruments were lifted in, and the doctors examined them with the deepest interest. One of them seemed so incredulous about its being only water in which they lay, that Mr. Brand laughed, and said he had better taste it, which he did. The nurses lifted the patient

on to the board, and arranged a sheet so as to cover the body almost entirely; on the feet were warm stockings. Only three nurses remained in the room. Sister Valentine, who was always present at every operation, stood opposite Mr. Brand with the buxom nurse, who was to have charge of the case, ready to hand him everything; Laurence and Nurse Hammond stood behind them, while the doctors took positions from which they could see perfectly and not interfere with the light. It seemed to Laurence impossible that she could ever know the names and uses of all these wonderful instruments, and exactly which was wanted. She determined not to lose sight of what was done for a single moment, but to notice and remember everything. Mr. Brand was in rather a cheerful mood, it seemed, to-day; he was fairly amiable, and spoke lightly of the operation he had to do as being quite a trifling one. This lasted till just the moment he was about to begin, when the buxom nurse did something wrong,— Laurence never clearly understood what, — and he spoke furiously to her. She made no reply, and he took the knife and made the incision. Laurence watched him with absorbed fascination, and kept her eyes firmly fixed on his hand till she saw the knife actually touch the skin, and then, in spite of her resolution, and the fascination, and everything else, she closed them. It was no use. She could not look. The horror of it was stronger than was her will. She stood quite steady and perfectly quiet, though it seemed as if her

heart had stopped. Nearly every one has had the feeling she was experiencing now, in the street, when it seems as if a horrible accident is inevitable, — perhaps a child hurt, or a dog run over without a chance of help. The instinctive action is to shut the eyes and wait, scarcely breathing, till the worst is over. Laurence heard Mr. Brand begin to talk, and explain the operation he was doing in technical language quite unintelligible to her. Then she felt Nurse Hammond touch her, and, with a great effort, opened her eyes and looked at the patient. After all the sight was bearable; the wound was only about two inches long, and Mr. Brand seemed to have the greater part of one of his great hands inside it. Something was drawn out; Laurence tried to look at it; but again the spasm came, and she could not. The ordeal was just over now; this was really a very slight operation, and only lasted a quarter of an hour. Then there was the hasty clearing up; everything done as quickly as possible, and yet with the greatest precision. The patient was lifted back on to her bed, and the coverings drawn up over her; the board was carried out, and in a few minutes all signs of the operation were gone from the room. Laurence realized, as she glanced back, that it was all so arranged that the patient never saw a single one of them. Every one but the nurse who remained in charge now went into the room on the other side of the landing. Mr. Brand went in first, and sat down in an armchair, drawing a handful of unopened letters

from his coat-pocket as he did so, and glancing at them, without, however, staying to open them. His mood was changing, as the nurses and the doctors who were in the habit of working with him very well knew. This was a difficult and dangerous operation which lay before him; and when he had one of that nature to do his temper became intolerable. Nurse Hammond, her face quite altered by the anxiety she felt, took the first place now, and stood ready, close to him, with Sister Valentine. The others were grouped together just outside the door. The patient was a quite young girl, so thin that she was like a skeleton, and with absolutely no color in her face. She looked so ill it was pitiable to see her. She wanted to speak to Mr. Brand, and managed to make him hear her feeble voice. She had a question to ask about what he was going to do, and she had been told that this was her only chance of asking it. He answered her in the gentlest possible voice, calling her "my child." And then, so suddenly that it was very bewildering except to those accustomed to him, and was bad enough for them, he turned furiously on Nurse Hammond, swearing at her, and calling her the most extraordinary names. "Now, then," he called out roughly. "What are we waiting for? Where's the chloroform?" Doctor Mendell was in the room instantly. Nurse Hammond was quite unjustly attacked, for the chloroformist always waited at the door till summoned. But this was Mr. Brand's way when he had serious

work in hand. Then the same scene as that which had already taken place in the other room was re-enacted; the anæsthetic was given, and the instant it began to take effect the board was brought in and all that was to be used. The girl, who now lay unconscious, was lifted from the bed; she was so light a weight one nurse could have moved her easily. Every one collected round the board again, Nurse Hammond now standing opposite Mr. Brand. Nurse Purvis had come to take the place of the buxom nurse, who was left in the other room, and stood next to Laurence. Every one was more excited this time, and showed it in different ways, — Mr. Brand by unbearable irritability, and the nurses by painful anxiety to do exactly the right thing at the right moment; the doctors who were looking on, by acute interest. Laurence was absolutely resolved to see the whole operation this time; no spasm of fear or horror should make her close her eyes. But in her ignorance she did not calculate on the difference between this one and the other. Mr. Brand had now to make a long incision, — one of quite seven inches. Laurence watched him do it without flinching; but as the knife finished its masterly stroke she gave a faint gasp and swayed backwards. It seemed to her that the whole room went suddenly round. Jim, who had so contrived as to be near her, managed to prevent her from falling; and between them he and Nurse Purvis got her to a chair, and having placed her on it left her. Not even Jim dare give a faint-

ing nurse more than a moment's attention at such a time. A great wave of unconsciousness passed over Laurence; but she recovered quickly and completely. She got back, unaided, to her place long before the operation was over; for it lasted quite half an hour. It was a most terrible one, and made even the old hands feel sick and faint. Then, at the very last, Nurse Hammond, with a crimson spot on each cheek, and her blue eyes glittering with excitement, suddenly spoke up and told Mr. Brand he must not sew the wound up yet for he had left a sponge inside it. He swore he had not, and was bitterly angry with her; but she stood him out, and was so certain, that he looked, and found it was there! Then he was just as angry with her for his own mistake as if she had been wrong. At last it was all over, and the patient was lifted back, and Nurse Hammond took her place of watching by the bed. She caught at Laurence as she was going out.

"You 'll bring up my dinner, won't you?" she said. "I can't leave this room till to-morrow — perhaps not then."

Dinner! Laurence had forgotten such a thing existed; but no one else had. It seemed that Mr. Brand had arrived, not merely at the hospital dinner-hour, but just as the dinner had been placed on the table. Downstairs in the kitchen the cook was raging over her spoiled dishes and the "onconsiderateness" of people who ought to know better, "seeing as they fixed the dinner-hour themselves."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHEN night came Laurence was thoroughly tired for the first time in her life. She had been everybody's "fag" all day. It was considered a blessing that there was a new nurse to do the fagging; for it was doubly hard with the two new patients both located in the second house, instead of in the same house as the kitchen. Laurence was regarded with some favor before the day was over, for she did not mind how hard her work was, and willingly went all kinds of errands, and carried messages to and fro. And once it was found that, stately and quiet though she was, she was perfectly willing to do whatever she was asked, she was not spared. To and fro she went with her quick, noiseless step, carefully carrying trays, taking letters and telegrams, hunting up "Married Life," who was never to be found without great difficulty, and cajoling him to go to the post-office at hours which he considered incorrect. Then she had to look after poor Mrs. FitzGerald altogether; and at last that lady succeeded in telling her the whole story of her woes and sufferings, which recital Sister Valentine had tried to stave off as long as possible,

fearing it might terrify a neophyte like Laurence. But it did not; she was too deeply plunged in the whirlpool of her new experiences before Mrs. FitzGerald got her chance, to be very much impressed. She had to sleep in her room; but the little Irishwoman was fast asleep when Laurence went in. So she crept into bed, her body tired, her mind in a blaze, wide awake, trying to disentangle and sort out the memories of the day. For a while her closed eyes saw only confusion, then by degrees all the hurry and bustle and the minor details and the unimportant figures fell away, and she saw the squat, unprepossessing form of Culverton Brand, in his black operating apron, knife in hand, achieving a miracle in surgery. She saw that, little as it looked like it, viewed intelligently this was in fact the figure of a hero. She had passed from one world to another, from that in which spirituality was the recognized aim, to one in which matter, pure and simple, was alone thought of. But here, in the very deeps of materialism, rose a giant who controlled and conquered matter by virtue of intense intelligence and a mastery of himself which is beyond intelligence; he seemed to her to restore things to their right places. Mrs. FitzGerald realized absolutely nothing but that she possessed a physical body which was maimed and shattered; with her, and amid the kindred conditions of the house, Laurence felt alone in a world of matter. But Mr. Brand, by his wonderful power, made matter seem once more but a passing triviality, a

dream of to-day, a thing which would fall away and leave the consciousness of the beyond which Canon Winterby held to so firmly. Thinking this, she fell asleep; and it seemed to her that she was instantly wakened again by a touch. She started up; Nurse Purvis stood at her side. The room was all quiet otherwise; Mrs. FitzGerald was still fast asleep.

"Come with me," said Nurse Purvis, in a whisper. Laurence rose at once and wrapped her dressing-gown round her. They crept out of the room, and softly closed the door.

"I 'm going down to make some tea," said Nurse Purvis. "Come and help me. Nurse Hammond's patient is having an awful time. We always get some tea the first night."

A little mystified, and not very wide awake, Laurence followed downstairs and into the cheerless kitchen. The kettle had to be boiled on some sticks; Laurence did this as well as she could, while Nurse Purvis found the other things needful. When the tea was ready, they carried it through into the next house, and upstairs to the landing on which the new patients' rooms opened. Nurse Purvis told Laurence to put the tray down outside (where so lately the terrible board and the silver trays had stood), while she pushed open one of the doors and went in. Nurse Hammond was stooping over the bed. Laurence heard a faint moan — an agonizing moan — come from that bed, that struck straight to

her heart, it was so full of pain, — unbearable pain and helplessness. She stepped quickly forward, but before she could see the prostrate figure, another heart-rending moan came, and then another one that would have been a wail but for the awful weakness of the sick creature that uttered it. They all gathered round the bed, looking picturesque in the dim light, in their dark-red dressing-gowns.

"If she gets any worse," said Nurse Hammond, "I must call Sister."

"Come and have tea first," said Nurse Purvis.

They went to the door, Nurse Hammond remaining inside and keeping watch on the bed while she took a cup of tea and drank it. Then she went quickly back and bent over the bed again. The buxom nurse came out of her room now and had tea, this being always a feature of the first night after an operation. Her patient, however, was doing well, and giving her no trouble. The woman who had nearly died of fright was recovering readily from the actual operation she had undergone. They were all on the landing now but Nurse Hammond, who, however, soon came out looking very anxious and rather frightened.

"She must have morphia again," she said. "Do fetch Sister for me."

Nurse Purvis was off in an instant, and in an incredibly short space of time came back with Sister Valentine wrapped in a dark-green dressing-gown trimmed with fur. This seemed a somewhat wintry

garment for the time of year; but the atmosphere was so chilly and the surroundings so dreary that Laurence had forgotten it was summer; roses and sunshine seemed like legends of a half-forgotten past.

"You go back to bed," said Sister Valentine to Laurence; "there are enough of us here without tiring you out." So Laurence went, and looking at her watch when she had crept back, found it was just four o'clock. She fell asleep and did not wake till she was roused, when she heard that there had been a dreadful night, that Mr. Brand had been sent for, that every one was worn out and cross; but the girl still lived.

The day was dull; there was a sense of reaction and exhaustion upon every one. And it was followed by other days like it. The hibernation set in again. Laurence got to look for the periodical awakening, and to depend upon the excitement of it even more than the other nurses. For they, though it became necessary to them, nevertheless had some other sensations. Lovers, flirtations, new dresses, the eating of cream tarts at the tea-shop in the town, letters from home, and visits home served to pass the dull intervals between the operation days and the nights of anxiety which followed them. All the nurses came from somewhere within half an hour's journey of Birchampton, except Laurence. The local notoriety of the hospital served to sustain a regular supply of them; and it was very rare for Mr. Brand

to engage one at a distance. Laurence felt no desire to leave the house when she was off duty; she did not rush out as the others all did instantly. Jim soon noticed this, and began to plan excursions into the neighborhood for her half-holidays. He was not at all a devoted brother in ordinary life; but he had inherited from his father a very keen conscientiousness, and he realized that he was to a certain extent responsible for Laurence's welfare under the present circumstances. And then he was still in a state of unsatisfied curiosity as to why she had done this. He tried hard to discover, but uselessly. By degrees he began to think she really must have been animated by the medical instinct, she talked so much about the subjects which interested him most. It dawned upon him at last that in course of a series of afternoon jaunts, Laurence was cleverly extracting from him the very pith and essence of his whole medical training; that her questions were not random, but the result of lines of thought; and that she preserved all such facts as she had made her own in orderly arrangement in her memory. This roused a friendly interest in him which he had never expected to feel for any woman, least of all for one of his sisters. He began to enjoy the hours spent with her; for he had no intelligent companion at Birchampton except Mr. Brand himself. The outings which he took with Laurence were conducted with as much care and secrecy as if they formed part of an intrigue. Jim planned them beforehand, and then wrote to her by

post, telling her to go by train to some point a little way off the town, where he met her. The nurses had found it impossible to question Laurence about where she went; there was something in her manner which intimidated them, though she was always polite and pleasant, and ready to oblige any one. But they soon discovered that she received letters bearing the Birchampton postmark, and came to the conclusion that she had a mysterious lover with whom she went out. How it was that they never succeeded in seeing this person, lie in wait how they might, exercised their minds a great deal. But in Jim they had to deal with a clever young man who was perfectly familiar with all their little ways. They only saw one side of him, and that was a taciturn, slightly disagreeable one; they were incapable of guessing at any other. Just in the same way did they form their estimate of Mr. Brand. Because they came under his lash (a quite necessary lash, though it might of course be differently administered) they were unable to see or believe in any other characteristics. It was easier for them to attribute low motives to him than high ones. They believed it to be some obscure form of stinginess which made him have the windows screwed up so that they could never be cleaned. He had learned, by experience, that it was the only way to protect patients from cold. Laurence found out that the poor girl whose operation had been so terrible was an absolute pauper, and that what he did for her was done out of pure

charity and pity. He insisted on her being treated in exactly the same way as the patients who paid high fees, and he personally showed her the greatest kindness and consideration. As the nurses themselves very much resented having to take charge of a poor patient, they all firmly believed that Mr. Brand had taken her in because he had expected the operation to be one which would throw light on some experiments he was making. Laurence learned enough afterwards to know that this was not so. Under the rough crust which the scientific materialist turned to the world was a great and kindly heart. Generous deeds were often done so simply and in such a practical way that the people who knew him best misunderstood him.

So the time passed by, and winter came, and the town was smokier and dirtier and colder than ever; and the patients who were in the house when Laurence first entered it had all gone long since, and been replaced again and again by others strangely like them. The symptoms and sufferings were similar, and, it seemed to Laurence, even the characters; as though people of certain types succumbed more readily to certain diseases. She grew to regard the individuals with a little less interest, and to feel involved, more increasingly, in the theories and conclusions to be drawn from observation of them as cases. She took great pains to conquer the difficulties of the technical language used by Mr. Brand at the operations, and by degrees came to understand his

explanations as well as Jim did. Sometimes in discussing the operations with Jim afterwards, she made suggestions which surprised him. In the end a one-sided friendship sprang up between these two: Jim gave Laurence all he had, — his confidence, his thoughts, his learning; while she gave him nothing but the stimulant of her sympathy and interest in his work and future. He was shut out of her confidence absolutely and entirely. Only one person had that or ever could have it. Philip Tempest knew well that the star in the sapphire was his, and his alone.

CHAPTER XX.

PHILIP TEMPEST, down in Lincolnshire, was doing battle daily. On his own estates his life was always rather a difficult one, as that of a landowner with quixotic ideas must be of necessity. But this difficulty was now greatly accentuated by his new departure in espousing the cause of Temperance. Without the support of Canon Winterby's friendship perhaps he would scarcely have had the pertinacity to be so consistent as he was. Not from the want either of perseverance or of courage in his character, but from the lack of conviction. This lack, which had always held him back hitherto, no longer existed. Canon Winterby's fervent conviction in every man being his brother's keeper had at last blotted it out entirely, and Philip stood like a rock, not to be swayed or moved by doubt. No such weakness had ever assailed him since the day of that dinner-party last season, when the difficulties thrown in his way by Leslie had made him wish some compromise were possible, and had sent him to Canon Winterby for counsel. Then Canon found a great pleasure in strengthening the new recruit, of whom he was proud, and of whose personal charm he was

very distinctly conscious; and he dipped into his wonderful mind for precious thoughts, talking on long after the time was past which he had intended to devote to the interview. He knew it was worth while; he knew he was making an impression that would last a lifetime, and making a friend who would give back to him good measure in the hour of need; and so it was. Philip got home an hour late, to find a catastrophe taking place which changed his whole life; but he brought with him the strength to face it unflinchingly and with heroism. That attitude had had to be maintained steadily ever since. The hardest part of the punishment it entailed lay in the complete separation between himself and Clare. She had killed his love; but he would have liked to have remained her friend. She would not have this either; she invariably sided with those who opposed him in his efforts towards reform, and showed a bitterness in doing so which pained him to the quick. For it was not possible for him to forget that he had loved her, and that she was his wife. She seemed to forget these things, or, rather, to resent them. He could only meet this by silence; anything else had long become impossible between them. Their daily association was embittered by the fact that he was compelled, for her own sake, to constitute himself her keeper in the painful and literal sense. He was infinitely patient, and he was unremitting in attention; nevertheless, he was but partially successful. It is true, that for long periods

her vice would be so held in check by the difficulty of indulging it that something like a shadow of comfort was restored to them. Not that she was ever her old bright loving self with him now; that gentle, tender soul seemed gone forever. Sometimes he fancied the love momentarily shone in her eyes again; if it did, it was banished at once by an access of bitterness. And these quieter phases were always followed by terrible outbreaks, which were to Philip like nightmares. He dealt with them alone. Maid after maid was dismissed because they yielded to the bribes Clare offered them, with the result that one of these dreadful phases followed. All the servants of the household were subjected to the temptation at different times; those that succumbed to it had to go. This became a well-known fact at Stourby. It was no longer possible to keep the matter an actual secret; it became one of those hidden things that are known to everybody. People talked about it in low tones, and, in louder ones of great discontent, commented on the new mode of life at Stourby. It had always been one of the most hospitable houses in the whole county, — dinner-parties, two or three times a week, two or three balls during the winter, and many minor festivities being habitually held there. All this was over. There were neither dinners nor balls, and Mrs. Tempest had no afternoon At Home; when she returned calls, she drove round in her brougham, and her footman left cards at the doors. She was understood to be

very much out of health. Dinners remained an unconquerable difficulty; she refused to be present if wine was not made a part of them in the usual way. This, Philip absolutely refused to permit. Neither would give way, so there could be no dinner giving. Mrs. Tempest's health had to serve as the excuse for this; so there was nothing for it but to keep out of society altogether, and let her ill-health serve as an excuse for all. The neighborhood talked a good deal about the fact that in spite of Mrs. Tempest having apparently become a chronic invalid, no doctor appeared to be in attendance on her. At last, however, they became better satisfied on this point, by a doctor arriving from London. It was Dr. Meredith. Philip very much wished to put her under the care of a specialist who would try every possible method to cure her. Clare, however, absolutely refused to see this great doctor at all. She knew quite well what it meant, and she was entirely immovable on the subject. Philip had to abandon this idea. That was before they left town. A doctor who had been known to Philip since his childhood was within reach of Stourby, and he thought that when they were settled there he could perhaps by ingenuity get Clare to submit to his treatment. But Clare was growing cunning. Though Dr. Gray came to the house merely as a visitor, he never saw Clare. She was always indisposed to come downstairs when he was in the house. He came to dinner twice, and dined alone with Philip. This

was tiresome. Philip gave in, as he found himself obliged to with Clare when her mind was absolutely made up. She made him feel when she was resolved without actually expressing her resolution. Her nature, utterly weak in some respects, yet contained in it a deep vein of obstinacy. This was not shown by words or any form of open warfare, but by a steady negative resistance, a sullen silence, and underhand actions. These tendencies had always been latent in her character, of course, but had scarcely shown any signs of their existence while she and Philip lived in accord. Now that a great gulf had opened between them, and they found themselves in complete opposition on a question of every-day life, it was natural that these innate tendencies should come to light. To Philip it seemed that her character was entirely changing, when it was simply developing.

During the periods of tranquillity, when Philip's efforts as her keeper were fairly successful, Clare always sank into a very weak state of health; and this increased as time went on, so that he became very much alarmed. She was becoming so ill, and so unnerved, that it was evidently necessary that she should have a doctor. For days and days together she would not leave her room, but would sit in a large armchair, or lie on a couch, doing absolutely nothing. She would not eat, and made no attempt to rouse herself from the apathy which possessed her. It dawned heavily upon Philip's mind at last

that in those long hours of silence her mind was working out some new scheme for obtaining that which gave her the excitement and oblivion she desired; for sooner or later she succeeded in doing this. And in time he learned to know that when she rose up and smiled, and seemed herself again, she had accomplished that which seemed to him impossible, and that in another twelve hours, or possibly a little longer, she would no longer be a reasoning human being. And then, when her cunning failed her, he would presently discover the hateful detail, — the new hiding-place found for a case of brandy that had been smuggled in by a bribed servant, or, even worse, because more openly shameful, he would be successfully deceived by Clare, and then discover the servant who had been her tool. It was a dispiriting ordeal to a man who might perhaps with justice be described as being æsthetic even before he was moral. It was not possible that his love for Clare should survive such experiences. His pity, yes, but not his love. Compassion is that part of the divine love which is long-suffering, even to the uttermost; what men and women call love must be pleased.

At last, in a quiet phase which had lasted longer than usual, when her weakness and apathy had become so great that it was impossible any longer to ignore them, Clare agreed to see a doctor. But she would only see Dr. Meredith. Philip was greatly surprised at this choice.

"He is not considered specially clever," he said.

"I will see him if you like," was her answer, "but no one else." Philip knew from her tone that it was useless to argue with her; she was resolute. So, thankful for small mercies, he went at once and telegraphed for Dr. Meredith, who came down to Stourby the same evening. He stayed all night, returning to London early next morning.

Clare elected to see him alone; and Philip now made a practice of never opposing her in small matters, whatever his own wishes might be. So he took Dr. Meredith up to her room, and left them.

"You will find me in the smoking-room, Meredith," he said, and went away.

Clare was lying so still that she might have been mistaken for one at the point of death. If Laurence had seen her then, her appearance would have reminded her of poor Gertrude Wainwright. Dr. Meredith was startled; he had expected to see her very ill, but not so ill as this. He did not show surprise as a man more naturally human would have done; no look of pity or of anxiety came upon his face. He seemed to become stiffer and more severe; this was really the result of an access of self-consciousness. To him a very serious case appealed, firstly, to his vanity; secondly, to his medical ability; and never to his pity.

He crossed the room slowly, with his slightly limping step, and drew a chair to the side of the sofa on which Clare lay. She did not open her eyes

till he put his hand on her wrist to feel her pulse; then she lifted the heavy, blue-veined lids, and when she saw who it was that bent over her a faint gleam of interest flashed into her eyes. She lifted herself a little upon her pillows, and began to talk.

Dr. Meredith stayed with her for quite an hour. Then he went slowly downstairs and found the smoking-room. Philip was smoking a cigarette and reading the evening papers, which had just reached the house. He started up the moment Dr. Meredith came in.

"What an age you have been, Meredith," he exclaimed. "I have been getting quite anxious."

"Yes," said Dr. Meredith, slowly; "I have had a long talk with Mrs. Tempest."

He paused and took a cigarette from a box which stood on the table, lighting it in his stiff, dilatory way before saying anything more. Philip watched him with well-concealed impatience. He knew from long experience that it was quite useless to try and hurry him. Not until the cigarette was lit, and Dr. Meredith had found a chair to his liking, and had established himself in it, did he say anything more. Then he began, picking his words, as it seemed, with great care, pausing sometimes to do so.

"She is in a very — weak state. I don't see how she could be — any weaker and sustain life. She has sunk as low as possible."

Philip said something, in a tone of great distress,

but it was under his breath, and was not addressed to Dr. Meredith, who went on without noticing the interruption.

"It will be a difficult matter to build up her strength again, and will take some time. I think I shall be able to do it, however, if my directions are followed out in every detail. I will write a prescription, and I will come down the day after to-morrow to see how she is progressing. I should say she would be able to leave her room in about a fortnight; and you had better take her for a short sea-voyage then. That is, of course, if all goes well. Diet is extremely important, and I fear it has been much neglected."

"She will not eat," said Philip, who knew well that he had unwearyingly tried to tempt her with every conceivable delicacy.

"No, she is too weak to eat," said Dr. Meredith. "She requires baby's food, given every hour, for some days. And brandy must be given in everything she takes."

Philip said nothing.

"She must have three or four glasses a day of good old port," went on Dr. Meredith; "if you will give me writing materials, I will make out the diet and write a prescription."

Philip rose, walked the length of the room, threw away the end of the cigarette he was smoking, went to a side table and fetched a blotting-pad, paper, pens, ink, and carried them to a table within

reach of Dr. Meredith. Then he walked to the end of the room again, still silent. Dr. Meredith meantime had finished his cigarette, and turned to the table. He took up a pen and tried it, and then, with great deliberation, began to write. Philip, having now made up his mind, came to him and stood at his side, leaning with one hand on the table, and one on the back of his chair.

"Dick," he said, in a low voice, "one moment."

Dr. Meredith looked up surprised. It was years since any one had called him by this name, hardly since he and Philip had been school-boys together.

"Dick, I 've something to say that hurts me, but it must be said. You are taking an awful responsibility on you in ordering these stimulants. Pause, and think it over."

"Oh, I know," said Dr. Meredith, rather irritably; "I know you have views about this now — "

Philip interrupted him.

"Don't you suppose," he said passionately, "that there must have been a reason for an easy-going fellow like me to take up an unpopular cause like that? Dick, I was driven to it. It 's useless for you to treat Clare without knowing all the truth. She cannot resist stimulants. It is a horrible word to use, but it is the only one. She is a drunkard. You must have guessed it."

"I should say," said Dr. Meredith, quite unmoved by Philip's agitation, "that she has an hereditary necessity for stimulants. That is why she has sunk

so low. She cannot live without them. They must be given in measured quantities; but they must be given."

Philip groaned and moved away; he sank into a chair close by.

"You don't know what it means," he said. "You can't know, or you would n't order these things. The mere taste of them drives her mad. A single glass of wine involves days of misery and despair and shame, for it gives her the craving, and she will gratify it at any cost or risk. The stuff is poison to her."

"It is an absolutely necessary poison if she is to live," said Dr. Meredith. "She will die without it."

Philip made no answer. He knew not what to say. He remained silent, a silence more distressful than words. Dr. Meredith, pulling down his shirt cuffs a little, and flicking off a scrap of tobacco which marred the immaculateness of one of them, began slowly to write. His pen did not please him; he put it down and tried another. Philip watched him with a growing sense of irritation. It seemed to him that this man was signing something which was worse than Clare's death-warrant would have been, with a mechanical indifference that was almost an insult.

CHAPTER XXI.

IT seemed to Philip as if from the time of this first visit of Dr. Meredith's he was like one who, standing on the summit of a mountain, or on the edge of a precipice, holds the hand of a person who has fallen from it, who has no longer any foothold whatever, nor any hope save in this hand-grasp. Such support cannot last long, nor is it of any use, if there is no other help to look for. So that it is one long agony. This was what Philip found it.

What he had told Dr. Meredith must happen, did happen. Clare's vice had reached a pitch at which it could only be controlled by the strongest measures, by absolutely starving it. Dr. Meredith's treatment fed and strengthened and excited it. Steadily it gained vigor, till it became a raging devil within her. Philip's head, that had a trick of being thrown back a little, began to droop forward, and he stooped a little as he walked. The burden was telling on him; it was a heavy one to carry. He dreaded to go into Clare's room now, she was so changed, and the change deepened as the days went on. He began to think of the old stories of obsession; it did not seem

possible that this irritable, ill-tempered, sometimes half-frantic woman was the gentle Clare he had loved. Another spirit, an utterly different one, appeared to have taken possession of her body and driven out the one he had known. Hitherto, there had always been intervals when she had returned more or less to her old self; now there were none, — only degrees of strangeness. For the amount of stimulant ordered by Dr. Meredith, and now made a regular part of her diet under his directions, was enough to keep her just irritable and restless and uncertain in humor. Philip knew when the irritability and capriciousness deepened into positive ill-temper that she had found some way of eluding his vigilance and increasing her doses. Then, at last, came the dreaded fits of unreasoning rage, which he endured now in silence, as we see the animals bearing the rage of the elements. The comparison occurred to Philip himself one day when he had gone out with Clare in the close carriage which she now always used, and a blinding storm of rain and sleet came on. The horses in the fields stood with their heads turned from the rain, but that was all; otherwise they endured it patiently. It was useless for them to turn and reproach Nature when she thus ill-used them, as they well knew. It was as useless for Philip to turn and reproach the angry woman who sat by his side and complained bitterly, he hardly knew of what, all through the drive. For it was one of her bad days. He had hoped the drive would do

her good, but apparently she was vexed at having been induced to come from her room. That was all he could gather from her bitter, rambling, excited, ill-natured talk. Like the horses, he turned his head from the storm, and looked out of the window, answering nothing. The landscape was a dreary one, blurred by the sudden, angry storm, with the little groups of animals herded together here and there. But it was better to look at than the face he should see if he turned round. And then he found his silence was the cause of new offence, so turned and looked at the heated face and humid eyes. He had intended to speak softly, so as to cause no farther jar; but he was surprised into exclaiming:

"Good heavens, Clare, where *can* you get the stuff from to make you as bad as this!"

Clare became instantly silent and remained so. Her mind was revolving around strange, hysterical, half-formed thoughts; in her present humor she would have been ready for suicide or murder had circumstances offered her a temptation. Philip had never spoken to her in such a tone of horror and disgust before. It practically sobered her, and the riot of her mind turned into a sort of silent madness. The chief feeling she was conscious of was that of anger, — anger against Philip. It had become too intense to express in words such as she had been pouring out until now. Such anger as she experienced now is only felt towards a person whom one loves deeply, and the sensation can only arise

in such a nightmare of life as she was going through. Poor Clare! Philip's heart melted with grief in the silence that followed; and he tried his best to induce her to speak again, and to change her humor. But it was useless; her face was set like a stone.

This drive marked a point in their unhappy lives. They were more separated after it, more entirely divided. Something in his face or his voice had revealed to her in that unguarded moment the disgust she inspired him with. A flash of terrible illumination had lit up her darkened soul, and awakened her dulled intelligence. She never forgot that moment, nor the bitterness she suffered in it. For, poor self-destroyer that she was, her bitterness towards Philip was not born of hate, but of impotent love — love maddened by the knowledge that she had murdered the thing she so desired, — his answering love. She gave him, however, no more of these dreadful scenes of unmerited reproaches, even in her worst fits of madness. She held herself back from that; and the result of this great effort, the greatest she now had the power to make, was that she scarcely ever addressed him at all. It seemed to him that he was dwelling in a great silence, chained to a living corpse. Every one else appeared remote; he talked to people, he attended to his affairs, but with an odd feeling that they were outside his actual life, apart from the world in which he dwelled alone with Clare. Within that, he stood quite isolated, witnessing a

tragedy, watching an embodied vice burn out the frail body that it possessed, and beat back the unhappy soul that should have conquered it. Dr. Meredith came down at intervals and regarded his handiwork with apparent equanimity. That Clare was not dead seemed to content him; that she was no longer a reasoning being appeared to distress him not at all. Philip knew that discussion on the subject would be futile, and felt it would only intensify his ever-present sense of shame. So very little was said about Clare at all between them. The one hope Philip cherished of any change for the better lay in Dr. Meredith's order of a sea-voyage. Clare was now much stronger, and quite fit for travelling, as Philip thought, and he tried to get a date fixed. He thought if he could get her away from home, and away from Dr. Meredith's treatment, he might recover his influence over her, and make one more effort to save her before she sank too far. Home was now no safeguard for her; he had regarded it as a place of safety, but it was not. The establishment was too large, there were too many servants. When Clare could do nothing with the servants in the house, she would creep out unobserved and find some under-gardener or stable-boy to do her bidding. Then, too, she had accustomed herself to the servants who waited on her seeing her in the various stages of excitement, madness, stupor, and despair. There was no longer any restraining influence, no public opinion to fear. He believed that

Clare would feel compelled to be more careful in hotels, or on board ship among strangers who would stare and wonder. So he tried hard to get the plan carried out.

Dr. Meredith, perhaps, did not care to part with so good a patient. At all events, it was not easy to get him to say she was well enough to travel. At last, however, he was compelled to admit that not only was she now quite strong enough to leave home, but that a change would be beneficial. The fact was so self-evident that it was useless to play with it any longer. So there was nothing to be done but pack up and decide where to go. This last was no light task, for Clare would not discuss the matter and help Philip to decide; she simply opposed every suggestion he made. He passed days with maps spread out on the great library table, endeavoring to interest her in any route, trying to discover where her fancy lay. His own wish was to go to America, where they had many interesting friends to visit, and where he knew Canon Winterby's introductions would bring him among those who led the great Temperance movements. It was his dream that Clare might be saved by the effect of some great woman's personal influence and example. And he wanted much to look into the working of some of the American organizations. Clare, however, would not listen for a moment to the idea of going to America. She said it was the wrong time of year, and that it would be bitterly cold on the voyage,

which was all true enough; but Philip felt that these were not her real objections, but that she instinctively read his mind and guessed his object. He grew quite despondent and brooded forlornly over his maps. The trunks stood ready, and at last the situation began to be absurd. Clare saw this, and put an end to it. She said that she would like to go to Gibraltar, and that perhaps it would be pleasant to wander on through Spain. Philip was so delighted to have anything settled that he did not pause for a moment's discussion even. He sent a servant to London at once to secure berths in the next P and O bound for Gibraltar, and was relieved to find that one was starting the very next day in which there was room for them. Clare had thus no time to change her mind; they went to town the same evening, slept at the Cannon Street Hotel, and went on board ship in the docks after breakfast next morning. Clare made no objection to this arrangement, she was a good sailor, and Philip took it for granted that she would prefer to go at once on to the boat rather than travel by train to Plymouth. And he himself felt it an infinite relief to have her safe in her saloon cabin. He leaned over the side of the boat, watching the start, and the wonderful sights of the river, with a feeling that surely Nature would come to rescue her unhappy child, here beneath the open sky, on the free water. They took no servants with them. Clare had easily been persuaded to travel without her maid. Philip knew that every-

thing now depended on his own efforts, and he would not permit himself to be afraid. The movement of the stately vessel, the gladness of passing out on to the great ocean, all the joy of the hour, awoke the youth within him and filled him with hope.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE voyage from London to Gibraltar is so short a one that Philip felt no misgivings about getting through it without any disaster. He devoted himself to Clare, was continually with her, attended to all her needs, and felt that so guarded she must be safe for the time being, and that she would have every possible chance of benefiting by the sea air. He induced her to sit on deck with him nearly all day, and to dine at the table d'hôte; thus a great change was effected in her life at once, — for she usually passed her time shut up in her own room. It seemed to him that on the second day she began to look better and healthier. They met a slight acquaintance on board, a young fellow who was going out to India and was very homesick. He was just engaged, and would not see his love for a whole year. Under such circumstances, and with the fostering conditions of being together on a ship, the slight acquaintance only took a few hours to ripen into friendship. Young Weymouth walked up and down the deck with them, and got his seat at dinner changed so that they could sit together. He talked to Clare so incessantly that she was obliged

to rouse herself to an interest in what he said. He was handsome, with gentle blue eyes, and was most pathetically in love with the girl he had left behind him. Clare grew interested in him in spite of herself, and Philip was glad to see a touch of her old charm of manner return. It was only drawn out by Mr. Weymouth, never by himself; but it was pleasant to see a glimpse of the former self he had loved so dearly. He would leave them alone for the sake of seeing a smile on her face when he returned; for he noticed that she was brighter in his absence. The smile vanished at the sight of him; but he was glad to know it had been there. Weymouth's admiration for her was enthusiastic and undisguised; it was that of a chivalrous boy for a beautiful woman whom he idealizes and endows with all those virtues which he firmly believes the girl he loves possesses.

In the evenings Clare went to her cabin, for she preserved some of the habits of an invalid, and some of the weakness too. When she was in bed and he thought she could need nothing more, Philip would go up on deck again, in spite of the sharpness of the air. The nights were very cold, and few of the passengers cared to leave the saloon, so that he and Weymouth generally had the deck to themselves after dinner. On the third evening Philip found it quite deserted except by the crew. It was an intensely cold night, but very still, and the great ship which was going at full speed seemed to be motionless, so still was the water she passed through.

The effect fascinated Philip, who stood a long while looking at the pale still heavens, glittering with cold stars, and the dim waveless water. It seemed to him as though the ship were hung between the two dimnesses, that it was going nowhere, that its light would just burn out on the chilly waste, and his life and Clare's, the tragedy they were living through, would burn out with it. He almost wished it were so; that he might be freed from his responsibility, released from the heavy burden he had to bear. It grew so cold that he became numbed, and the sense of discomfort woke him to realities. He remembered that he had left Clare much longer than usual. Just as the thought came into his mind, he felt a touch on his arm. Weymouth was standing by him. The boy's blue eyes were so full of distress that Philip's mind misgave him.

"What is it?" he said.

"I think Mrs. Tempest wants you," said Weymouth.

Philip asked no more, but went instantly; and Weymouth, standing still, passed his hand over his eyes, as if to brush away from them a painful sight. But he could not. It was photographed on his brain. The dismal memory of it never quite left him, and it did him good service later on.

Philip went down, not dreaming but that Clare was in her cabin and had sent for him. Weymouth's message, however, was his own. Passing through the saloon Philip caught sight of a figure that

amazed him. It was Clare. She was alone and quiet, sitting at a table in a corner. She wore a dressing-gown and a travelling cape drawn over it; her hair was loose on her shoulders. Her eyes were wild and her cheeks flushed. She had a tall glass standing in front of her; the steward, who had just refilled it, was going slowly out of the saloon with his tray in his hand, looking back at her curiously. Philip went quickly to her, and as she saw him she lifted the glass instantly and drained it before he could reach her. The smell from it made him dizzy, remembering what it meant to her; it was rum. He wondered whether they had better go to some desert where civilization and its poisons do not exist. With a great effort he managed to speak to her very quietly, in his ordinary manner.

"You will catch cold, Clare," he said; "come back to your cabin now."

She had evidently expected something different, and was surprised. No course occurred to her but to comply; so she let him take her hand and lead her away. She went quietly with him to the door of her cabin. He saw that she must have been behaving very oddly from the way the stewards and some of the passengers were waiting about and looking round corners. But she was quiet at the moment, and he took advantage of it. She went in to her cabin before him, and he locked her in. This, however, was a mistake. The spirit was mounting to her head now and maddening her. She

began ringing the electric bell violently, and beating on the door. So he went in, and stayed with her throughout one of those one-sided scenes in which she said all and he nothing, stayed until at last she fell asleep, stupid and exhausted.

The next morning at dawn they came in sight of Gibraltar. Philip went up and looked at the wonderful great rock standing up out of the sea, with the white clouds driven across its face. What was he to do with her, what hope was there, now that she had sunk so low? Weymouth kept out of his way till the last moment, when he came to say good-by to them both. Clare, weary, heavy-eyed, and irritable, only left her cabin at the last moment. She wore a very thick veil and had muffled herself in her travelling-cloak. She said good-by to Weymouth apathetically, apparently having quite forgotten the intimacy which had sprung up between them. She did not even wish him God-speed; he leaned over the side of the ship watching them approach the rock in a little wave-tossed boat, and wondered what would be the end of this charming and beautiful woman. And then he thought, with a passion of sympathy that made his eyes dim for a moment, of Philip, who had simply gripped his hand tight at parting and said, "Good luck to you." He watched the little boat till he could see it no more. And then, by and by, the ship swung itself into its path again and steamed away from the great rock, from the low dark hills and shining shores of

Africa; and Weymouth went on to take up his own life with its hopes and joys and sorrows. Very often he thought of these people who had interested him so much, but he never saw them again.

Philip and Clare went to the great caravansera at Gibraltar where all strangers lodge, and tried to be comfortable. The cooking at this hotel is excellent, but unfortunately neither of them were at the moment sensitive to that sort of pleasure, — Clare from disorder of body, and Philip from disorder of mind. The great wide inn, so bare and sparsely furnished, seemed very dreary. Outside was sunshine and bright colors, muleteers with carts of fruit that were a joy to look at, Spanish women with the aspect of mystery which belongs to them, English officers riding fine horses, — all sorts of attractive sights and sounds. As soon as Clare seemed sufficiently rested, they went out in one of the queer curtained carriages which are a feature of Gibraltar, and drove down the long road and back again, stopping sometimes when anything interested them particularly. One such stoppage was made to look at a homeward bound P and O which came in sight and stayed her passage within reach of the rock.

"When will she start?" Clare asked the driver, who spoke the queer rock English. He told her it would probably be about five in the morning; he did not know for certain, but they knew at the hotel in case any one wanted to leave for England, and

all the couriers would know. Clare looked earnestly at the ship but said no more.

The day passed in walks and drives, in going to the hotel to meals, and a little reading of newspapers. When the evening came, Clare said she was very tired and would like to go to bed directly after dinner. Philip readily agreed; he, too, was very tired. He was relieved that Clare went to her room and settled down quietly for the night. His room opened into hers with great creaking folding-doors, and each room had a door on to the landing. He locked both these outer doors on the inside, and left the communicating door wide open. He thought this was quite safe, for Clare seemed overcome with sleep. Without any thought of immediate danger he himself went to bed with a book, intending to read. Mental anxiety had worn him out more than he knew, and he soon fell into the deep sleep of exhaustion. Clare came noiselessly into the room and looked at him. Then she approached and blew out the candle that burned beside his bed. Returning to her own room she softly closed the door between the two.

Philip was awakened by the harsh cries of the muleteers in the sunny street outside. The morning light flooded his room, making a splendid strong brightness that startled his senses which had been dulled by the dimness of English winter days; and he was broad awake in an instant. It was impossible to rest any longer, though it was still

very early. Was Clare awake, he wondered. He rose and went to the door between the two rooms, which he noticed with surprise was closed. He opened it softly and looked in. The room was all dark, and seemed doubly so by contrast with his own. The window was not only on the side of the house on which the morning sun did not shine, but it did not open upon the outer world. There was a large courtyard in the centre of the hotel, and it looked into that. There were no sounds here; it was perfectly still, and very dark. Philip was bewildered by the change from the lightness of his own room; and the silence struck him as strange when the street outside resounded with harsh, discordant, incessant noises, and was all alive and full of business. Clare's room gave him a chilled feeling as though he looked into a tomb. He could only see the outlines of the bed indistinctly, so he advanced very softly to see better. His eyes grew accustomed to the dimness, and he found that the room was not actually dark. He could see the bed plainly, when he paused half-way between it and the door. It was not only empty, but it had never been slept in. Where was Clare? He glanced quickly round and saw that her rug and her dressing-bag were not there. Hurrying back to his own room, he dressed hastily and went downstairs. The great hotel was all silent, its inmates fast asleep. He saw no one till he had crossed the central courtyard, and then, in the entrance, he found a porter and two

or three couriers dozing on benches. From the porter and one of the couriers who had been with her to the ship, Philip learned that Clare had gone on board the homeward bound P and O and that it had sailed three hours ago.

CHAPTER XXIII.

IT was the end of February, and Laurence had now become one of the tried and trusted nurses at the hospital. She was really interested in her work, and was determined to be successful in it, and so had stayed resolutely on, despite her mother's constant and despairing efforts to induce her to leave. For, of course, Mrs. Monkwell had learned the truth in time, and had now recovered from the first shock. But it seemed as if she would never become used to it, or resign herself to the situation. Laurence had not troubled herself to assert her own individuality till now, and it was a great trial to her mother. Indeed, as Jim remarked, after a flying visit home, Laurence was spoken of there in a way which would lead an impartial stranger to suppose she had been sent into penal servitude for forgery or embezzlement. Laurence found the busy life she led, its special interests and peculiar hardships, far more bearable than the idle existence she had left; and nothing would induce her to return to it, even for a day. She felt that she would break her heart with the longing which she now kept at bay, if she did but enter the old house and garden. All other memories of them had been blotted out, save the dreadful one that it was there she had faced the

fact that she loved, and loved hopelessly; that for her the world was empty. It was just as empty now, and life as hopeless, but it was possible to live because of ceaseless occupation, of constant doing for others, of continual mental effort. She knew she could never go back to the dull world peopled with dolls, in which Philip Tempest had arisen, a living figure, and taught her the value and glory of life. She and Jim had decided that she should stay out her term as a nurse, and then study for a medical degree. Her talent was undoubted; Jim recognized it as being decidedly greater than his own, and he promised to help her, and to back her up in the fight she would have at home. So, with a busy life of ceaseless effort mapped out before her, Laurence felt it just possible to go on, and was upheld too by the feeling that she was no longer unworthy, that if Philip could see how the hours of her life were passed, he would approve of her; that she had the chance before her of actual accomplishment, and of earning distinction by her work. That was the goal she kept in view; and she knew that all other life was shut away from her forever. To her Philip Tempest was the only man in the world. In the silence of her heart he was her constant companion and critic. She, more or less unconsciously, considered with regard to everything she did and every effort she made, what he would say and think of it. This become so deep and constant a habit that she felt it would be with

her always. Philip was not to be her earthly companion, but he could be her spiritual one. This was how it seemed to her, and she was resigned. She had heard nothing of the Tempests, and she preferred it should be so. Her life lay before her like a straight road where progress, the result of effort, is marked; but where are no shaded resting-places, no fairy-like homes by the way to dwell in even for a while, nor any visions of far heights to draw the dreamer on to dizzy climbing, and fill him with high hopes. All was plain and level. Laurence did not repine, now that she had schooled herself, so long as she could see that every hour would be filled with work. That questioning brain of hers, that passionate heart, must never have time to arraign the Law that governs and denies us. This was how it was to be, and how it would be. She saw no chance of any sort of change; her fate was fixed immutably.

And while with set face and silenced heart she was going quietly on her ordered way, something she never dreamed of or looked for was coming to her from without. The storm, of which she had formed a vital part, was only waiting its hour to seize on her again and sweep her out of herself. That time was near.

One dark and chilly afternoon in the latter part of February, she was spending her half-holiday in taking another nurse's duty; for she did not care to go out. Jim was away, and in his absence she

seldom left the hospital. Cream-tarts at the tea-shop had no attraction for her; nor had the attentions of the other young doctors who lived in Jim's house, nor of Nurse Hammond's brother, a smart young counter-jumper at the large linen-draper's near the tea-shop. She found it much more interesting to sit beside the bed of a patient whom she might help, and study at the same time. She was so occupied now, having volunteered to watch an hour by a woman who was evidently dying, who knew it, and who was convulsed with terror. Mr. Brand knew she was sinking, and inevitably; he kept away from the hospital. He hated these failures. Sister Valentine came in very often, for she was nervous and anxious. It was growing dusk when she came in for the third time, and after a glance at the patient, crossed to the side where Laurence was sitting and put a note into her hand.

"The man who brought it is waiting," she said; and then, while Laurence was opening it, she turned to the bed in answer to a piteous cry from its occupant. So Laurence was left free to read the note; when she had finished it, she turned back and read it again.

COLUMBIA HOTEL, BIRCHAMPTON.

DEAR MISS MONKWELL,— Please come to see me as soon as you can. I have learned where you are with great difficulty, and am here only to see you. I trust you will be able to come at once for I am very ill.

Yours very truly,

CLARE TEMPEST.

Laurence was struck with amazement, and full of a vague sense of disaster. She rose and went to Sister Valentine.

"This is from a friend who has come here to see me. She begs me to go to her as soon as possible. What shall I say? It seems she is ill."

"You can go now if you like," said Sister Valentine. "Nurse Hammond can take this patient. I am sure you have obliged her often enough, and she has never done such a thing for you yet. Certainly go."

So Laurence hastily wrote a line saying that she would come immediately, and then went and dressed herself in her nurse's cloak and bonnet. She walked quickly away from the hospital, through the dreary Terrace and its neighborhood, down to the brighter part of the town, where the dull, uninteresting crowd gazed into the windows of brilliantly lit shops, and stared up at house fronts covered to the very roof with specimens of the cheap goods sold within. She passed through the throng that jostled her, without seeing or feeling it. Her whole being was absorbed in wondering why Clare Tempest had come to see her.

The Columbia Hotel was not quite in the centre of the town, and was much less imposing than the Grand, where stray visitors to Birchampton always went, and where the friends of Mr. Brand's patients stayed. The Grand was got up in the style of the large London and Paris hotels, whereas the

Columbia made no attempt to redeem itself from the ugliness which was an innate part of the town. It belonged to the actual permanent business life of the prosperous, commonplace city; within it was comfortable, as inns always are that entertain many "commercials," — a class that likes good fires, large easy-chairs, strong tea, and plates of hot buttered toast. From without, the Columbia appeared to be simply a very large public-house, with a good billiard-room and a great bare dining-room where a cheap "ordinary" was held every day. Laurence found she had to enter through swing doors into a large bare hall on which the bar opened all along one side. There was no porter or waiter visible, and she hesitated as to what she should do next. A moment later, and a very smartly dressed youngish man who was behind the bar saw her and came to her. He lifted his hat and asked her civilly what she wanted. This was the proprietor, a dull-eyed phlegmatic person who was making a fortune as fast as it is well possible to make one.

"Mrs. Tempest is staying here, I believe," said Laurence. "I wish to see her."

The man called to a girl who had taken his place at the bar when he left it.

"No. 8, Mary," he said briefly.

The girl was very neat and smart, quite civil, but very off-hand, as is the way with bar-maids. She led Laurence up some stairs which were uncarpeted as far as the billiard-room door, and after that

furnished very comfortably. It was a queer old-fashioned house with little staircases running up at unexpected angles to odd rooms that opened straight on to them without any landing. Up one of these went Mary, and, with a smile to Laurence, opened the door and showed her in, closed the door and ran straightway downstairs again.

Laurence found herself in a square room, very comfortably furnished in a prosaic way. The table in the centre of it was nicely laid ready for late dinner, with good linen, bright glass and silver, and some flowers. The sideboard looked gay too, with vases of flowers, fruit, decanters, and silver. The large window, which looked out on a very dreary prospect of Birchampton roofs and smoke, was filled half-way up with some very highly colored stained glass, which had a picture in it of Saint George with his foot upon the Dragon. The last gleams of daylight were made the most of by the jewels on his armor. A great fire burned in the hearth, which struck Laurence with a sense of comfort such as she had almost forgotten. At the hospital there were no fires except the one in the kitchen, the rooms being all heated by gas-stoves, invented and patented by Mr. Brand himself, and which showed no light. Two great easy-chairs were drawn up to the fire, but they were empty. Laurence thought for a moment that the room was empty, but saw directly that what she had taken for a heap of shawls only upon the sofa, really covered

a prostrate figure. A gleam of red-gold hair was caught by the firelight as the head was moved restlessly upon the pillows, and a feeble but irritable voice said, "Mary, is that you?"

"It is Laurence Monkwell," said Laurence, and she approached the sofa.

Instantly a fire seemed to flame out within the apparently apathetic woman, and changed her into one full of excitement. She sat up, threw off her shawls, and rose quickly to her feet. By the firelight, rather than by the fast fading daylight, Laurence saw that this was Clare. Her beautiful hair was carelessly rolled up, and some of it had fallen from its fastenings. She wore a loose black-silk gown that fell in straight folds from her throat to her feet. She looked strangely different from the Clare whom Laurence had last seen, perfectly appointed in her white summer dress, with roses pinned at her waist. There was something disordered about her appearance, and which, to Laurence's trained powers of observation, seemed hardly the symptoms of weakness or of illness. A pang of pity made her manner very gentle.

"Don't get up please, Mrs. Tempest," she said; "you told me you are ill."

"Never mind that," said Clare, "I want to talk, and I can't talk lying down."

She put her hand up to the crimson-shaded gaslight which hung over the table, and turned it high. The shade only cast a ruddy glow over the ceiling,

from under it a crude, strong light illuminated the two women's faces. There was an instant's pause, during which they surveyed each other. Laurence was thinner and paler than she had been last summer; yet she looked perfectly healthy, and her face had acquired a new beauty in expression. The mystery was there which comes of habitually veiled feeling; and a fixed purpose had strengthened the look of character. Clare saw at a glance that the cold, indifferent girl she had known was ripening into a woman whose beauty was of that higher type which lasts as long as life does. Laurence was amazed at the revelation made by the strong light; it scarcely seemed possible that these few months could have worked such havoc as she saw before her. The vivid, peach-like flush upon the cheeks, which had been one of Clare's charms, had deepened into a sort of purplish crimson, and it no longer faded softly away into the cream of the neck and forehead, but ended abruptly with a blotchy effect. And that which had been, indeed, like cream against the rose-flush, had a yellow tinge upon it now. The eyes were dull and blood-shot, and wrinkles born of discontent and ill-humor were creasing the skin about them. Clare had been like an exquisite picture; the picture was ruined, its colors coarsened, its lines vulgarized, its fine detail blurred.

"Come and sit by the fire," she said, "I am very cold." She took one of the easy-chairs, and put her feet on the fender, drawing her loose gown round

her in such a way that her form seemed shapeless. This looked to Laurence very strange. She remembered well the rich outlines of Clare's beautiful figure, which it seemed to her would have shown its grace through any disguise. But it was entirely concealed now, and Laurence regarded with wonder the dark, huddled figure before her. She experienced the same bewilderment as to identity that troubled Philip so greatly sometimes that it seemed to him as if he were passing through a waking dream, a daily nightmare. Was this indeed Clare, or some one strangely like her, masquerading in her character? Philip had felt this so often and so deeply, that he had become habituated to the idea that if it was Clare's body it was not her soul which was acting under such circumstances as these.

"You don't ask me how I come to be here alone," said Clare.

"I did not know you were alone," replied Laurence.

"Well, I am; utterly, entirely. I escaped from Philip at Gibraltar, and got back to England without his knowing of it."

"Does n't he know?" exclaimed Laurence, in surprise and some alarm.

"No. How should he? I don't suppose he has got back yet."

"You will let him know you are here," said Laurence, quickly. "He will be very anxious!"

"You shall tell him," said Clare. "I want you to go and see him for me."

"I!" exclaimed Laurence.

"Yes, you," answered Clare. "You took everything from me — "

"I!" again exclaimed Laurence, this time interrupting Clare. She half rose from her chair as she spoke. Clare leaned forward and put her hand on her arm, pushing her back. She gazed at her with eyes that now showed a strange, bright, burning devil leaping to life within them.

"Yes, you," she said, also repeating herself; "never forget that. Never forget that in our tragedy, — for a tragedy it is doomed to be, one way or the other. It is you who have done it; it is you who have taken everything I cared for from me. I never really valued anything in life but Philip's love."

She drew back as she said this, and huddled up in her large chair, looking barely human, so formless was she. She remained silent for a minute or two, regarding Laurence with a fixed gaze which held her silent too. But, indeed, she was like one paralyzed, struck dumb with amazement, and something like fear. She wondered whether Clare was mad, and then wondered why she should think so, when she did but speak the truth! Yet she may have been nearer to the mark herself than she supposed, for to speak the plain truth is in itself a sort of madness in this world of compromise. Clare had reached a condition in which compromise no longer exists. She had one great stake to play for; nothing else

mattered. She was desperate as a person who is fighting for dear life, and to whom the social graces have no longer any meaning. It was possible to her to say things which she would not even have thought a few months ago. And it was also possible for her to say them with scarcely any consideration of the suffering she might cause; so far as she realized it, the power to inflict pain gave her a sense of satisfaction. She was so possessed by the idea of her own misery, of her awful closeness to the dreadful realities of life, that it was a certain pleasure to make another person suffer a little. She was glad, therefore, to see Laurence start as if stung, and to her clouded mind there appeared to be a sort of grandeur in her own greater misery. She was like the patients at the hospital, each certain no other is so ill, or like the Italian beggars, proud of their sores. There was a sort of fiendish amusement in her eyes as she looked at Laurence. It was nothing to her, or rather it was something pleasant to her, that what she was doing now was like the burning of a flower.

Laurence drew back into herself and waited, setting her face like a stone the while. She had never found her habit of wearing a mask more valuable than now.

"Nothing else — nothing else," Clare went on after a moment. "I never cared for anything else in the whole world. I have known Philip ever since I was a baby; and from the moment I understood

anything I wanted him to love me, and I have wanted that ever since. He did love me till you came. He never has since. Can you wonder that I propose to put the burden of this thing on you?"

"What thing?" asked Laurence.

"Of my despair," said Clare, in a lower voice; she changed as she began to think of herself, and became full of fear. It was a fear so absolute that it affected the person with her, even though, like Laurence now, they were entirely ignorant of the cause of this terror. There is perhaps nothing so alarming as a person who is afraid.

"What do you mean?" said Laurence. "What is there that can make you despair? Is it your illness?"

"I will tell you," answered Clare, gloomily. "I intend to tell you. I came here to do so. But it 's a hard task. I have been alone with thoughts that have frightened me for so long that it is better to put them into words."

She rose from her chair, went to the sideboard, and poured a glass full of brandy from a decanter that stood there. Then she paused a moment, leaning with her hand upon the table. In a few minutes the spirit brought back her strength and courage. She drew herself up, and then came back to her chair.

"Ever since I can remember," she went on, speaking quickly but steadily now, "I have been tossed to and fro between two ways of life, between

two ideas of life, like a ball or a shuttlecock. My father was what is called bad, an evil liver. I am obliged to say it, though I loved him dearly. He died while I was little more than a child. I remember his death — it was awful! Ah, God! to think that there can be such awful deaths! Well, never mind that — it unnerves me — my mother was good — good, sweet, kind — I believe she was as nearly perfect as any one can be. My father cried aloud for me when he was dying, and if he had not, I do not think she would have taken me into his room. But she did at last, and she said, 'You will never forget it, child — perhaps it may help you by and by!' I remember so well the look in his eyes — I have been told that I am like him —" she rose and looked at herself in the glass over the mantelpiece, then dropped back into her chair, putting up her hands for a second with a gesture as if to push away an awful thought. Then she went on rather more slowly, "Those were the two that played ball with me in my childhood. I loved them both, but I loved my mother infinitely the more. I adored her. Yet my father's spirit was strong in me. It led me to do and say many things that troubled her gentle soul. You will say I was not consistent. I was not. I did not care for one way of living more than for another. But I loved her, and tried to please her in spite of myself. You must remember while you listen to me that I am only an ordinary woman of the old-fashioned sort. It is not natural to me to

think for myself. I have been forced to do so lately, but I hate it. You belong to the new order. You are a woman that thinks and decides. You have had the strength to choose a difficult task and stick to it. You are at no one's beck and call; you are not even the subject of your own heart. I know all about it, I have read about it whether I would or no; for books are full of nothing but this new woman. It is because you are of this kind that Philip loved you."

She paused, for her voice had lost some of its strength. She rose, after a moment, and went to the sideboard again. Laurence scarcely noticed what she did. It was difficult to hear such words as these and not be troubled by a tumultuous heart. Clare came back and began to speak quickly.

"It was my father and mother when I was a child; it was Philip and Leslie when I began to be a woman. It has been Philip and Leslie ever since. A game at ball — I have never been anything but a plaything. Philip tried to make me good. Why is goodness so negative? When Leslie tried to make me bad, it was a very different matter. A few days undid the work of years. It is like unravelling a piece of knitting, — it takes so long to do and so much patience; it is undone so quickly and so easily, and in the reckoning of the world the long work of patience counts for so little, and the quick undoing for so much. Why is that? I have asked a great many questions lately that I cannot answer,

and it seems as if no one can answer them for me. I have had so much time to think — so much time alone. How still you sit and listen! I like you for that. It is not every one who can sit still and listen to such talk as mine; for I have nothing pleasant to tell you about. It is all blank despair. I have no hope — only one ; and it is because I am determined to save myself by that means if I can, that I am here, humbling myself to you. For it is that, though I don't feel it so now. I should have done so a very little while ago. I should have thought it was impossible; but it has become possible. It is difficult, I admit. The preliminaries — the talking up to it is all easy enough; but when it comes to the point — well that 's another matter."

She went back to the sideboard. Laurence watched her with the stupefied gaze of fascination and wonder. Suddenly it occurred to her that she ought to try and interfere in some way.

"Is your maid with you?" she asked suddenly.

"My maid? I have n't got one now. Philip has sent them all away. No, I am here quite alone; but they take very good care of me here."

She answered absently, as if she was not thinking of what was being said. Coming slowly back to her chair, she returned to her huddled up position in it, and, fixing eager, burning eyes on Laurence, went on steadily.

"I am coming to the point," she said, "I have something to tell Philip which cannot be put off any

longer; and I dare not tell him myself. I want you to go and tell him for me. I want you to use your influence with him. He would do for you what he would do for no one else; what he would not do for me now. I dare not speak to him. I believe I should drive him away before I had won him over — that he would be horrified and would not listen to me. In you lies my only hope. You must go to him at once — to-morrow — if he is back. I sent to find out as soon as I got here, and knew I could see you. We shall know to-night or to-morrow morning. I rely absolutely on you. The moment he is back, you must go to him. You must tell him that I was not able to endure the ordeal you and he put upon me. It was too much — you drove me mad with jealousy. I turned to another who had loved me as long and as well, in his own way, as Philip. I thought it might bring me comfort. It has brought me misery. Very soon I shall be a mother. Philip has longed for a child; there is one coming, but it is not his. He must acknowledge it, or the shame will kill me. I have borne all I can — I cannot bear that. You must tell him so. You must implore him to stand by me. You will, I know you will."

She had slipped to the ground, and was kneeling, a strange, formless, disordered-looking figure, with her hands grasping Laurence's cloak. There was a moment's pause. Laurence looked at the clock that ticked on the mantelpiece.

"I must go," she said; "my time is up. I will think this all over and come to see you again to-morrow."

"Oh, no, no!" cried Clare, starting to her feet. In a moment she was changed from the piteous creature she had become, in making this appeal, to a desperate woman. She turned suddenly, hurried to the door and locked it. The quick movement brought her hair all tumbling on her shoulders. She pushed it back from her face and turned again to Laurence.

"You shall not go till you have promised me," she said. "You must promise me or I will kill myself this very night. I cannot face the thought of what I shall have to endure otherwise. There is no knowing what Philip might do. He has such terrible ideas; he is so moral; he has no feeling, no pity. He might divorce me. He would say it was his duty. What would become of me then! What should I sink to? I have sunk far enough. One step further, and I must be in hell. I am nearly there now. Of course I shall go there when I die. O God! how afraid I am! I dare not think of that now. I must save myself if I can — and my child. Think of the misery and shame of it if Philip divorced me! He would have no difficulty — I have been very reckless. I have been mad. You must go to him for me. You must say to him: We have made this woman suffer; now, though so late, we must save her from the worst. You must not leave him till he has promised to make no

scandal, and to acknowledge the child. Swear to me that you will not leave him till he has promised."

"I have not deserved this," said Laurence, in a voice so full of agony that any but a blind and hardened egotist must have pitied her.

"Swear it," repeated Clare, rising to her feet. She stood beside Laurence, gazing on her with burning eyes. Laurence looked at her steadily, saw the wreck of mind and soul and body, and wondered what lay before so poor and pitiful a wretch. A perfect passion of compassion seized upon her for the moment, and made her act like a divine creature, without any thought of herself.

"I swear it," she said. Clare turned away with a deep sigh of relief.

"Then I can rest, for I know you will keep your word."

She was evidently worn out. She went to the sofa and sat down; and then her head sank upon the cushions. Just then there came a brisk knock at the door. Laurence went and unlocked it, and Mary, the smart bar-maid, came bustling in, carrying a soup tureen.

Laurence was very late already, and dared not delay a moment longer. Clare seemed already to be asleep; so, without making any attempt to speak to her again or to say good-by, she left the room and found her way out of the hotel, and hurried through the crowded streets back to the hospital.

CHAPTER XXIV.

IT seemed to Laurence that night as if Philip's voice spoke to her. She heard it as she walked home through the noise of the streets; she heard it in the silence of the night.

"I must shield her with my very life from shame and disgrace."

That was what he had said; and what Philip said he meant. She never doubted that for a second or a fraction of one. He meant it to the full. He was now searching for Clare, with the one object of doing everything possible to shield her from herself and the consequences of her own acts. By degrees Laurence began to wonder at herself that she should ever have rebelled against the task set her. Detestable as it was, it yet was inevitable. Moreover she knew that it was part of the life she had been inspired to live, that she should do all even to the uttermost that was expected of her, that she should respond to any demand made upon her, however exacting. It was with the dawn that she recognized this, and her own shortcoming in having resisted her fate, and resented its bitterness, even for a moment. When she came to the breakfast-table, Nurse Hammond said to her, "Why, Nurse Smith,

you 've got great black saucers round your eyes, and you look like a ghost. Oh, don't be ill, please."

"I don't think I shall be ill," said Laurence, with a smile. The nurses had all learned to like her in their different ways. Most of them valued her as a quite priceless fag. Nurse Hammond was fond of her, and was just sensible enough to recognize that Laurence had capacities and powers she herself did not possess.

When breakfast was over, and all the well patients had had their second cups of tea, Laurence went to speak to Sister Valentine in her sitting-room. She told her she might have to ask for a day away, perhaps two, that it depended on her sick friend; Sister Valentine made no difficulty. It was the first privilege of the kind that Nurse Smith had ever asked for, while the other nurses were always wanting extra holidays. And Sister Valentine had so much responsibility that she could not but value highly such a steady worker as Laurence had proved herself to be. So it was easily settled that she should go whenever she received the summons. She went to her work then, and tried to be absorbed in it as usual. It was difficult to be so; her thoughts were all the while with Philip. No one detected her absent-mindedness, however. She was sufficiently well skilled now to be perfectly well able to do her work mechanically, so long as no special emergency arose; and none did arise, fortunately for her, else the strain might have been too great. She had

done simple, straightforward work till about eleven o'clock, steadily. Sister Valentine came into the room where she was busy, holding a letter. She knew the summons was come. Slowly opening the note, she very quickly read it. It was a mere scrawl, roughly written crossways on the paper, with no beginning and no signature.

"He is in London at Tempest House. I have telegraphed him that you are coming at once to bring him news of me. Please don't delay."

So it was a straightforward task set before her, with no alternative open, without even any pause. She turned to Sister Valentine.

"I must go to town by the next train."

"You will catch the 11.50," said Sister Valentine; "just go, I 'll send Nurse Hammond here. You will get back to-night without fail, won't you?"

"Shall I have time?" said Laurence. "I must look at the trains. I have to go to Kensington. Once there, half an hour is all I want, if the person is in whom I have to see."

"You can manage that quite well, I am sure; for there are plenty of trains back. The A. B. C. is in my sitting-room; but don't stay to look at it, you might lose the train."

So Laurence hurried away, quickly took off her nurse's uniform, and replaced it with the plain travelling dress in which she had come to Birchampton.

The other nurses all looked better in their uniforms than in anything else, and learned to know it; in ordinary dress they became once more mere shopwalker's sisters, and young women who should have been housemaids. They all looked well in the clean print-dress and long cloak, and, thus dressed, the difference was not so marked. None of them loved her more for the fact that in her ordinary dress she looked like a lady.

It was a strange journey for her. She had never left Birchampton since she came there, except for the little outings she took with Jim. If she had been in a happier mood, it would have been a delight to her to look at the beautiful country she passed through. But her eyes wandered over the brown fields and bare trees that showed their outlines so clearly and softly against the gray-blue sky, without seeing them, without noticing the signs of coming spring which, at another time, would have delighted her. Now she could think only of the interview before her, of what words she could choose, and how she could say them. And while she thought of all this, she knew also perfectly well that it was useless, that she would depend so much on Philip it was in vain to make for herself any programme. With any one else in the world, it would be easy for her to say just such words as she should choose beforehand; but not with Philip. He always created a new atmosphere and a new world for her the moment she came into his presence. It made her quiver to

think of this, and of how soon, how very soon, she would be there.

The keenness of her feeling made the time pass quickly. It seemed to her that she reached London before she was ready. However, she did not delay a moment, once there. Getting into a hansom, she told the man to drive to Tempest House. It was a long way, and she once more set herself to try and think out what she had to do; but it was useless. She began to feel a little dazed. It was easiest just to look idly at the streets and the people, and she surrendered herself to this mental indolence at last, trusting in Providence. It seemed to her that she was moving in a dream, and this sense of unreality increased on her as she drove up to the well-remembered door in the dim haziness of a dim London February afternoon. As the cab stopped, the door opened and Philip came out, a letter in his hand. As of old, he was carrying his letters himself to the pillar box on the other side of the road.

There are plenty of human beings who do not love at all, who know absolutely nothing of the divine passion; these are the common herd. There are many who interpret the word according to their own lights. They care only for that which belongs to them, or which they can hope to obtain for their own, whether it be money, men, or women. Their idea of love is simply possession. There are others, the few, to whom love is as a sacred flame, to be tended with utter devotion, something greater than

religion, more beautiful than art, more righteous than virtue. It is to them like the first taste of pure divinity, of that which encircles eternally this commonplace, unsatisfactory round of materialism in which we live. Laurence felt, when she saw Philip standing there, like a sad priestess whose god has to suffer, and whose fate it is to bring to the altar the message of sacrifice.

A servant came to the door behind him, and he gave the man the letter he held, himself coming to help Laurence out of her cab. She held the money for the fare in her hand, and reached up to give it to the driver. Philip took it from her and placed it in his hand. Then he led the way in.

"You know Clare is not at home?" he said.

"I have come from her," answered Laurence.

"You have come from her — are you the messenger she said would come to me? She gave me no idea whom to expect. James," turning to the servant (they were in the hall now, and the man was closing the front door), "bring some tea here at once."

A bright fire was burning in the hearth; Philip turned one of the large oak chairs a little more towards it, and settled a big silk cushion in the back, "Sit here," he said. She did so, realizing for the first time that she was cold and rather tired.

"Where is Clare?" asked Philip, standing in front of the fire and looking down at her.

"At Birchampton," said Laurence; "staying at

an hotel there; she is quite alone, and I am afraid she is very ill."

"What *can* have made her go to Birchampton!" exclaimed Philip, who was utterly puzzled.

"I believe she came there to see me," replied Laurence. "I have been there now for seven months. I suppose you did not know. Mrs. Tempest must have found out from my mother, and that with difficulty, I should think, for she does not like talking about it. I am a nurse in Culverton Brand's hospital."

"What! the great surgeon?"

"Yes."

"Do you like it?"

"Yes, it interests me."

"Have you been there all that time?"

"Yes, my contract is for three years."

"Shall you stay it out?"

"I expect to."

"Do you like nursing for its own sake?"

"Not very much. The same ground has to be gone over so often. I would prefer to be a doctor. I shall study for that I think."

"For medicine? Should n't you prefer surgery?"

"Oh, yes, but there 's no opportunity."

They had both forgotten Clare for the moment. There was a second's pause, and then Philip recalled himself to the situation and said, "And Clare found you there? And she has sent you to me. It is all very strange. What is her message?"

Just then the servant returned, and so the difficult moment was postponed. He carried a tea-tray; and Laurence found that she was glad to see it, for she had had nothing since the early breakfast at the hospital. She took the cup Philip prepared and handed to her, feeling grateful both for the tea itself, and for the pause it gave in the conversation. For Philip could ask no more while James was there, fiddling about over trifles as servants love to do when there is anything interesting going on. Laurence had emptied her cup before he was fairly out of hearing, down the long hall and out through the door that led to the kitchens. Nothing was said till then. Philip had poured out a cup of tea for himself, but had not touched it; Laurence put her empty cup upon the tray. And then she spoke, he standing by the table, but forgetting his cup altogether as he listened to her words.

"Clare's message," she said, "is one so painful and so difficult that she had not the courage to give it you herself, even by writing. She dared not. She fears you. She is afraid you might act on what would perhaps be your first impulse, and throw her off without waiting to listen to her cry for mercy. I do not know if this would be so; but her terror is so great that I could not refuse her when I found she had decided that I was the person to bring it you —"

"If it is so painful, why did she choose you?" exclaimed Philip, interrupting her.

"I would rather not give you her reason," said Laurence. She was holding the arm of the chair she sat in fast, with one hand; as she said this, she hurt her fingers, so tight was her grip. She did not notice it at the time, not till afterwards, when she was surprised to find that her hand was bruised and tender. "It does not matter," she went on; "it does not concern what I have to tell you. That has to do entirely with Clare. Mr. Tempest, my mission is simply to beg you to be merciful to her, merciful to the uttermost. When I remembered your own words to me about her, that you were prepared to shield her with your life from shame and disgrace, then I knew I should not ask you this in vain."

"Shame and disgrace!" repeated Philip, in a low voice of pain. "What has she done? What can she have done? Surely I have drunk that cup to the full — "

"No," said Laurence, "you have yet to drain the dregs of it. Promise me that you will fulfil your words, that you will not turn from her, no matter what she has done."

"You know I shall fulfil them," was Philip's answer. "But my imagination fails me, I can picture nothing further than what I have already endured. Surely I have stood beside her through every possible scene of shame, through every form of degradation. You can have nothing new to tell me. I do not suppose any one who has not lived through it can even guess at the miserable life led

by a man chained as I am. It cannot be called life; it is one long endurance. Never to feel safe for a single moment, never to know what will happen next, what horror will come; to see the woman one has loved lost utterly to all sense of beauty, to all the joy of life, to every great possibility that it contains. It is an awful thing, marriage under such conditions as these. It is paralyzing. To live a useful life, even an honorable one, so manacled, is like carrying a weight heavier than one's self up a steep hill. But why should I speak of it to you, who know it all, who have seen it all! I only say there cannot be more."

"There is," said Laurence, "more than you have borne, more than you could imagine having to bear. Clare has sunk into the deep waters. You can never draw her out from them; but you can protect her from the world and its cruelty. That is what she is in such terror of. And she is so aware of her guilt that she dare not come to you. She has been untrue to you, and untrue to herself. I have to ask you to shield her; I know that you will do it."

A painful pause followed. Philip said nothing, but stood still, staring down at the cup of tea vacantly. In it he saw, as he might have seen in a crystal, Clare's face. Her eyes looked at him with that expression of fear and dislike which he had seen in them sometimes. He saw, too, pages of the past illuminated and made plain. Much had become intelligible which had perplexed him. Laurence

sat still as a statue, yet suffering torments of apprehension, wondering what he would say, dreading lest he should ask her more. At last he put an end to the suspense she was in by speaking quite simply.

"I will go to her at once," he said. Laurence gave a sigh of great relief. How much lighter he made her task than a man one degree less perfectly bred would have done! She felt rested and refreshed by the sense of complete reliability which he gave her. He fulfilled her ideal of what a man should be; and love cannot be fed with any sweeter food than this fulfilment.

"Where is she staying?" he went on. "She did not give me any address."

"The Columbia Hotel, Birchampton," answered Laurence. "Now I must go. I must catch the next train back if possible; and I think I shall if I go at once."

"Are you going straight back now?" exclaimed Philip, in some dismay. "It will tire you very much. Are you obliged to go?"

"Oh, yes," replied Laurence, "absolutely. I shall not be tired."

"I will come by the same train," said Philip, suddenly. "I need not wait for anything; what I want can be sent after me. I will send for a cab."

He went away, only for a moment, and gave some directions. Laurence, who was a little anxious now about her train, rose and went to the door. Philip

came hurrying to her, putting on his overcoat as he came, and James following him with hat and stick.

"There is generally a cab in the road here," he said; and as the servant opened the door one passed, and was stopped. And so, in a few moments, Laurence found herself once more driving with Philip. It recalled those other drives with him so vividly to her mind,— the one to the Temperance meeting, and the one to Westminster Abbey. Each one had been an event in her life; this was perhaps the greatest. They said scarcely anything on the way; the sense of rest in being able to be silent together without impoliteness came upon them both. At the station they found they were in good time. Philip found a carriage that they liked, and leaving Laurence in it went for his ticket. He soon came back laden with evening papers. Laurence smiled as she looked them over, noticing that they were all Liberal. She took one up and began to read, and Philip did the same. Both were soon buried in their papers, and yet each was full of the overpowering delight of the other's companionship. Presently Philip began to talk about some questions of the day; and in a moment they were deep in one of their old discussions, which to both were such delightful memories. Talks of this kind cannot be put upon paper or written down in any way even in the most intimate diary. They are too light, intangible, discursive. You might as well try to record a swallow's flight.

Unfettered thought is very bird-like in its movements, darting hither and thither and passing quickly on. What is so enchanting as a personal experience in the contact with another mind which has the same breadth of wing, the same power of movement, and the same desire of it, and yet is absolutely independent and individual. Association such as this holds in it the keenest joy of living, when it is mingled with the pleasure of physical contact. Broadly speaking, there are three parts of the nature in a fully developed human being which demand sympathy and satisfaction: matter, mind, and soul, — the physical, the mental, the spiritual. When these three are satisfied, then love is glorious and perfect. As a rule, love or sympathy exist only in one of these parts of the nature, and a man like Philip is divided in his affections almost invariably by the need he has of a beautiful woman to look at and to touch, and of an intellectual man to talk to. Hitherto, he had been so divided, and he was now tasting the infinite joy of satisfying both these needs at once. There was yet another profound delight which made a part of his pleasure; he hardly knew it himself as yet, for it was something which passed beyond any hope he had ever had of enjoyment in this world. It was the satisfaction of the deepest sympathy; of that which arises between two souls which touch. He could not be expected to understand that, or to have dreamed of its possibility, it is so rare an experience. He only knew that this

badly-lit, close railway-carriage, which was carried screeching through dark tunnels and across tracks of dim, invisible country, was to him as the most admirable chamber in an enchanted palace. For him it literally was this, he not being limited to pure material facts for his sensation, but keenly sensitive to all that lies beyond and without them.

As for Laurence, she only knew that she lived. Away from Philip, she endured and was strong; but she did not live, as now, in every fibre of her body, in every part of the higher being which was usually companionless, solitary, unaroused.

They were nearing their journey's end, when a pause came in their talk, and a silence fell between them. Laurence leaned back in her corner, and looked out into the dark country; her mind was tossed between thoughts awakened by this last hour, and the effort to recall herself to what she was returning to. Her gloved hands lay loosely clasped in her lap; suddenly she was startled by the feeling of a very gentle hand laid upon them, encompassing them. She looked quickly round to see Philip leaning forward, his eyes fixed on her. How they shone and glittered! They looked like stars shining in the dimness.

"If Fate had given you to me," he said, "I might have been of use in my generation. But it has chosen to test my strength in another way; and it is only cowards who complain."

He drew back, for the train was steaming into the station. A moment later, and they were amid all the bustle of arrival. Philip saw Laurence off in one cab to the hospital, and then he took another and drove to the Columbia Hotel.

CHAPTER XXV.

LAURENCE drove back to the hospital in a turmoil of thought and feeling such as she had never experienced in all her life before. After all, sensation being all we know of as actual fact, such moments as these, of agonizingly keen feeling, are the mile-stones of our lives. We may be married, make a fortune or lose one, die even, and not feel like this. Perhaps the scientist, when he has discovered a new element, is nearer such a condition than any one else. Yet I doubt if even Professor Ramsay, when he recently announced his discovery of helium, felt as entirely filled with new knowledge as did Laurence now. She had scarcely uttered a word since Philip laid his hand on hers; she had scarcely lifted her eyes, and had held her mouth firmly in its most rigid lines. That was the only safety. He did not ask her to leave her own life and enter his in spite of all; and had she only looked at him her eyes must have said, "I am yours." He had stirred the pulses of her being so that they beat noisily and gave her no peace. What was she to do? Go on the dull level road she had marked out for herself till the merciful end of life came and released her? That was all it would be,

even if she worked well and achieved distinction. She would do that, yes, of course; he should not love unworthily. But it was not possible, she could not go on without him. It was a sacrifice she could not make, however it might be demanded of her. Why should his life be ruined and wasted by the wretched woman whose vice made her fall to the lowest depths possible? It was not right; it was unjust, unfair. And yet she herself had but just won his promise to suffer all from Clare and not punish her. It seemed to Laurence that she had been mad to do this. She never could have done it if he had ever laid his hand on hers. At least, so it seemed to her now that her mood was so changed by his touch, which had left a fever in her blood. Then she had been acting according to her idea of duty. Now duty had no longer any meaning for her; she was swayed by love only. Why should he be sacrificed, made a recluse, denied to society and to public life, his home a prison, his daily life a misery? — he, who deserved all that the world could give him. It was intolerable. How happy she could make him if she might, if she dare! She had to press her hands tight together, to bite her lip, to bear the pleasure of this thought; it was so sharp, it hurt as pain does. A vision passed before her, — a dazzling, blinding vision of what life might be; it passed, or she would have fainted. The cab drew up at the door of the hospital; she was glad of the necessity for movement. She got out, paid the

man, and went in at the door which was standing open. Sister Valentine was in the hall, talking to some one who was going out. She smiled when she saw Laurence, "I 'm glad you 're got back, Nurse Smith," she said. "The others have not done supper; go and have some, do, you look tired."

Laurence only smiled an answer and passed through the hall. She did not go out to the kitchen, but went upstairs quietly to the nurses' dressing-room. She knew it would be empty now, and she wanted a few moments alone. Entering the hospital had somehow altered her state, brought her into a more practical one. Her vision vanished utterly; and she recognized it as the delirium of the passionate love that had wakened within her so fiercely. She saw that she could not be any help to Philip, except as his friend; any recognition of the love that burned between them like a flame would only darken his life more, create scandal and difficulty, and shut him off more than ever from the world. "What a *vile* social system ours is!" she exclaimed in the freedom of the dark, silent little dressing-room. "How vile, how immoral, how bad it is!" She could have cried aloud in her anger; but she kept herself still for fear of being disturbed. Feeling her way in the dark to where her box stood, she sat down on it, and remained there silent for some minutes, her head bowed, her hands tightly clasped. She was resolutely facing the situation, going over all that had happened, repeating again to

herself all that had been said. She walked again through the dark places in which she had been. As she did so a sudden thought came upon her, struck her like a flash of light, startled her so that she rose to her feet. "Oh, what have I put upon him," she said, "it is monstrous! Clare's child, if it should be a boy, would be his heir, — the heir he had so wished for. That child, with its awful heredity! — Clare's and Leslie's! What an iniquity! The child of such parents to bear his name, to inherit his possessions, to have all the privileges it would have had were it his own! What a shameful burden to put upon a man of stainless life! And I have done this," said Laurence to herself, "who love him."

Her moment of solitude was over. She heard two of the nurses coming upstairs. She felt round in the dark for her hat, and pretended to be hanging it up, so as to turn her back to them, for she did not know what her face was like.

"What, no light!" exclaimed Nurse Hammond, who was one of the two that came in. She found some matches and lit the gas.

"Why, Nurse Smith, here in the dark!" she said, seeing Laurence.

"My head aches," said Laurence; "I have been to London, and it is rather tiring."

"You want some supper," said Nurse Hammond, who was fond of her, in her way, and who was really kind-hearted. "It 's not cleared away; come down.

A cup of cocoa will do you good — or shall I bring it to you here?"

"Oh, no, thank you," said Laurence, a little touched in her misery by the girl's kindness, "I will come down."

Nurse Hammond went with her, and got some hot cocoa from the cross cook, and some bread and butter. Laurence took it, and was glad of it. Nurse Hammond sat and talked with her, and Laurence felt the companionship a relief. Her own thoughts were unbearable; she felt as if she would be afraid ever to be alone again. They were just rising to leave the table and go upstairs, when a loud knock sounded at the front door.

"I know that is for me," said Laurence, in a low voice. Something told her that it was a message of distress from Philip.

It was a note to her, inclosing one to Mr. Brand. He begged both to come at once to Clare, who was terribly ill.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LAURENCE went straight to Sister Valentine with the letters, and asked her to send to Mr. Brand, and to let her go to the hotel.

"I can't let you go, I 'm afraid," said Sister Valentine. "Number two cannot be left alone at night. You can go in the morning, but not to stay, unless Mr. Brand gives you permission. I 'll telephone to him at once, and if he is at home he will go to the hotel directly, and call here for the letter on his way."

This she did. Laurence went upstairs to her patient, who was convalescent, but too weak to be left for long together. She determined not to undress, for she thought some further summons might come, and she might be allowed to go. So she sat down in the chair beside her patient's bed, and talked to her a little, and soothed her to sleep. And then she sat in silence, and waited and thought.

In about an hour she heard Mr. Brand's carriage drive up to the door. He came in. Sister Valentine had been sitting up for him. This was part of her duty. He was usually sent for to his hospital, not to his private house, and if the summons came at night Sister Valentine had to telephone to him, and then give him the letter.

Philip, distracted though he was, had been sensible enough to mention Laurence in his letter, and ask if she might be allowed to come and nurse Clare.

"They want Nurse Smith," said Mr. Brand. "If she is up, I 'll take her with me."

"We can't spare her at night, sir," said Sister Valentine.

"Oh, nonsense, you must," said Mr. Brand; "there 's nobody dying just now. I can't wait while she dresses; but if she 's ready I 'll take her. Just go and see, and be quick."

Sister Valentine was quick by nature, else Mr. Brand would never have chosen her as his lieutenant, and working under him had made her doubly so. She wasted no time in further protest, but ran upstairs, and in a moment was by Laurence's chair, so softly that the sleeping patient heard nothing.

"Are you ready to go?" she asked. "Mr. Brand will take you if you are."

"But what will you do without me?" asked Laurence.

"I don't know, the best we can. As Mr. Brand says, there 's nobody dying. Quick, don't keep him waiting."

Laurence ran up to the dressing-room, which luckily was empty, so that no one stayed her with questions, put on her nurse's cloak and bonnet, and ran down again. She went straight into the hall, where Mr. Brand was standing, reading certain

memoranda on a slate which Sister Valentine wrote for him every day. He turned as Laurence came through the baize door.

"I am glad you are ready, Miss Monkwell," he said; "these are friends of yours, I understand, and they seem very anxious you should go to them. Of course I don't know yet whether it is a case for me; if it is not, the other doctors here won't like to have one of my nurses. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly, sir," said Laurence, briefly, preserving her nurse's manner and mode of address in spite of his addressing her by her own name, to the great interest of Sister Valentine, who was standing in the doorway.

They went outside, where Mr. Brand's shabby brougham waited for them. Like most great surgeons, he had a passion for horses, and drove splendid animals, bred by himself on his own land outside the town; but he had no idea that a fine horse looked out of place in a dirty old carriage, so that his "turn-out" was quite one of the sights of Birchampton. The drive to the Columbia Hotel took but a few minutes behind the fast-trotting mare that he kept for night work, so that there was little or nothing said on the way. Laurence was glad of this, she feared so that he might ask her something about Clare; but he did not. He was much too wise and clever a man to trouble himself with any evidence but that of his own senses.

At the Columbia the world seemed to be just

waking up. At the hospital it was all asleep, and this was practically felt to be the middle of the night; for patients often woke in pain just before dawn and roused their nurses. No one but Sister Valentine had known of Laurence's departure, for all the rest were either on night-duty or in their beds. But here was uproar, life, a great deal of talking, a blaze of light, and, as the swing-doors opened, an overpowering smell of beer, spirits, and tobacco. It made Laurence feel sick for a moment, for she was tired, though she did not know it. The landlord, smart as ever, but with a much more vinous expression than he wore in the day, — a difference which resulted from various "treatings" and "standing" of glasses of this and that, — saw them and came out at once, raising his hat politely. He owed his success to his power of preserving his shrewdness at all hours, and under all circumstances. He remembered Laurence, and he recognized Mr. Brand at once as the great surgeon who was the chief notability in the town.. He called to Mary, who was in the thick of things, flushed with hard work, and the effort of constant repartee, serving at the centre bar.

"Come," he said, "you go upstairs and tell Mr. Tempest that Mr. Brand is here, and the lady that came yesterday. I 'll show them into No. 8. Look sharp, now."

This young man was nearly as good a team-driver as Mr. Brand himself; and the doctor looked admir-

ingly after the quick feet that flew up the stairs, and thought Mary would be a capital girl to have in the hospital. No. 8 was the sitting-room Laurence had seen Clare in. The table, prettily laid and bright with flowers, had not been cleared since dinner had been served, which still stood there untouched, a fowl and vegetables, all as they had come, and sweets standing on the corner of the sideboard as if put there in a hurry.

"Our friends don't seem to have enjoyed their dinner to-night," said Mr. Brand, a little regretfully, as he looked round. He had scarcely spoken when Philip came into the room, followed by Mary, who, with an inaudible apology, picked up as many dishes as she could carry and ran away.

Laurence was amazed at the change in Philip's appearance in so short a time. It seemed extraordinary. He was worn and haggard as if by many nights of watching, and he looked unutterably sad.

"I am grateful to you, Mr. Brand, for coming so promptly," he said. "Will you come at once to my wife? She is in a terrible state, and I do not like to leave her alone for a minute."

Without any further delay they went upstairs, Philip leading the way. Laurence knew her duty as nurse was to be at all events within call, so she followed a few steps behind. Philip went up to the next landing, and, turning down a short corridor, opened the last door in it, and went in, leaving it open for the others to follow. And indeed, thought

Laurence, it was as well to leave it open a while to admit a little air. The room was stifling, with a great fire blazing on the hearth, and a curious feeling of closeness, apart from the heat. Mr. Brand glanced at the window, which was heavily curtained, and Laurence expected to be told to open it; but before he had time to speak his attention was arrested by the figure in the bed. It was Clare, sitting up against a pile of pillows, her bright hair falling in tumbled confusion about her head, her eyes wild, and on her face an expression which was familiar to Laurence, though she had never seen it there before. A second glance, and she remembered it; just like this had the terrified patient looked whom Mr. Brand had to have chloroformed at once lest she should die of fright before the operation. The muscles of Clare's face worked visibly, and there was a curious twitch in one eye that gave a crooked effect. She panted a little like a hunted animal.

"Doctor," she cried out, "Doctor, come here! Tell me I am not going to die! Tell me I shall get through! Tell me I shall live!"

Her voice was terrible, it expressed such simple, undisguised fear.

Mr. Brand went up to her, took her wrist and felt her pulse, looked closely at her face, drew away one eyelid and looked at the white of the eye.

"What 's the matter?" he said, "can't you breathe?"

Clare shook her head.

Without saying anything more he made a thorough examination, testing heart and lungs. She submitted quite patiently, turning as he wished her to, breathing just as he told her, her eyes fixed on him all the time with an agonized inquiry in them that made Laurence shudder, it was so distressing. Then he sat down on the edge of the bed and asked her a great number of questions about her usual health, her habits, her diet, and so on, watching her all the while with unflinching observation. She told him a good many lies, but they were just as useful to him as the truth would have been. Laurence pitied her more than she had ever pitied any living thing. She had shrunk back into the doorway where the half-open door and the curtains of the old-fashioned bed formed a screen. She dared not go away altogether lest Mr. Brand should instantly call for her, and so make her presence, which she felt to be an impertinence, although it had been asked for, more evident than it need be. Philip stood near Mr. Brand, watching Clare.

"Good-night," said Mr. Brand at last, getting up, "just calm yourself and go to sleep. You are wearing every one out. I assure you, you won't die to-night."

Clare cried out (a dreadful cry, like an animal under torment), Philip started at the sound. Mr. Brand took no further notice of her, but walked out of the room, saying to Philip as he passed, "I 'll speak to you downstairs."

Laurence hurriedly spoke as he came to the door.

"Am I to stay and nurse her?" she asked.

"No," he said; "it 's not a case for me, and we want you at the hospital. Follow me."

This was dreadful! Philip could not be left alone to deal with this half-maniac. Laurence perforce followed, in a turmoil of feeling.

Mr. Brand went into the sitting-room and took his hat which was on the table.

"Won't you write a prescription?" exclaimed Philip.

"No, I can do nothing. I am very sorry. I am simply a surgeon, and there is nothing for me to do. Your wife will soon be confined; and she would need no special care, being perfectly healthy, but for one thing."

"And that?" asked Philip.

"Well, you must know. It is pure alcoholism. No one can help her. She has got beyond the point at which science can give any aid. I tell you that, as an honest man. This is not one of my specialties, and, of course, another medical man might tell you differently."

"Yes," said Philip; "but I know yours is one of the two or three opinions in the whole world of science worth having."

"Then it will perhaps save you from vain hopes if I tell you that you can do nothing but take care of her. You will find plenty of men, willing to make a small income out of doctoring her, who will tell

you certain drugs, certain modes of treatment, will help her. They will not. Her blood is poisoned. I am very sorry, but this is the truth. If, later on, you should need surgical aid which comes within my province, you may command me."

Laurence heard a strange sort of cry, just as these words were uttered, and she ran quickly upstairs and into Clare's room. She felt that they ought not to have left her. Clare was sitting on the ground beside the wardrobe, her head leaning against it. The door of it was open. She had a bottle of brandy, nearly empty, beside her, and the tumbler from the washing-stand, half-full, in her hand. At the sight of Laurence she quickly drank it.

"I hurt myself," she said; "I fell. Where is Philip? He must n't see this bottle, or he would throw it out of the window. See — put it in here — under my black dress — "

Laurence did so, for it seemed the best thing to do; there was very little left in the bottle, and it might as well be out of sight. As she put it back, she felt another, and quickly drawing it out saw that it was full, the cork drawn so that it was ready for use. She tried to hide it under her cloak; but Clare was too quick for her. In a moment the sick woman had sprung to her feet, transformed into a giant of strength, and tried to wrest the bottle from her. Laurence held fast to it; and she scarcely knew what happened till she felt that there was some one

else who was releasing her from the grip of iron hands.

"Quick, go downstairs," said Philip's voice; "Mr. Brand is waiting for you."

She made her way to the door as best she could, half-blinded she knew not by what. It was by the brandy; in the struggle, the bottle had been broken and some of the spirit had flown up into her face. Mr. Brand was in the corridor.

"Come on," he said, "get out of this; I won't have one of my best nurses knocked about by a maniac."

He hurried downstairs, where it was all quiet now, and the house closed. The landlord was waiting to let them out. Mr. Brand's carriage stood outside, man and horse both, to all appearance, asleep. But they soon woke up at the chance of getting home.

Laurence felt dazed at first by the keen night air. But, oh! what a relief its freshness was, though she had to close her eyes, they smarted so.

"I 'm very sorry for Tempest," said Mr. Brand; "it 's an awful position for a man. It 's the kindest thing to tell him the truth."

Laurence made no answer; for she knew not what to say. And so, in silence, she went into the hospital and crept upstairs to bed.

CHAPTER XXVII.

MR. BRAND came to the hospital about one o'clock next day, and sent up a message to Laurence that he wished to speak to her. So she went down. He was standing in the hall, reading the memoranda on the slate. This was an occupation he always fell back upon when he had to wait for any one. To have nothing to do even for a moment tormented him. At home he was always busy, being a very good amateur gardener. When that failed him he went fishing. He turned when he heard Laurence's step.

"I have told Sister Valentine to arrange for you to go down to the Columbia every day for a short time, if you wish it, Miss Monkwell; but don't stay there longer than you would as an ordinary visitor. You will understand that it is impossible for me to let one of my nurses take the case, as it is not one with which I can deal. I don't think Mr. Tempest does quite understand this; and I shall be glad if you will explain it to him. Sister Valentine thinks you can be spared for an hour directly after dinner if you like to go down. I should advise Mr. Tempest to call in Dr. Stanhope, you can tell him so from me, if you will."

Mr. Brand, who was always in a hurry, had got to the front door and opened it while saying this; and in another moment he was in his carriage and driving away. The dinner-bell rang, and Laurence went through to the kitchen. She had her patient's dinner to attend to, which was a serious matter, and her own to eat, which was quickly done, and then she went upstairs for her bonnet and cloak.

She was full of absorbing thought as she walked through the town. It did not seem possible that there was actually no means of saving Clare from the misery she was plunged in. Could no one influence her? Surely there must be some one strong enough to arrest her attention and awaken her conscience. And yet, was that what she needed? She seemed perfectly aware of her fault and her folly, and to live in terror of the consequences. Moreover, had she not lived in the closest companionship with Philip? It seemed to Laurence that if that had not redeemed her, nothing could. And yet she could not allow to herself that there was no hope, none; that Philip had nothing to look forward to but battling with this difficulty day and night, alone always. It seemed barbaric, impossible, that such a man should be so sacrificed. Surely, surely, there must be help somewhere! She looked up as she shaped this thought in her mind, and it seemed to her that she was answered. Her eyes fell on a large notice-board, and she saw Canon Winterby's name. He was announced to preach at the large

church in the town on Sunday. What day was this? She had to think a moment in order to remember, she had been so absorbed that she had lost count of time. A moment's thought told her it was Friday. Yes, she was answered. He, of all men living, was the one to give help and aid at such a crisis as this. If he could not save Clare, then it was certain no human being could. And what a help his presence would be to Philip! But would Philip like to see him in such dreadful circumstances? She turned this over in her mind and could not decide. She found that she did not know him quite well enough to be able to say. It takes years before one can know a person thoroughly in such things as these. She resolved to tell him of Canon Winterby's coming to the town, at all events.

When she arrived at the hotel she found herself in such a whirlwind of confusion and distress that everything but immediate necessity was driven from her mind. Clare's paroxysm of terror was followed by a fit of rage, — blind, unreasoning anger against all things and people, but against Philip first of all. She was in the humor to delight in humiliating him in every possible way, in creating the most dreadful confusion. It pleased her to see the look of bewilderment and distress on every face. For it was not possible for Philip to keep the raging storm to himself. She made more noise if locked up than if free, when this fit was on her, as he knew by bitter experience. She rushed to and fro from her

bedroom to the sitting-room, continually ringing the bell and ordering all kinds of things that she did not want, till no one knew what to do. She abused Philip to any one who would listen. Just as Laurence entered, the landlord had gone upstairs to speak to Philip, and tell him, civilly enough, that their rooms were engaged.

"It ill becomes you to turn us out!" exclaimed Philip, worried beyond endurance. "You should not have sold her the stuff. You must have known that no woman could drink all the brandy you have sent up to her without going out of her senses."

"She *has* had a great deal," admitted the phlegmatic landlord, thoughtfully, as if that fact had struck him for the first time. "But this is a hotel, sir, where we're accustomed to supply customers with what they order. And we've always kept the house decent and respectable till now."

Laurence had found no one to speak to at the door, and had gone upstairs alone, after waiting a few minutes in vain. She heard what was being said by the two men, who were standing in the sitting-room with the door open. She saw Clare coming downstairs, wrapped, rather than dressed, in her black gown. She moved with great difficulty, being evidently too ill to be out of bed. But a fever burned in her that made her frantic, and gave her an unnatural strength.

Some of the strangest features of the madness that comes from drink are its dark suspicion, its

sudden, unreasoning jealousy, its inability to distinguish between friend and foe. Very recently Laurence had been accepted by Clare as her friend, and she had but now done her the greatest service possible. She had no thought of being received as anything but a friend. To her horror and amazement, Clare, on the instant she saw her, attacked her vehemently, and as a bitter enemy. What she said Laurence could barely understand, and never attempted to remember; who can recollect or record the ravings of a drunkard? At certain moments in her life Laurence had been troubled by that dreadful sense of unreality which seizes us all one time or another, but she had never experienced it so keenly as now. She stood silent, like one paralyzed, grasping the banister for support. The landlord and Philip, silenced in their talk by the sudden uprisal of this shrill, angry voice, came out and stood helplessly regarding the scene. Clare, after a moment, became aware that Philip was there, and turned the torrent of her anger upon him. But this was worse. She began to talk of Laurence, to say — well no one ever knew what she said. Philip started forward to stop her; startled by his sudden angry movement, the mad woman fell back upon the stairs in a strange, huddled heap. They all moved quickly to help her, but Philip was first. He raised her in his arms, and turned an ashen face on Laurence, who was close to him.

"Go," he said, "don't stay here. Send me a

doctor. For God's sake, go, and send me a doctor who will help me."

She bowed her head, and went downstairs and out of the house. She was very glad Mr. Brand had told her the right doctor to bring to them. It was something to do. She went, walking quickly through the town, to the doctor's house, found him at home, told him her errand, obtained his promise to go to the Columbia Hotel at once, and then returned to the hospital.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

LAURENCE went back to her work and did it just as well as usual. But she found it impossible to keep her thoughts upon it. They would wander back, try how she might, to the pitiable picture of life in those small, dark rooms at the Columbia Hotel. The situation seems a very sad one to any one who thinks of it seriously, for a moment, even without any personal acquaintance with the victim. But when one loves that chief sufferer! It was more than Laurence could do, to turn her mind away from the man she loved and the hopeless trouble he was fighting with. All that night she thought of him, instead of sleeping; and at dawn she found herself, agnostic though she was, praying for him. And then, half-ashamed of herself, she whispered, "There is no God who is my friend; no God who has ever spoken to me; but I pray to Canon Winterby's God. If He is absolute love, as the Canon says, He will forgive me that I do not know Him better, and will listen to my prayer, perhaps!" that "perhaps" marked her for the doubter that she was. Fearless, honest, sincere,

absolutely true, she lacked the final saving grace of faith; she was essentially modern, belonging to the second half of the nineteenth century. She could not help the doubting, questioning, wondering spirit within her. It asked, "Where is God? Why does He not reveal Himself and sweep away the iniquities that kill us?" and then she would answer herself with the quick thought, "There is a God whom Canon Winterby knows. I will plead with Him. Is He strong enough to help one who does not know Him?"

All Saturday she resolutely remained at her work. After the horrible scene of Friday afternoon she knew Philip did not wish her to go to the hotel. She stayed away because she felt that would please him best; but it was torture.

Sister Valentine asked her, in the evening, whether she was going out the next day. She often did this, as Laurence was not like the other nurses, greedy of every hour of freedom. She was more likely to stay at home the whole of Sunday than not. She paused a moment before she answered, quite surprised at the resolution which she found formed in her mind. Then she expressed it.

"I want to hear Canon Winterby," she said; "and I don't know whether he preaches in the morning or evening."

"I do," said Sister Valentine; "it is in the evening. Very well, you shall go then, and Nurse Hammond shall go out in the morning."

So it was arranged. Laurence was glad, in a blind sort of way, with a feeling that here was a friend indeed, one of the great ones of the earth, and that it would help her to hear his voice. That was all she realized at first; but by degrees a purpose shaped itself in her mind, and she recognized that she would have to fulfil it. Having once seen it as the right thing to do, she dare not leave it alone, but must be courageous, and carry it through. She must risk Philip's displeasure or vexation, should it prove that she had done wrong; she must take Canon Winterby to him. Having once seen that she had this to do, she went through the day with a sense of solemnity mixed with fear. No one can understand how she felt, who has not loved as intensely as she did. She dreaded above all things not doing what Philip would like, and yet she could not let such an opportunity pass.

When the evening came, she hurried down to the Columbia before going to the church, and was glad that Mary, the bar-maid, was standing just inside the door. She asked her first, in some trembling, whether the Tempests were still there.

"Oh, yes," said Mary, "the poor lady's a great deal too ill to be moved. She has been ever since you were here on Friday. There's been two doctors called in; but they don't seem able to do any good. She ought to have a nurse; but Mr. Tempest will do everything for her himself. He says he will take her away to-morrow; but he can't without a nurse.

Do try and persuade him; perhaps he 'll listen to you. We 're that put about with it all, it 's dreadful."

"I 'll come back by and by," said Laurence, hurriedly, and went away. She walked quickly to the large church, which was some little distance from the hotel. Her visit there had made her late for the service, but that did not matter. She felt that she would hardly be able to attend to it. The church was very crowded, and all down the aisles people were standing, — an unusual sight in Birchampton, which was not a very church-going town. No other preacher would have drawn more than a moderate congregation. But the fame of Canon Winterby's eloquence brought even his bitterest opponents to listen to him; and Birchampton, while a great drinking town, had also a large Temperance party. Laurence crept in among the crowd and stood there, her eyes fixed upon the soldierly, upright figure, and the silver curls. He took no part in the service, and stood with his head bowed and his face almost expressionless. She remembered how, when she first saw him at the Temperance meeting, he had looked like this, and how she had felt disappointed at the plainness of his face. Philip then had been on the platform. She remembered his look too; indeed she could remember every look of his since first she had seen him. He had seemed harassed then, but not worn and bowed by trouble as he did now. A pang struck into her heart as she thought of the difference. She looked again at the

preacher. What could he do? How help? Only by imparting some of his own courage and faith. And when his sermon came, it made her feel ashamed. It was like a trumpet-call. The passionate belief of this great optimist that all was ordered for the best, affected her now as it had never done before. It was because she needed it more. She understood the message better, for it no longer appeared to her as a message to the world, but to herself.

When it was over, she succeeded, with some difficulty, in getting a note carried to him. She had written it during the sermon on a leaf torn out of a pocket-book. It was not more urgent than it would have been had she written it before hearing him; but it was more confident. All diffidence in asking him to come had vanished; she knew he had only to know he was needed and he would come. She had to wait some little time before he could see her, for he was an honored visitor to the church and had to pay the inevitable penalty of being surrounded by various persons who wished to monopolize him. But presently Laurence was taken to the door of the vestry. He came out alone, holding her note in his hand. He looked up from it with interest to see who wanted him. He saw a stranger, a nurse; that was all. "Some one I know is in the town, in great trouble?" he said, inquiringly.

"Yes," answered Laurence, "it is Mr. Tempest." The Canon's face lit up with added interest.

"Here, and in great trouble?"

"Yes," said Laurence, "his wife — she is in a terrible condition. I do not know whether you would try to help or influence her; the task is too heavy for him alone. He does not know that I have come to you. I do not suppose he knows you are in the town; but I cannot but believe it would help him greatly only to see you."

"But you have not told me what is the trouble," he asked.

"I am a nurse in Mr. Brand's hospital here," said Laurence. "On Thursday night I went with him to Mrs. Tempest. I was present when he told Mr. Tempest that she is beyond the reach of science. She is nearly mad from alcoholism."

"Mrs. Tempest!" he exclaimed in great surprise. "But she is a beautiful young woman. I saw her once at some house in a crowd. I remember her bright face. Are you sure?"

"Quite sure," answered Laurence, "I am a friend of theirs; I have stayed in the house. That was last season, she was drinking then; now she is maddened with it. I assure you his position is awful."

Canon Winterby stood a moment in deep thought. He was looking back over his interviews with Philip.

"This then," he said, "is the secret of Tempest's life, — the trouble he came to me with, and then told me nothing of it. I understand him now. I am ready; I will go at once. I will just speak to the friends with whom I am staying."

He did this, and Laurence waited. A carriage

was outside to take Canon Winterby home, and his friends wished him to use it. So he and Laurence got into it and drove to the Columbia Hotel. On the way he asked her a few questions, and she told him briefly the story, so far as she knew it, of the Tempests' life in the months since he had seen Philip. She found it difficult to explain why Clare had come to her in Birchampton without telling him all the wretched story. She was very much disturbed by the desire to tell him, and to ask him whether she had done wrong, but then she remembered that the secret was Philip's and Clare's, not hers. The responsibility she had taken with regard to it, she had taken of her own accord; and when she had done it, it had seemed right, and she had felt that she had no choice. If what she had done brought misery and despair to the one being in the world she cared for, she must witness the tragedy without complaint. While she was possessed by the longing to tell her trouble and ask advice and comfort, she knew at the same time that comfort could not exist for her, and that advice was useless. The thing was done. Philip would never go back, and she could not. What was the use, then, of saying anything, of speaking any word, even to one who was wise? So Laurence thought, bidding herself bear in silence whatever punishment might be in store for her. To a nature like Clare's there is relief in speech for speech's sake; not so to Laurence. Canon Winterby felt that she was

reticent and quiet, and ceased to ask her questions before they reached the hotel. But this was only his superficial consciousness; he was intensely intuitive and sympathetic, and he could not silence a voice that spoke within him and said that a soul in trouble was at his side; but he knew also that it was not for him to help. And so, thinking of each other, they were silent. At the hotel, Laurence was a little in doubt what to do; but she had decided by the time they were inside the swing-doors.

"Have you a card with you," she said to Canon Winterby. "I think it would be best to send that up to Mr. Tempest, and we will wait here." She said this very positively; so that Mary, who had come to them, obeyed her without demur. She could not tell what developments might have taken place; Clare might have come downstairs again; no one knew what she would do at any moment now. Her one anxiety was to spare Philip. They had only to wait a moment. Mary ran up and down again in less time than seemed possible. In the short pause, Canon Winterby looked round him. The bar was crowded with drinkers, eager to make up for the hours of enforced thirst which Sunday had inflicted on them. The landlord had more than he could do without Mary, and she had good reason to be quick.

"Will you please come upstairs," she said, pausing as soon as she was within hearing. They went up, and Mary showed them into the little sitting-

room. No dinner had been laid here to-night, or, if it had, it had been long since removed. But Laurence's first guess she knew to be the true one directly she saw Philip's face, as he came quickly and almost instantly into the room. There had certainly been no dinner for him that day. He looked worn to a shadow, and completely exhausted. He came in with an eager step and shining eyes.

"Canon Winterby," he said; "how unexpected!"

Laurence had remained very near the door purposely, and before Canon Winterby could answer, before Philip could speak to her, she left the room and ran upstairs. She had met Philip's glance for a second, and it had said, "I owe this to you!" She knew he was glad, and that was enough. She went softly to the door of Clare's room, it was ajar. She did not intend Clare to see her unless it became necessary, so she only crept just inside, and remained standing there within the shelter of the bed-curtain. How stifling the room seemed! The peculiar closeness that she had noticed before oppressed her senses again. She associated it with Clare in some way, and wondered vaguely, while she was actually thinking of the two downstairs, whether it was the scent of the spirits which had been consumed in this room that still hung upon the air. It was a dreadful thought, but it forced itself upon her,—the same heaviness that was in the bar downstairs was here too, in a lesser degree. She had stood like this for some moments, scarcely breathing, when

a faint moan came from the bed, and then a cry: "Philip — are you there — don't leave me alone — Philip!" The voice was very feeble, and Laurence barely distinguished the words. This was not the woman who had been so angry with her on Friday. She thought it would not be dangerous for Clare to see her in her present mood, so she very gently went forward and stood by the bed, "What can I do?" she said in a soft voice full of inexpressible pity.

Clare was lying down, no longer propped up by pillows. She looked as if she would never be lifted up again, or her head raised; she lay like one dead. Only her eyes were alive, and they were full of an awful despair, a dreadful fear. She looked at Laurence without showing any anger. "I am so thirsty," she said, and Laurence saw that her lips were dry and the skin cracked. She tended her, with the nurse's skill; and Clare received her attention without resentment, though without any sign of gratitude. She seemed indifferent, absorbed in contemplation of some thought, — the thought that gave her eyes so strange a look. Laurence knew what it was, and shuddered as she met the frightened glance. That expression is not often seen upon a human face, it is the look of a hunted, terrified animal.

"Where is Philip?" she asked, but went on talking without waiting for any answer. She showed the same desire to talk on incessantly, and the

same tendency to repetition that she had done when Laurence first came to see her at the hotel. Her mind appeared to work in a circle,—a circle that grew smaller; she had only a certain number of thoughts in her mind, and she went over them continually, like a child with its dolls. "He will be back, I suppose, in a moment," she said; "I am glad you are here alone, for I wanted to tell you he is going to do everything I wished. I have told him all now. I am glad you went to him when you did. I am glad I asked you to go. It was a strange thing perhaps to ask a girl to do; but you owed it to me. You know that. Never forget that." Her voice was so weak, it was pitiable to hear her, and it produced a very curious effect, hearing the feeble, feverish, petulant voice, and seeing the terrible eyes, to note how still the rest of the body lay, as if all power of motion was gone; but this was only a phase, the result of awful exhaustion. Fits of pain came at intervals when the whole body quivered and stirred and writhed without cease till the paroxysm was over. Just now it was one of the quiet intervals; otherwise Philip could not have left her, even for a moment. As it was, he stayed away longer than he would have done because he knew that Laurence had gone to her.

"It was easier than I expected to tell Philip," she said; "he has heard all I wanted to say now. I don't know why I should have been so nervous about it. I was dreadfully frightened; but then, you see,

he might have taken it differently, — there was never any understanding Philip, or guessing what he might think it his duty to do. After that dreadful night of the dinner-party, I was always afraid of him. It seemed to me such a cruel, unreasonable, senseless thing to do, to ask a lot of society people to dinner and give them nothing to drink. I was frightened to face them, and sat in my room shuddering; for I felt sure they must all know it was done because of me. It seemed to me such an insult. Why, why, did he do it? There was never any hope for me after that night. Of course I denied it to Philip; but I knew all those horrid people thought there was something wrong with me. How I *hated* them! How dared they look at me as they did? Was I not in my own house and free to do as I liked? Why had the wretches come there to glare at me and make mischief? I never wanted to see people any more after that. There was never any hope for me after that night. Perhaps some people are strong enough to fall, and know themselves pointed at, and feel that they are guilty, and rise again; I am not. I could not do it. I could only try to forget. Ah, God, how spoiled my life has been! Always trying to forget something horrible. Can you find my handglass? I think Philip has hidden it. I want to see if I look like my father yet. Do try to find it. It 's so stupid of Philip to thwart me and not let me have my own way. He has always done that, and it has made me much

worse. If he had not taken up that Temperance nonsense and made us ridiculous, things would have been very different. He drove me to it — he and you. It is torture to know that he loves you — and admires you. It is hell — hell — yes — such as I am go to hell — I know I am going there — I need not be there yet — oh, no, not yet — not now — oh, give me something — something — "

Her voice had sunk to an almost inaudible whisper. Laurence could only just hear her, by leaning over the bed. The eyes remained steadily fixed on her, — eyes so desperate that they filled her soul with pain, and with an impotent longing to give help. She knew that this creature in torment was beyond her help. She lifted her hand to reach a glass upon the table from which to moisten the wretched sufferer's dry lips, and Clare's eyes caught the glitter of the bracelet on her wrist. She said something which Laurence could not hear; she repeated it again with great difficulty.

"Philip gave you that," she said; "I feel he did. He says you have a soul — I hate you both. I hope I have no soul — then I cannot be punished — I cannot be tortured when I am dead. The animals, they say, can only be tortured till they die. I hope I am like them. I think I am — "

A sudden mist of sharp tears blurred everything to Laurence for a moment. It was gone directly, and she looked again into the wild eyes; but they had turned from her, they were looking away, at

something else. Laurence followed their gaze and saw that Philip had softly entered the room, and that Canon Winterby stood beside him. It was at him Clare looked. She had given Philip but one glance, and then had fastened her gaze upon the figure of the stranger. She did not know Canon Winterby; she had never seen him, though he had once seen her.

Laurence recognized, in the moment's silence that followed, that personality is the greatest power upon this earth. The idea of God alone exceeds it, and that is not innate in all minds, in spite of what theorists say. It was not in Laurence's. She envied and desired it, but she did not possess it. It was so strong a factor in Canon Winterby's nature that his presence brought with it an access of confidence. This is the power of a strong personality; without speech or apparent effort, it compels attention to its ideals; and optimistic thinking, even without belief, is a rest to an agnostic who desires belief. What wonder, then, that such a resolute believer as the Canon is regarded as a hero by a generation that is hungry for knowledge?

"If knowledge cannot be," said Laurence to herself, "how good then is faith in its stead."

Clare recovered enough strength, after a moment's pause, to speak, though very feebly.

"It is no use to bring a clergyman here," she said. "It is too late; I hate hypocrisy. Please leave me alone."

Canon Winterby moved from where he stood and came to the side of the bed. Laurence stepped back, and so did Philip. Both were out of Clare's sight. Practically she was alone with this man of God. To Laurence's fancy, it seemed as if they represented the two powers that do battle continually in the world.

He addressed her quite simply.

"You are very ill," he said. And Clare's answer struck like fire and ice in one to the hearts of the two who stood and listened.

"I am dying," she said.

He looked earnestly at her. That look in her eyes was not unfamiliar to him. He had seen it before. Most people lose their fear of death before it comes, that is, the mere physical fear which naturally goes before the end, when the physical force is exhausted. Only sometimes is the spirit full of terror.

"Are you afraid?" he asked.

"Horribly," she gasped out.

"Afraid of dying?"

"No, no, afraid that I shall not really die; that I shall go to some place of torment, for I have deserved it!"

"You are afraid of hell?"

"Yes, I must go there; there is no hope for me. None. I have led a selfish, useless life always; I have done no good. I know there is no hope for me. I wish you would leave me alone. Philip,

why does n't the doctor come back? Send for him; he must n't let me die yet!"

Her feeble voice was raised with the terrible intonation Philip had learned to dread, and she tried to lift herself a little, but her strength was too slight. She sank back, baffled and impotent.

"How dare you say that you have no hope?" demanded Canon Winterby, leaning over her. "How dare you deny God? For that is what you are doing when you say you have no hope. You feel within yourself that you are immortal; and if you are immortal you are divine. Why be afraid when the spirit within you is about to be released from this tangle, is going home?" He had succeeded in arresting her attention now, and went on, holding her eyes with his.

"You know that the divine can no more be tarnished by evil than gold can suffer by contact with fire. Gold is purified by burning, and the divine within you will reveal itself when it has passed through the fiery ordeal. You are in hell now; yes, burning in its flames; for you know that you are evil. But this torture is a thing desirable and beautiful; for it is destroying the evil part of you, so that it will dissolve and vanish and the miracle of death be accomplished. You have seen your sins, you know them, cast them away from you now forever, with your weakness and your fear, and come out from the ordeal a pure spirit, strong, knowing that your God is there to save you, to help, forgive, and love."

This impassioned appeal completely held her attention, she kept her eyes fixed upon him, and a flicker of strength enabled her to raise herself a little. Her face seemed to alter; the lines smoothed out of it, and the agonizing look of despair and terror struggled for the mastery with a new look, — one of eagerness and interest. Canon Winterby saw that he had gained a slight advantage, and seized it; without moving, and without turning his eyes from hers, holding her fast by his gaze, he burst suddenly into a wonderful prayer that was like a very well-spring of love flowing forth. He leaned a little over her, stretching out his arms as if to Heaven; Laurence thought, as she looked at him, that the hands spoke as eloquently as the lips, so earnestly did they seem to plead for pity and ask for love, and give these, all at once. Suddenly his voice ceased. Clare had moved a little, and seemed to struggle; he bent lower, looking still into her eyes.

"Philip!" she cried, at last succeeding in her effort. In an instant Philip was at her side. Laurence started forward too, simply with the instinct of giving help if it was needed. Clare convulsively flung out her arms and caught both Philip's and Laurence's hands in hers; she grasped them tightly, and made an evident effort to put them together. The Canon saw her intention and her desperate struggle before the others, and putting out one hand gently pressed Laurence's forward, and put Philip's

on it. Clare pressed them close, and then murmured something almost inaudibly. Only one word —"Forgive"— could any of the three hear plainly. She fell back suddenly upon her pillow.

"She is forgiven," said the Canon, simply, and raised his hands as if to speed her soul with a parting blessing. For they knew that her spirit had flown, that body and soul were parted. The dark, difficult enigma of that life was over.

THE END.

MESSRS. ROBERTS BROTHERS' ANNOUNCEMENTS for the FALL OF 1895.

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