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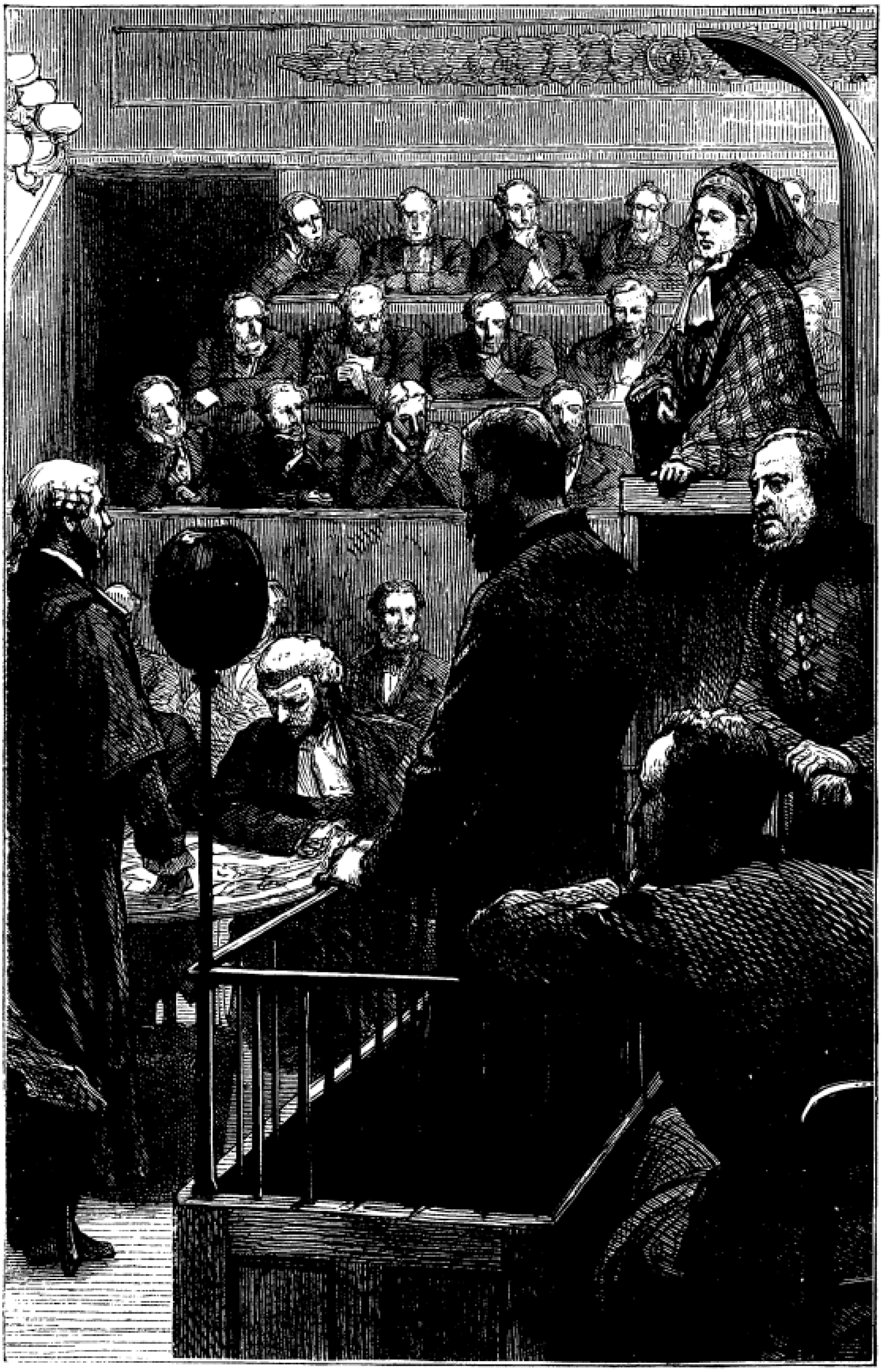

"THE APPEARANCE OF THE NEXT WITNESS CREATED A MARKED SENSATION IN THE COURT."—[See p. 114.]

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THE LAW AND THE LADY.

A Novel.

By WILKIE COLLINS,

AUTHOR OF

"THE MOONSTONE," "ARMADALE," "THE WOMAN IN WHITE,"
"BASIL," "THE DEAD SECRET," "ANTONINA," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

NEW YORK:

HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,

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1875.

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WILKIE COLLINS'S NOVELS.

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I gratefully dedicate
this Collected Edition of my
Works, to
The American People
Wilkie Collins
September 1873.

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THE LAW AND THE LADY.

PART I.

PARADISE LOST.

CHAPTER I.

THE BRIDE'S MISTAKE.

"For after this manner in the old time the holy women also who trusted in God adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands; even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord; whose daughters ye are as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement."

Concluding the Marriage Service of the Church of England in those well-known words, my uncle Starkweather shut up his book, and looked at me across the altar rails with a hearty expression of interest on his broad, red face. At the same time my aunt, Mrs. Starkweather, standing by my side, tapped me smartly on the shoulder, and said,

"Valeria, you are married!"

Where were my thoughts? What had become of my attention? I was too bewildered to know. I started and looked at my new husband. He seemed to be almost as much bewildered as I was. The same thought had, as I believe, occurred to us both at the same moment. Was it really possible—in spite of his mother's opposition to our marriage—that we were Man and Wife? My aunt Starkweather settled the question by a second tap on my shoulder.

"Take his arm!" she whispered, in the tone of a woman who had lost all patience with me.

I took his arm.

"Follow your uncle."

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unfortunate signature with the feather end of her pen. "I hope, my dear, you may not live to regret it."

Even then, in the days of my ignorance and my innocence, that curious outbreak of my aunt's superstition produced a certain uneasy sensation in my mind. It was a consolation to me to feel the reassuring pressure of my husband's hand. It was an indescribable relief to hear my uncle's hearty voice wishing me a happy life at parting. The good man had left his north-country Vicarage (my home since the death of my parents) expressly to read the service at my marriage; and he and my aunt had arranged to return by the mid-day train. He folded me in his great strong arms, and he gave me a kiss which must certainly have been heard by the idlers waiting for the bride and bridegroom outside the church door.

"I wish you health and happiness, my love, with all my heart. You are old enough to choose for yourself, and—no offense, Mr. Woodville, you and I are new friends—and I pray God, Valeria, it may turn out that you have chosen well. Our house will be dreary enough without you; but I don't complain, my dear. On the contrary, if this change in your life makes you happier, I rejoice. Come, come! don't cry, or you will set your aunt off—and it's no joke at her time of life. Besides, crying will spoil your beauty. Dry your eyes and look in the glass there, and you will see that I am right. Good-by, child—and God bless you!"

He tucked my aunt under his arm, and hurried out. My heart sank a little, dearly as I loved my husband, when I had seen the last of the true friend and protector of my maiden days.

The parting with old Benjamin came next. "I wish you well, my dear; don't forget me," was all he said. But the old days at home came back on me at those few words. Benjamin always dined with us on Sundays in my father's time, and always brought some little present with him for his master's child. I was very near to "spoiling my beauty" (as my uncle had put it) when I offered the old man my cheek to kiss, and heard him sigh to himself, as if he too were not quite hopeful about my future life.

My husband's voice roused me, and turned my mind to happier thoughts.

"Shall we go, Valeria?" he asked.

I stopped him on our way out to take advantage of my

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uncle's advice; in other words, to see how I looked in the glass over the vestry fire-place.

What does the glass show me?

The glass shows a tall and slender young woman of three-and-twenty years of age. She is not at all the sort of person who attracts attention in the street, seeing that she fails to exhibit the popular yellow hair and the popular painted cheeks. Her hair is black; dressed, in these later days (as it was dressed years since to please her father), in broad ripples drawn back from the forehead, and gathered into a simple knot behind (like the hair of the Venus de Medicis), so as to show the neck beneath. Her complexion is pale: except in moments of violent agitation there is no color to be seen in her face. Her eyes are of so dark a blue that they are generally mistaken for black. Her eyebrows are well enough in form, but they are too dark and too strongly marked. Her nose just inclines toward the aquiline bend, and is considered a little too large by persons difficult to please in the matter of noses. The mouth, her best feature, is very delicately shaped, and is capable of presenting great varieties of expression. As to the face in general, it is too narrow and too long at the lower part, too broad and too low in the higher regions of the eyes and the head. The whole picture, as reflected in the glass, represents a woman of some elegance, rather too pale, and rather too sedate and serious in her moments of silence and repose—in short, a person who fails to strike the ordinary observer at first sight, but who gains in general estimation on a second, and sometimes on a third view. As for her dress, it studiously conceals, instead of proclaiming, that she has been married that morning. She wears a gray cashmere tunic trimmed with gray silk, and having a skirt of the same material and color beneath it. On her head is a bonnet to match, relieved by a quilling of white muslin, with one deep red rose, as a morsel of positive color, to complete the effect of the whole dress.

Have I succeeded or failed in describing the picture of myself which I see in the glass? It is not for me to say. I have done my best to keep clear of the two vanities — the vanity of depreciating and the vanity of praising my own personal appearance. For the rest, well written or badly written, thank Heaven it is done!

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And whom do I see in the glass standing by my side?

I see a man who is not quite so tall as I am, and who has the misfortune of looking older than his years. His forehead is prematurely bald. His big chestnut-colored beard and his long overhanging mustache are prematurely streaked with gray. He has the color in the face which my face wants, and the firmness in his figure which my figure wants. He looks at me with the tenderest and gentlest eyes (of a light brown) that I ever saw in the countenance of a man. His smile is rare and sweet; his manner, perfectly quiet and retiring, has yet a latent persuasiveness in it which is (to women) irresistibly winning. He just halts a little in his walk, from the effect of an injury received in past years, when he was a soldier serving in India, and he carries a thick bamboo cane, with a curious crutch handle (an old favorite), to help himself along whenever he gets on his feet, in doors or out. With this one little drawback (if it *is* a drawback), there is nothing infirm or old or awkward about him; his slight limp when he walks has (perhaps to my partial eyes) a certain quaint grace of its own, which is pleasanter to see than the unrestrained activity of other men. And last and best of all, I love him! I love him! I love him! And there is an end of my portrait of my husband on our wedding-day.

The glass has told me all I want to know. We leave the vestry at last.

The sky, cloudy since the morning, has darkened while we have been in the church, and the rain is beginning to fall heavily. The idlers outside stare at us grimly under their umbrellas as we pass through their ranks and hasten into our carriage. No cheering; no sunshine; no flowers strewn in our path; no grand breakfast; no genial speeches; no bridemaids; no father's or mother's blessing. A dreary wedding —there is no denying it—and (if Aunt Starkweather is right) a bad beginning as well!

A *coupé* has been reserved for us at the railway station. The attentive porter, on the lookout for his fee, pulls down the blinds over the side windows of the carriage, and shuts out all prying eyes in that way. After what seems to be an interminable delay the train starts. My husband winds his arm round me. "At last!" he whispers, with love in his eyes that no words can utter, and presses me to him gently. My arm steals round his neck; my eyes answer his eyes.

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Our lips meet in the first long, lingering kiss of our married life.

Oh, what recollections of that journey rise in me as I write! Let me dry my eyes, and shut up my paper for the day.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRIDE'S THOUGHTS.

We had been traveling for a little more than an hour when a change passed insensibly over us both.

Still sitting close together, with my hand in his, with my head on his shoulder, little by little we fell insensibly into silence. Had we already exhausted the narrow yet eloquent vocabulary of love? Or had we determined by unexpressed consent, after enjoying the luxury of passion that speaks, to try the deeper and finer rapture of passion that thinks? I can hardly determine; I only know that a time came when, under some strange influence, our lips were closed toward each other. We traveled along, each of us absorbed in our own reverie. Was he thinking exclusively of me—as I was thinking exclusively of him? Before the journey's end I had my doubts; at a little later time I knew for certain that his thoughts, wandering far away from his young wife, were all turned inward on his own unhappy self.

For me the secret pleasure of filling my mind with him, while I felt him by my side, was a luxury in itself.

I pictured in my thoughts our first meeting in the neighborhood of my uncle's house.

Our famous north-country trout stream wound its flashing and foaming way through a ravine in the rocky moor-land. It was a windy, shadowy evening. A heavily clouded sunset lay low and red in the west. A solitary angler stood casting his fly at a turn in the stream where the backwater lay still and deep under an overhanging bank. A girl (myself) standing on the bank, invisible to the fisherman beneath, waited eagerly to see the trout rise.

The moment came; the fish took the fly.

Sometimes on the little level strip of sand at the foot of the bank, sometimes (when the stream turned again) in the shallower water rushing over its rocky bed, the angler fol-

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lowed the captured trout, now letting the line run out, and now winding it in again, in the difficult and delicate process of "playing" the fish. Along the bank I followed to watch the contest of skill and cunning between the man and the trout. I had lived long enough with my uncle Starkweather to catch some of his enthusiasm for field sports, and to learn something, especially, of the angler's art. Still following the stranger, with my eyes intently fixed on every movement of his rod and line, and with not so much as a chance fragment of my attention to spare for the rough path along which I was walking, I stepped by chance on the loose overhanging earth at the edge of the bank, and fell into the stream in an instant.

The distance was trifling, the water was shallow, the bed of the river was (fortunately for me) of sand. Beyond the fright and the wetting I had nothing to complain of. In a few moments I was out of the water and up again, very much ashamed of myself, on the firm ground. Short as the interval was, it proved long enough to favor the escape of the fish. The angler had heard my first instinctive cry of alarm, had turned, and had thrown aside his rod to help me. We confronted each other for the first time, I on the bank and he in the shallow water below. Our eyes encountered, and I verily believe our hearts encountered at the same moment. This I know for certain, we forgot our breeding as lady and gentleman: we looked at each other in barbarous silence.

I was the first to recover myself. What did I say to him?

I said something about my not being hurt, and then something more, urging him to run back and try if he might not yet recover the fish.

He went back unwillingly. He returned to me—of course without the fish. Knowing how bitterly disappointed my uncle would have been in his place, I apologized very earnestly. In my eagerness to make atonement, I even offered to show him a spot where he might try again, lower down the stream.

He would not hear of it; he entreated me to go home and change my wet dress. I cared nothing for the wetting, but I obeyed him without knowing why.

He walked with me. My way back to the Vicarage was his way back to the inn. He had come to our parts, he told me, for the quiet and retirement as much as for the fishing.

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He had noticed me once or twice from the window of his room at the inn. He asked if I were not the vicar's daughter.

I set him right. I told him that the vicar had married my mother's sister, and that the two had been father and mother to me since the death of my parents. He asked if he might venture to call on Doctor Starkweather the next day, mentioning the name of a friend of his, with whom he believed the vicar to be acquainted. I invited him to visit us, as if it had been my house; I was spell-bound under his eyes and under his voice. I had fancied, honestly fancied, myself to have been in love often and often before this time. Never in any other man's company had I felt as I now felt in the presence of *this* man. Night seemed to fall suddenly over the evening landscape when he left me. I leaned against the Vicarage gate. I could not breathe, I could not think; my heart fluttered as if it would fly out of my bosom — and all this for a stranger! I burned with shame; but oh, in spite of it all, I was so happy!

And now, when little more than a few weeks had passed since that first meeting, I had him by my side; he was mine for life! I lifted my head from his bosom to look at him. I was like a child with a new toy—I wanted to make sure that he was really my own.

He never noticed the action; he never moved in his corner of the carriage. Was he deep in his own thoughts? and were they thoughts of Me?

I laid down my head again softly, so as not to disturb him. My thoughts wandered backward once more, and showed me another picture in the golden gallery of the past.

The garden at the Vicarage formed the new scene. The time was night. We had met together in secret. We were walking slowly to and fro, out of sight of the house, now in the shadowy paths of the shrubbery, now in the lovely moonlight on the open lawn.

We had long since owned our love, and devoted our lives to each other. Already our interests were one; already we shared the pleasures and the pains of life. I had gone out to meet him that night with a heavy heart, to seek comfort in his presence, and to find encouragement in his voice. He noticed that I sighed when he first took me in his arms, and he gently turned my head toward the moonlight to read my

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trouble in my face. How often he had read my happiness there in the earlier days of our love!

"You bring bad news, my angel," he said, lifting my hair tenderly from my forehead as he spoke. "I see the lines here which tell me of anxiety and distress. I almost wish I loved you less dearly, Valeria."

"Why?"

"I might give you back your freedom. I have only to leave this place, and your uncle would be satisfied, and you would be relieved from all the cares that are pressing on you now."

"Don't speak of it, Eustace! If you want me to forget my cares, say you love me more dearly than ever."

He said it in a kiss. We had a moment of exquisite forgetfulness of the hard ways of life—a moment of delicious absorption in each other. I came back to realities fortified and composed, rewarded for all that I had gone through, ready to go through it all over again for another kiss. Only give a woman love, and there is nothing she will not venture, suffer, and do.

"No, they have done with objecting. They have remembered at last that I am of age, and that I can choose for myself. They have been pleading with me, Eustace, to give you up. My aunt, whom I thought rather a hard woman, has been crying—for the first time in my experience of her. My uncle, always kind and good to me, has been kinder and better than ever. He has told me that if I persist in becoming your wife, I shall not be deserted on my wedding-day. Wherever we may marry, he will be there to read the service, and my aunt will go to the church with me. But he entreats me to consider seriously what I am doing—to consent to a separation from you for a time—to consult other people on my position toward you, if I am not satisfied with his opinion. Oh, my darling, they are as anxious to part us as if you were the worst instead of the best of men!"

"Has any thing happened since yesterday to increase their distrust of me?" he asked.

"Yes."

"What is it?"

"You remember referring my uncle to a friend of yours and of his?"

"Yes. To Major Fitz-David."

"My uncle has written to Major Fitz-David."

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"Why?"

He pronounced that one word in a tone so utterly unlike his natural tone that his voice sounded quite strange to me.

"You won't be angry, Eustace, if I tell you?" I said. "My uncle, as I understood him, had several motives for writing to the major. One of them was to inquire if he knew your mother's address."

Eustace suddenly stood still.

I paused at the same moment, feeling that I could venture no farther without the risk of offending him.

To speak the truth, his conduct, when he first mentioned our engagement to my uncle, had been (so far as appearances went) a little flighty and strange. The vicar had naturally questioned him about his family. He had answered that his father was dead; and he had consented, though not very readily, to announce his contemplated marriage to his mother. Informing us that she too lived in the country, he had gone to see her, without more particularly mentioning her address. In two days he had returned to the Vicarage with a very startling message. His mother intended no disrespect to me or my relatives, but she disapproved so absolutely of her son's marriage that she (and the members of her family, who all agreed with her) would refuse to be present at the ceremony, if Mr. Woodville persisted in keeping his engagement with Dr. Starkweather's niece. Being asked to explain this extraordinary communication, Eustace had told us that his mother and his sisters were bent on his marrying another lady, and that they were bitterly mortified and disappointed by his choosing a stranger to the family. This explanation was enough for me; it implied, so far as I was concerned, a compliment to my superior influence over Eustace, which a woman always receives with pleasure. But it failed to satisfy my uncle and my aunt. The vicar expressed to Mr. Woodville a wish to write to his mother, or to see her, on the subject of her strange message. Eustace obstinately declined to mention his mother's address, on the ground that the vicar's interference would be utterly useless. My uncle at once drew the conclusion that the mystery about the address indicated something wrong. He refused to favor Mr. Woodville's renewed proposal for my hand, and he wrote the same day to make inquiries of Mr. Woodville's reference and of his own friend Major Fitz-David.

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Under such circumstances as these, to speak of my uncle's motives was to venture on very delicate ground. Eustace relieved me from further embarrassment by asking a question to which I could easily reply.

"Has your uncle received any answer from Major Fitz-David?" he inquired.

"Yes."

"Were you allowed to read it?" His voice sank as he said those words; his face betrayed a sudden anxiety which it pained me to see.

"I have got the answer with me to show you," I said.

He almost snatched the letter out of my hand; he turned his back on me to read it by the light of the moon. The letter was short enough to be soon read. I could have repeated it at the time. I can repeat it now.

"DEAR VICAR,—Mr. Eustace Woodville is quite correct in stating to you that he is a gentleman by birth and position, and that he inherits (under his deceased father's will) an independent fortune of two thousand a year.

"Always yours, LAWRENCE FITZ-DAVID."

"Can any body wish for a plainer answer than that?" Eustace asked, handing the letter back to me.

"If *I* had written for information about you," I answered, "it would have been plain enough for me."

"Is it not plain enough for your uncle?"

"No."

"What does he say?"

"Why need you care to know, my darling?"

"I want to know, Valeria. There must be no secret between us in this matter. Did your uncle say any thing when he showed you the major's letter?"

"Yes."

"What was it?"

"My uncle told me that his letter of inquiry filled three pages, and he bade me observe that the major's answer contained one sentence only. He said, 'I volunteered to go to Major Fitz-David and talk the matter over. You see he takes no notice of my proposal. I asked him for the address of Mr. Woodville's mother. He passes over my request, as he has passed over my proposal—he studiously confines him-

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self to the shortest possible statement of bare facts. Use your own common-sense, Valeria. Isn't this rudeness rather remarkable on the part of a man who is a gentleman by birth and breeding, and who is also a friend of mine?'"

Eustace stopped me there.

"Did you answer your uncle's question?" he asked.

"No," I replied. "I only said that I did not understand the major's conduct."

"And what did your uncle say next? If you love me, Valeria, tell me the truth."

"He used very strong language, Eustace. He is an old man; you must not be offended with him."

"I am not offended. What did he say?"

"He said, 'Mark my words! There is something under the surface in connection with Mr. Woodville, or with his family, to which Major Fitz-David is not at liberty to allude. Properly interpreted, Valeria, that letter is a warning. Show it to Mr. Woodville, and tell him (if you like) what I have just told you—'"

Eustace stopped me again.

"You are sure your uncle said those words?" he asked, scanning my face attentively in the moonlight.

"Quite sure. But I don't say what my uncle says. Pray don't think that!"

He suddenly pressed me to his bosom, and fixed his eyes on mine. His look frightened me.

"Good-by, Valeria!" he said. "Try and think kindly of me, my darling, when you are married to some happier man."

He attempted to leave me. I clung to him in an agony of terror that shook me from head to foot.

"What do you mean?" I asked, as soon as I could speak. "I am yours and yours only. What have I said, what have I done, to deserve those dreadful words?"

"We must part, my angel," he answered, sadly. "The fault is none of yours; the misfortune is all mine. My Valeria! how can you marry a man who is an object of suspicion to your nearest and dearest friends? I have led a dreary life. I have never found in any other woman the sympathy with me, the sweet comfort and companionship, that I find in you. Oh, it is hard to lose you! it is hard to go back again to my unfriended life! I must make the sacrifice, love, for your sake. I know no more why that letter

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is what it is than you do. Will your uncle believe me? will your friends believe me? One last kiss, Valeria! Forgive me for having loved you—passionately, devotedly loved you. Forgive me—and let me go!"

I held him desperately, recklessly. His eyes put me beside myself; his words filled me with a frenzy of despair.

"Go where you may," I said, "I go with you! Friends—reputation—I care nothing who I lose, or what I lose! Oh, Eustace, I am only a woman—don't madden me! I can't live without you. I must and will be your wife!"

Those wild words were all I could say before the misery and madness in me forced their way outward in a burst of sobs and tears.

He yielded. He soothed me with his charming voice; he brought me back to myself with his tender caresses. He called the bright heaven above us to witness that he devoted his whole life to me. He vowed—oh, in such solemn, such eloquent words!—that his one thought, night and day, should be to prove himself worthy of such love as mine. And had he not nobly redeemed the pledge? Had not the betrothal of that memorable night been followed by the betrothal at the altar, by the vows before God! Ah, what a life was before me! What more than mortal happiness was mine!

Again I lifted my head from his bosom to taste the dear delight of seeing him by my side—my life, my love, my husband, my own!

Hardly awakened yet from the absorbing memories of the past to the sweet realities of the present, I let my cheek touch his cheek, I whispered to him softly, "Oh, how I love you! how I love you!"

The next instant I started back from him. My heart stood still. I put my hand up to my face. What did I feel on my cheek? (*I* had not been weeping—I was too happy.) What did I feel on my cheek? A tear!

His face was still averted from me. I turned it toward me, with my own hands, by main force.

I looked at him—and saw my husband, on our wedding-day, with his eyes full of tears.

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CHAPTER III.

RAMSGATE SANDS.

EUSTACE succeeded in quieting my alarm. But I can hardly say that he succeeded in satisfying my mind as well.

He had been thinking, he told me, of the contrast between his past and his present life. Bitter remembrance of the years that had gone had risen in his memory, and had filled him with melancholy misgivings of his capacity to make my life with him a happy one. He had asked himself if he had not met me too late—if he were not already a man soured and broken by the disappointments and disenchantments of the past? Doubts such as these, weighing more and more heavily on his mind, had filled his eyes with the tears which I had discovered—tears which he now entreated me, by my love for him, to dismiss from my memory forever.

I forgave him, comforted him, revived him; but there were moments when the remembrance of what I had seen troubled me in secret, and when I asked myself if I really possessed my husband's full confidence as he possessed mine.

We left the train at Ramsgate.

The favorite watering-place was empty; the season was just over. Our arrangements for the wedding tour included a cruise to the Mediterranean in a yacht lent to Eustace by a friend. We were both fond of the sea, and we were equally desirous, considering the circumstances under which we had married, of escaping the notice of friends and acquaintances. With this object in view, having celebrated our marriage privately in London, we had decided on instructing the sailing-master of the yacht to join us at Ramsgate. At this port (when the season for visitors was at an end) we could embark far more privately than at the popular yachting stations situated in the Isle of Wight.

Three days passed—days of delicious solitude, of exquisite happiness, never to be forgotten, never to be lived over again, to the end of our lives!

Early on the morning of the fourth day, just before sunrise, a trifling incident happened, which was noticeable, nev-

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ertheless, as being strange to me in my experience of myself.

I awoke, suddenly and unaccountably, from a deep and dreamless sleep with an all-pervading sensation of nervous uneasiness which I had never felt before. In the old days at the Vicarage my capacity as a sound sleeper had been the subject of many a little harmless joke. From the moment when my head was on the pillow I had never known what it was to awake until the maid knocked at my door. At all seasons and times the long and uninterrupted repose of a child was the repose that I enjoyed.

And now I had awakened, without any assignable cause, hours before my usual time. I tried to compose myself to sleep again. The effort was useless. Such a restlessness possessed me that I was not even able to lie still in the bed. My husband was sleeping soundly by my side. In the fear of disturbing him I rose, and put on my dressing-gown and slippers.

I went to the window. The sun was just rising over the calm gray sea. For a while the majestic spectacle before me exercised a tranquilizing influence on the irritable condition of my nerves. But ere long the old restlessness returned upon me. I walked slowly to and fro in the room, until I was weary of the monotony of the exercise. I took up a book, and laid it aside again. My attention wandered; the author was powerless to recall it. I got on my feet once more, and looked at Eustace, and admired him and loved him in his tranquil sleep. I went back to the window, and wearied of the beautiful morning. I sat down before the glass and looked at myself. How haggard and worn I was already, through awaking before my usual time! I rose again, not knowing what to do next. The confinement to the four walls of the room began to be intolerable to me. I opened the door that led into my husband's dressing-room, and entered it, to try if the change would relieve me.

The first object that I noticed was his dressing-case, open on the toilet-table.

I took out the bottles and pots and brushes and combs, the knives and scissors in one compartment, the writing materials in another. I smelt the perfumes and pomatums; I busily cleaned and dusted the bottles with my handkerchief as I took them out. Little by little I completely emptied

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the dressing-case. It was lined with blue velvet. In one corner I noticed a tiny slip of loose blue silk. Taking it between my finger and thumb, and drawing it upward, I discovered that there was a false bottom to the case, forming a secret compartment for letters and papers. In my strange condition—capricious, idle, inquisitive—it was an amusement to me to take out the papers, just as I had taken out every thing else.

I found some receipted bills, which failed to interest me; some letters, which it is needless to say I laid aside after only looking at the addresses; and, under all, a photograph, face downward, with writing on the back of it. I looked at the writing, and saw these words:

"To my dear son, Eustace."

His mother! the woman who had so obstinately and mercilessly opposed herself to our marriage!

I eagerly turned the photograph, expecting to see a woman with a stern, ill-tempered, forbidding countenance. To my surprise, the face showed the remains of great beauty; the expression, though remarkably firm, was yet winning, tender, and kind. The gray hair was arranged in rows of little quaint old-fashioned curls on either side of the head, under a plain lace cap. At one corner of the mouth there was a mark, apparently a mole, which added to the characteristic peculiarity of the face. I looked and looked, fixing the portrait thoroughly in my mind. This woman, who had almost insulted me and my relatives, was, beyond all doubt or dispute, so far as appearances went, a person possessing unusual attractions—a person whom it would be a pleasure and a privilege to know.

I fell into deep thought. The discovery of the photograph quieted me as nothing had quieted me yet.

The striking of a clock down stairs in the hall warned me of the flight of time. I carefully put back all the objects in the dressing-case (beginning with the photograph) exactly as I had found them, and returned to the bedroom. As I looked at my husband, still sleeping peacefully, the question forced itself into my mind, What had made that genial, gentle mother of his so sternly bent on parting us? so harshly and pitilessly resolute in asserting her disapproval of our marriage?

Could I put my question openly to Eustace when he awoke?

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No; I was afraid to venture that length. It had been tacitly understood between us that we were not to speak of his mother—and, besides, he might be angry if he knew that I had opened the private compartment of his dressing-case.

After breakfast that morning we had news at last of the yacht. The vessel was safely moored in the inner harbor, and the sailing-master was waiting to receive my husband's orders on board.

Eustace hesitated at asking me to accompany him to the yacht. It would be necessary for him to examine the inventory of the vessel, and to decide questions, not very interesting to a woman, relating to charts and barometers, provisions and water. He asked me if I would wait for his return. The day was enticingly beautiful, and the tide was on the ebb. I pleaded for a walk on the sands; and the landlady at our lodgings, who happened to be in the room at the time, volunteered to accompany me and take care of me. It was agreed that we should walk as far as we felt inclined in the direction of Broadstairs, and that Eustace should follow and meet us on the sands, after having completed his arrangements on board the yacht.

In half an hour more the landlady and I were out on the beach.

The scene on that fine autumn morning was nothing less than enchanting. The brisk breeze, the brilliant sky, the flashing blue sea, the sun-bright cliffs and the tawny sands at their feet, the gliding procession of ships on the great marine highway of the English Channel—it was all so exhilarating, it was all so delightful, that I really believe if I had been by myself I could have danced for joy like a child. The one drawback to my happiness was the landlady's untiring tongue. She was a forward, good-natured, empty-headed woman, who persisted in talking, whether I listened or not, and who had a habit of perpetually addressing me as "Mrs. Woodville," which I thought a little overfamiliar as an assertion of equality from a person in her position to a person in mine.

We had been out, I should think, more than half an hour, when we overtook a lady walking before us on the beach.

Just as we were about to pass the stranger she took her handkerchief from her pocket, and accidentally drew out with it a letter, which fell unnoticed by her, on the sand.

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I was nearest to the letter, and I picked it up and offered it to the lady.

The instant she turned to thank me, I stood rooted to the spot. There was the original of the photographic portrait in the dressing-case! there was my husband's mother, standing face to face with me! I recognized the quaint little gray curls, the gentle, genial expression, the mole at the corner of the mouth. No mistake was possible. His mother herself!

The old lady, naturally enough, mistook my confusion for shyness. With perfect tact and kindness she entered into conversation with me. In another minute I was walking side by side with the woman who had sternly repudiated me as a member of her family; feeling, I own, terribly discomposed, and not knowing in the least whether I ought or ought not to assume the responsibility, in my husband's absence, of telling her who I was.

In another minute my familiar landlady, walking on the other side of my mother-in-law, decided the question for me. I happened to say that I supposed we must by that time be near the end of our walk—the little watering-place called Broadstairs. "Oh no, Mrs. Woodville!" cried the irrepressible woman, calling me by my name, as usual; "nothing like so near as you think!"

I looked with a beating heart at the old lady.

To my unutterable amazement, not the faintest gleam of recognition appeared in her face. Old Mrs. Woodville went on talking to young Mrs. Woodville just as composedly as if she had never heard her own name before in her life!

My face and manner must have betrayed something of the agitation that I was suffering. Happening to look at me at the end of her next sentence, the old lady started, and said, in her kindly way,

"I am afraid you have overexerted yourself. You are very pale—you are looking quite exhausted. Come and sit down here; let me lend you my smelling-bottle."

I followed her, quite helplessly, to the base of the cliff. Some fallen fragments of chalk offered us a seat. I vaguely heard the voluble landlady's expressions of sympathy and regret; I mechanically took the smelling-bottle which my husband's mother offered to me, after hearing my name, as an act of kindness to a stranger.

If I had only had myself to think of, I believe I should

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have provoked an explanation on the spot. But I had Eustace to think of. I was entirely ignorant of the relations, hostile or friendly, which existed between his mother and himself. What could I do?

In the mean time the old lady was still speaking to me with the most considerate sympathy. She too was fatigued, she said. She had passed a weary night at the bedside of a near relative staying at Ramsgate. Only the day before she had received a telegram announcing that one of her sisters was seriously ill. She was herself, thank God, still active and strong, and she had thought it her duty to start at once for Ramsgate. Toward the morning the state of the patient had improved. "The doctor assures me, ma'am, that there is no immediate danger; and I thought it might revive me, after my long night at the bedside, if I took a little walk on the beach."

I heard the words—I understood what they meant—but I was still too bewildered and too intimidated by my extraordinary position to be able to continue the conversation. The landlady had a sensible suggestion to make—the landlady was the next person who spoke.

"Here is a gentleman coming," she said to me, pointing in the direction of Ramsgate. "You can never walk back. Shall we ask him to send a chaise from Broadstairs to the gap in the cliff?"

The gentleman advanced a little nearer.

The landlady and I recognized him at the same moment. It was Eustace coming to meet us, as we had arranged. The irrepressible landlady gave the freest expression to her feelings. "Oh, Mrs. Woodville, ain't it lucky? here is Mr. Woodville himself."

Once more I looked at my mother-in-law. Once more the name failed to produce the slightest effect on her. Her sight was not so keen as ours; she had not recognized her son yet. *He* had young eyes like us, and he recognized his mother. For a moment he stopped like a man thunderstruck. Then he came on—his ruddy face white with suppressed emotion, his eyes fixed on his mother.

"You here!" he said to her.

"How do you do, Eustace?" she quietly rejoined. "Have *you* heard of your aunt's illness too? Did you know she was staying at Ramsgate?"

He made no answer. The landlady, drawing the inevita-

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ble inference from the words that she had just heard, looked from me to my mother-in-law in a state of amazement, which paralyzed even *her* tongue. I waited with my eyes on my husband, to see what he would do. If he had delayed acknowledging me another moment, the whole future course of my life might have been altered—I should have despised him.

He did *not* delay. He came to my side and took my hand.

"Do you know who this is?" he said to his mother.

She answered, looking at me with a courteous bend of her head:

"A lady I met on the beach, Eustace, who kindly restored to me a letter that I dropped. I think I heard the name" (she turned to the landlady): "Mrs. Woodville, was it not?"

My husband's fingers unconsciously closed on my hand with a grasp that hurt me. He set his mother right, it is only just to say, without one cowardly moment of hesitation.

"Mother," he said to her, very quietly, "this lady is my wife."

She had hitherto kept her seat. She now rose slowly and faced her son in silence. The first expression of surprise passed from her face. It was succeeded by the most terrible look of mingled indignation and contempt that I ever saw in a woman's eyes.

"I pity your wife," she said.

With those words and no more, lifting her hand she waved him back from her, and went on her way again, as we had first found her, alone.

CHAPTER IV.

ON THE WAY HOME.

LEFT by ourselves, there was a moment of silence among us. Eustace spoke first.

"Are you able to walk back?" he said to me. "Or shall we go on to Broadstairs, and return to Ramsgate by the railway?"

He put those questions as composedly, so far as his manner was concerned, as if nothing remarkable had happened. But his eyes and his lips betrayed him. They told me that he

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was suffering keenly in secret. The extraordinary scene that had just passed, far from depriving me of the last remains of my courage, had strung up my nerves and restored my self-possession. I must have been more or less than woman if my self-respect had not been wounded, if my curiosity had not been wrought to the highest pitch, by the extraordinary conduct of my husband's mother when Eustace presented me to her. What was the secret of her despising him, and pitying me? Where was the explanation of her incomprehensible apathy when my name was twice pronounced in her hearing? Why had she left us, as if the bare idea of remaining in our company was abhorrent to her? The foremost interest of my life was now the interest of penetrating these mysteries. Walk? I was in such a fever of expectation that I felt as if I could have walked to the world's end, if I could only keep my husband by my side, and question him on the way.

"I am quite recovered," I said. "Let us go back, as we came, on foot."

Eustace glanced at the landlady. The landlady understood him.

"I won't intrude my company on you, sir," she said, sharply. "I have some business to do at Broadstairs, and, now I am so near, I may as well go on. Good-morning, Mrs. Woodville."

She laid a marked emphasis on my name, and she added one significant look at parting, which (in the preoccupied state of my mind at that moment) I entirely failed to comprehend. There was neither time nor opportunity to ask her what she meant. With a stiff little bow, addressed to Eustace, she left us as his mother had left us, taking the way to Broadstairs, and walking rapidly.

At last we were alone.

I lost no time in beginning my inquiries; I wasted no words in prefatory phrases. In the plainest terms I put the question to him:

"What does your mother's conduct mean?"

Instead of answering, he burst into a fit of laughter—loud, coarse, hard laughter, so utterly unlike any sound I had ever yet heard issue from his lips, so strangely and shockingly foreign to his character as *I* understood it, that I stood still on the sands, and openly remonstrated with him.

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"Eustace! you are not like yourself," I said. "You almost frighten me."

He took no notice. He seemed to be pursuing some pleasant train of thought just started in his mind.

"So like my mother!" he exclaimed, with the air of a man who felt irresistibly diverted by some humorous idea of his own. "Tell me all about it, Valeria!"

"Tell *you!*" I repeated. "After what has happened, surely it is your duty to enlighten *me*."

"You don't see the joke," he said.

"I not only fail to see the joke," I rejoined, "I see something in your mother's language and your mother's behavior which justifies me in asking you for a serious explanation."

"My dear Valeria, if you understood my mother as well as I do, a serious explanation of her conduct would be the last thing in the world that you would expect from me. The idea of taking my mother seriously!" He burst out laughing again. "My darling, you don't know how you amuse me."

It was all forced; it was all unnatural. He, the most delicate, the most refined of men — a gentleman in the highest sense of the word—was coarse and loud and vulgar! My heart sank under a sudden sense of misgiving which, with all my love for him, it was impossible to resist. In unutterable distress and alarm I asked myself, "Is my husband beginning to deceive me? is he acting a part, and acting it badly, before we have been married a week?"

I set myself to win his confidence in a new way. He was evidently determined to force his own point of view on me. I determined, on my side, to accept his point of view.

"You tell me I don't understand your mother," I said, gently. "Will you help me to understand her?"

"It is not easy to help you to understand a woman who doesn't understand herself," he answered. "But I will try. The key to my poor dear mother's character is, in one word —Eccentricity."

If he had picked out the most inappropriate word in the whole dictionary to describe the lady whom I had met on the beach, "Eccentricity" would have been that word. A child who had seen what I saw, who had heard what I heard, would have discovered that he was trifling — grossly, recklessly trifling—with the truth.

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"Bear in mind what I have said," he proceeded; "and if you want to understand my mother, do what I asked you to do a minute since—tell me all about it. How came you to speak to her, to begin with?"

"Your mother told you, Eustace. I was walking just behind her, when she dropped a letter by accident—"

"No accident," he interposed. "The letter was dropped on purpose."

"Impossible!" I exclaimed. "Why should your mother drop the letter on purpose?"

"Use the key to her character, my dear. Eccentricity! My mother's odd way of making acquaintance with you."

"Making acquaintance with me? I have just told you that I was walking behind her. She could not have known of the existence of such a person as myself until I spoke to her first."

"So you suppose, Valeria."

"I am certain of it."

"Pardon me—you don't know my mother as I do."

I began to lose all patience with him.

"Do you mean to tell me," I said, "that your mother was out on the sands to-day for the express purpose of making acquaintance with Me?"

"I have not the slightest doubt of it," he answered, coolly.

"Why, she didn't even recognize my name!" I burst out. "Twice over the landlady called me Mrs. Woodville in your mother's hearing, and twice over, I declare to you on my word of honor, it failed to produce the slightest impression on her. She looked and acted as if she had never heard her own name before in her life."

"'Acted' is the right word," he said, just as composedly as before. ("The women on the stage are not the only women who can act.) My mother's object was to make herself thoroughly acquainted with you, and to throw you off your guard by speaking in the character of a stranger. It is exactly like her to take that roundabout way of satisfying her curiosity about a daughter-in-law she disapproves of. If I had not joined you when I did, you would have been examined and cross-examined about yourself and about me, and you would innocently have answered under the impression that you were speaking to a chance acquaintance. There is my mother all over! She is your enemy, remember—not

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your friend. She is not in search of your merits, but of your faults. And you wonder why no impression was produced on her when she heard you addressed by your name! Poor innocent! I can tell you this—you only discovered my mother in her own character when I put an end to the mystification by presenting you to each other. You saw how angry she was, and now you know why."

I let him go on without saying a word. I listened—oh! with such a heavy heart, with such a crushing sense of disenchantment and despair! The idol of my worship, the companion, guide, protector of my life—had he fallen so low? could he stoop to such shameless prevarication as this?

Was there one word of truth in all that he had said to me? Yes! If I had not discovered his mother's portrait, it was certainly true that I should not have known, not even have vaguely suspected, who she really was. Apart from this, the rest was lying, clumsy lying, which said one thing at least for him, that he was not accustomed to falsehood and deceit. Good Heavens! if my husband was to be believed, his mother must have tracked us to London, tracked us to the church, tracked us to the railway station, tracked us to Ramsgate! To assert that she knew me by sight as the wife of Eustace, and that she had waited on the sands and dropped her letter for the express purpose of making acquaintance with me, was also to assert every one of these monstrous probabilities to be facts that had actually happened!

I could say no more. I walked by his side in silence, feeling the miserable conviction that there was an abyss in the shape of a family secret between my husband and me. In the spirit, if not in the body, we were separated, after a married life of barely four days.

"Valeria," he asked, "have you nothing to say to me?"

"Nothing."

"Are you not satisfied with my explanation?"

I detected a slight tremor in his voice as he put that question. The tone was, for the first time since we had spoken together, a tone that my experience associated with him in certain moods of his which I had already learned to know well. Among the hundred thousand mysterious influences which a man exercises over a woman who loves him, I doubt if there is any more irresistible to her than the influence of

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his voice. I am not one of those women who shed tears on the smallest provocation: it is not in my temperament, I suppose. But when I heard that little natural change in his tone my mind went back (I can't say why) to the happy day when I first owned that I loved him. I burst out crying.

He suddenly stood still, and took me by the hand. He tried to look at me.

I kept my head down and my eyes on the ground. I was ashamed of my weakness and my want of spirit. I was determined not to look at him.

In the silence that followed he suddenly dropped on his knees at my feet, with a cry of despair that cut through me like a knife.

"Valeria! I am vile—I am false—I am unworthy of you. Don't believe a word of what I have been saying—lies, lies, cowardly, contemptible lies! You don't know what I have gone through; you don't know how I have been tortured. Oh, my darling, try not to despise me! I must have been beside myself when I spoke to you as I did. You looked hurt; you looked offended; I didn't know what to do. I wanted to spare you even a moment's pain—I wanted to hush it up, and have done with it. For God's sake don't ask me to tell you any more! My love! my angel! it's something between my mother and me; it's nothing that need disturb you; it's nothing to any body now. I love you, I adore you; my whole heart and soul are yours. Be satisfied with that. Forget what has happened. You shall never see my mother again. We will leave this place to-morrow. We will go away in the yacht. Does it matter where we live, so long as we live for each other? Forgive and forget! Oh, Valeria, Valeria, forgive and forget!"

Unutterable misery was in his face; unutterable misery was in his voice. Remember this. And remember that I loved him.

"It is easy to forgive," I said, sadly. "For your sake, Eustace, I will try to forget."

I raised him gently as I spoke. He kissed my hands with the air of a man who was too humble to venture on any more familiar expression of his gratitude than that. The sense of embarrassment between us as we slowly walked on again was so unendurable that I actually cast about in my

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mind for a subject of conversation, as if I had been in the company of a stranger! In mercy to *him*, I asked him to tell me about the yacht.

He seized on the subject as a drowning man seizes on the hand that rescues him.

On that one poor little topic of the yacht he talked, talked, talked, as if his life depended upon his not being silent for an instant on the rest of the way back. To me it was dreadful to hear him. I could estimate what he was suffering by the violence which he—ordinarily a silent and thoughtful man—was now doing to his true nature, and to the prejudices and habits of his life. With the greatest difficulty I preserved my self-control until we reached the door of our lodgings. There I was obliged to plead fatigue, and ask him to let me rest for a little while in the solitude of my own room.

"Shall we sail to-morrow?" he called after me suddenly, as I ascended the stairs.

Sail with him to the Mediterranean the next day? Pass weeks and weeks absolutely alone with him, in the narrow limits of a vessel, with his horrible secret parting us in sympathy farther and farther from each other day by day? I shuddered at the thought of it.

"To-morrow is rather a short notice," I said. "Will you give me a little longer time to prepare for the voyage?"

"Oh yes—take any time you like," he answered, not (as I thought) very willingly. "While you are resting—there are still one or two little things to be settled—I think I will go back to the yacht. Is there any thing I can do for you, Valeria, before I go?"

"Nothing—thank you, Eustace."

He hastened away to the harbor. Was he afraid of his own thoughts, if he were left by himself in the house. Was the company of the sailing-master and the steward better than no company at all?

It was useless to ask. What did I know about him or his thoughts? I locked myself into my room.

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CHAPTER V.

THE LANDLADY'S DISCOVERY.

I SAT down, and tried to compose my spirits. Now or never was the time to decide what it was my duty to my husband and my duty to myself to do next.

The effort was beyond me. Worn out in mind and body alike, I was perfectly incapable of pursuing any regular train of thought. I vaguely felt—if I left things as they were—that I could never hope to remove the shadow which now rested on the married life that had begun so brightly. We might live together, so as to save appearances. But to forget what had happened, or to feel satisfied with my position, was beyond the power of my will. My tranquillity as a woman—perhaps my dearest interests as a wife—depended absolutely on penetrating the mystery of my mother-in-law's conduct, and on discovering the true meaning of the wild words of penitence and self-reproach which my husband had addressed to me on our way home.

So far I could advance toward realizing my position—and no farther. When I asked myself what was to be done next, hopeless confusion, maddening doubt, filled my mind, and transformed me into the most listless and helpless of living women.

I gave up the struggle. In dull, stupid, obstinate despair, I threw myself on my bed, and fell from sheer fatigue into a broken, uneasy sleep.

I was awakened by a knock at the door of my room.

Was it my husband? I started to my feet as the idea occurred to me. Was some new trial of my patience and my fortitude at hand? Half nervously, half irritably, I asked who was there.

The landlady's voice answered me.

"Can I speak to you for a moment, if you please?"

I opened the door. There is no disguising it—though I loved him so dearly, though I had left home and friends for his sake—it was a relief to me, at that miserable time, to know that Eustace had not returned to the house.

The landlady came in, and took a seat, without waiting to

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be invited, close by my side. She was no longer satisfied with merely asserting herself as my equal. Ascending another step on the social ladder, she took her stand on the platform of patronage, and charitably looked down on me as an object of pity.

"I have just returned from Broadstairs," she began. "I hope you will do me the justice to believe that I sincerely regret what has happened."

I bowed, and said nothing.

"As a gentlewoman myself," proceeded the landlady—"reduced by family misfortunes to let lodgings, but still a gentlewoman—I feel sincere sympathy with you. I will even go farther than that. I will take it on myself to say that I don't blame *you*. No, no. I noticed that you were as much shocked and surprised at your mother-in-law's conduct as I was; and that is saying a great deal—a great deal indeed. However, I have a duty to perform. It is disagreeable, but it is not the less a duty on that account. I am a single woman; not from want of opportunities of changing my condition—I beg you will understand that—but from choice. Situated as I am, I receive only the most respectable persons into my house. There must be no mystery about the positions of *my* lodgers. Mystery in the position of a lodger carries with it—what shall I say? I don't wish to offend you—I will say, a certain Taint. Very well. Now I put it to your own common-sense. Can a person in my position be expected to expose herself to—Taint? I make these remarks in a sisterly and Christian spirit. As a lady yourself—I will even go the length of saying a cruelly used lady—you will, I am sure, understand—"

I could endure it no longer. I stopped her there.

"I understand," I said, "that you wish to give us notice to quit your lodgings. When do you want us to go?"

The landlady held up a long, lean, red hand, in a sorrowful and sisterly protest.

"No," she said. "Not that tone; not those looks. It's natural you should be annoyed; it's natural you should be angry. But do—now do please try and control yourself. I put it to your own common-sense (we will say a week for the notice to quit)—why not treat me like a friend? You don't know what a sacrifice, what a cruel sacrifice, I have made—entirely for your sake."

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"You?" I exclaimed. "What sacrifice?"

"What sacrifice?" repeated the landlady. "I have degraded myself as a gentlewoman. I have forfeited my own self-respect." She paused for a moment, and suddenly seized my hand in a perfect frenzy of friendship. "Oh, my poor dear!" cried this intolerable person. "I have discovered every thing. A villain has deceived you. You are no more married than I am!"

I snatched my hand out of hers, and rose angrily from my chair.

"Are you mad?" I asked.

The landlady raised her eyes to the ceiling with the air of a person who had deserved martyrdom, and who submitted to it cheerfully.

"Yes," she said. "I begin to think I *am* mad—mad to have devoted myself to an ungrateful woman, to a person who doesn't appreciate a sisterly and Christian sacrifice of self. Well, I won't do it again. Heaven forgive me—I won't do it again!"

"Do what again?" I asked.

"Follow your mother-in-law," cried the landlady, suddenly dropping the character of a martyr, and assuming the character of a vixen in its place. "I blush when I think of it. I followed that most respectable person every step of the way to her own door."

Thus far my pride had held me up. It sustained me no longer. I dropped back again into my chair, in undisguised dread of what was coming next.

"I gave you a look when I left you on the beach," pursued the landlady, growing louder and louder and redder and redder as she went on. "A grateful woman would have understood that look. Never mind! I won't do it again. I overtook your mother-in-law at the gap in the cliff. I followed her—oh, how I feel the disgrace of it *now!*—I followed her to the station at Broadstairs. She went back by train to Ramsgate. *I* went back by train to Ramsgate. She walked to her lodgings. *I* walked to her lodgings. Behind her. Like a dog. Oh, the disgrace of it! Providentially, as I then thought—I don't know what to think of it now—the landlord of the house happened to be a friend of mine, and happened to be at home. We have no secrets from each other where lodgers are concerned. I am in a position to

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tell you, madam, what your mother-in-law's name really is. She knows nothing about any such person as Mrs. Woodville, for an excellent reason. Her name is *not* Woodville. Her name (and consequently her son's name) is Macallan—Mrs. Macallan, widow of the late General Macallan. Yes! your husband is *not* your husband. You are neither maid, wife, nor widow. You are worse than nothing, madam, and you leave my house!"

I stopped her as she opened the door to go out. She had roused *my* temper by this time. The doubt that she had cast on my marriage was more than mortal resignation could endure.

"Give me Mrs. Macallan's address," I said.

The landlady's anger receded into the background, and the landlady's astonishment appeared in its place.

"You don't mean to tell me you are going to the old lady herself?" she said.

"Nobody but the old lady can tell me what I want to know," I answered. "Your discovery (as you call it) may be enough for *you*; it is not enough for *me*. How do we know that Mrs. Macallan may not have been twice married? and that her first husband's name may not have been Woodville?"

The landlady's astonishment subsided in its turn, and the landlady's curiosity succeeded as the ruling influence of the moment. Substantially, as I have already said of her, she was a good-natured woman. Her fits of temper (as is usual with good-natured people) were of the hot and the short-lived sort, easily roused and easily appeased.

"I never thought of that," she said. "Look here! if I give you the address, will you promise to tell me all about it when you come back?"

I gave the required promise, and received the address in return.

"No malice," said the landlady, suddenly resuming all her old familiarity with me.

"No malice," I answered, with all possible cordiality on my side.

In ten minutes more I was at my mother-in-law's lodgings.

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CHAPTER VI.

MY OWN DISCOVERY.

FORTUNATELY for me, the landlord did not open the door when I rang. A stupid maid-of-all-work, who never thought of asking me for my name, let me in. Mrs. Macallan was at home, and had no visitors with her. Giving me this information, the maid led the way up stairs, and showed me into the drawing-room without a word of announcement.

My mother-in-law was sitting alone, near a work-table, knitting. The moment I appeared in the doorway she laid aside her work, and, rising, signed to me with a commanding gesture of her hand to let her speak first.

"I know what you have come here for," she said. "You have come here to ask questions. Spare yourself, and spare me. I warn you beforehand that I will not answer any questions relating to my son."

It was firmly, but not harshly said. I spoke firmly in my turn.

"I have not come here, madam, to ask questions about your son," I answered. "I have come, if you will excuse me, to ask you a question about yourself."

She started, and looked at me keenly over her spectacles. I had evidently taken her by surprise.

"What is the question?" she inquired.

"I now know for the first time, madam, that your name is Macallan," I said. "Your son has married me under the name of Woodville. The only honorable explanation of this circumstance, so far as I know, is that my husband is your son by a first marriage. The happiness of my life is at stake. Will you kindly consider my position? Will you let me ask you if you have been twice married, and if the name of your first husband was Woodville?"

She considered a little before she replied.

"The question is a perfectly natural one in your position," she said. "But I think I had better not answer it."

"May I ask why?"

"Certainly. If I answered you, I should only lead to oth-

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er questions, and I should be obliged to decline replying to them. I am sorry to disappoint you. I repeat what I said on the beach—I have no other feeling than a feeling of sympathy toward *you*. If you had consulted me before your marriage, I should willingly have admitted you to my fullest confidence. It is now too late. You are married. I recommend you to make the best of your position, and to rest satisfied with things as they are."

"Pardon me, madam," I remonstrated. "As things are, I don't know that I *am* married. All I know, unless you enlighten me, is that your son has married me under a name that is not his own. How can I be sure whether I am or am not his lawful wife?"

"I believe there can be no doubt that you are lawfully my son's wife," Mrs. Macallan answered. "At any rate it is easy to take a legal opinion on the subject. If the opinion is that you are *not* lawfully married, my son (whatever his faults and failings may be) is a gentleman. He is incapable of willfully deceiving a woman who loves and trusts him. He will do you justice. On my side, I will do you justice too. If the legal opinion is adverse to your rightful claims, I will promise to answer any questions which you may choose to put to me. As it is, I believe you to be lawfully my son's wife; and I say again, make the best of your position. Be satisfied with your husband's affectionate devotion to you. If you value your peace of mind and the happiness of your life to come, abstain from attempting to know more than you know now."

She sat down again with the air of a woman who had said her last word.

Further remonstrance would be useless; I could see it in her face; I could hear it in her voice. I turned round to open the drawing-room door.

"You are hard on me, madam," I said at parting. "I am at your mercy, and I must submit."

She suddenly looked up, and answered me with a flush on her kind and handsome old face.

"As God is my witness, child, I pity you from the bottom of my heart!"

After that extraordinary outburst of feeling, she took up her work with one hand, and signed to me with the other to leave her.

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I bowed to her in silence, and went out.

I had entered the house far from feeling sure of the course I ought to take in the future. I left the house positively resolved, come what might of it, to discover the secret which the mother and son were hiding from me. As to the question of the name, I saw it now in the light in which I ought to have seen it from the first. If Mrs. Macallan *had* been twice married (as I had rashly chosen to suppose), she would certainly have shown some signs of recognition when she heard me addressed by her first husband's name. Where all else was mystery, there was no mystery here. Whatever his reasons might be, Eustace had assuredly married me under an assumed name.

Approaching the door of our lodgings, I saw my husband walking backward and forward before it, evidently waiting for my return. If he asked me the question, I decided to tell him frankly where I had been, and what had passed between his mother and myself.

He hurried to meet me with signs of disturbance in his face and manner.

"I have a favor to ask of you, Valeria," he said. "Do you mind returning with me to London by the next train?"

I looked at him. In the popular phrase, I could hardly believe my own ears.

"It's a matter of business," he went on, "of no interest to any one but myself, and it requires my presence in London. You don't wish to sail just yet, as I understand? I can't leave you here by yourself. Have you any objection to going to London for a day or two?"

I made no objection. I too was eager to go back.

In London I could obtain the legal opinion which would tell me whether I were lawfully married to Eustace or not. In London I should be within reach of the help and advice of my father's faithful old clerk. I could confide in Benjamin as I could confide in no one else. Dearly as I loved my uncle Starkweather, I shrank from communicating with him in my present need. His wife had told me that I had made a bad beginning when I signed the wrong name in the marriage register. Shall I own it? My pride shrank from acknowledging, before the honeymoon was over, that his wife was right.

In two hours more we were on the railway again. Ah,

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what a contrast that second journey presented to the first! On our way to Ramsgate every body could see that we were a newly wedded couple. On our way to London nobody noticed us; nobody would have doubted that we had been married for years.

We went to a private hotel in the neighborhood of Portland Place.

After breakfast the next morning Eustace announced that he must leave me to attend to his business. I had previously mentioned to him that I had some purchases to make in London. He was quite willing to let me go out alone, on the condition that I should take a carriage provided by the hotel.

My heart was heavy that morning: I felt the unacknowledged estrangement that had grown up between us very keenly. My husband opened the door to go out, and came back to kiss me before he left me by myself. That little after-thought of tenderness touched me. Acting on the impulse of the moment, I put my arm round his neck, and held him to me gently.

"My darling," I said, "give me all your confidence. I know that you love me. Show that you can trust me too."

He sighed bitterly, and drew back from me—in sorrow, not in anger.

"I thought we had agreed, Valeria, not to return to that subject again," he said. "You only distress yourself and distress me."

He left the room abruptly, as if he dare not trust himself to say more. It is better not to dwell on what I felt after this last repulse. I ordered the carriage at once. I was eager to find a refuge from my own thoughts in movement and change.

I drove to the shops first, and made the purchases which I had mentioned to Eustace by way of giving a reason for going out. Then I devoted myself to the object which I really had at heart. I went to old Benjamin's little villa, in the by-ways of St. John's Wood.

As soon as he had got over the first surprise of seeing me, he noticed that I looked pale and care-worn. I confessed at once that I was in trouble. We sat down together by the bright fireside in his little library (Benjamin, as far as his means would allow, was a great collector of books), and there I told my old friend, frankly and truly, all that I have told here.

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He was too distressed to say much. He fervently pressed my hand; he fervently thanked God that my father had not lived to hear what he had heard. Then, after a pause, he repeated my mother-in-law's name to himself in a doubting, questioning tone.

"Macallan?" he said. "Macallan? Where have I heard that name? Why does it sound as if it wasn't strange to me?"

He gave up pursuing the lost recollection, and asked, very earnestly, what he could do for me. I answered that he could help me, in the first place, to put an end to the doubt—an unendurable doubt to *me*—whether I were lawfully married or not. His energy of the old days when he had conducted my father's business showed itself again the moment I said those words.

"Your carriage is at the door, my dear," he answered. "Come with me to my own lawyer, without wasting another moment."

We drove to Lincoln's Inn Fields.

At my request Benjamin put my case to the lawyer as the case of a friend in whom I was interested. The answer was given without hesitation. I had married, honestly believing my husband's name to be the name under which I had known him. The witnesses to my marriage—my uncle, my aunt, and Benjamin—had acted, as I had acted, in perfect good faith. Under those circumstances, there was no doubt about the law. I was legally married. Macallan or Woodville, I was his wife.

This decisive answer relieved me of a heavy anxiety. I accepted my old friend's invitation to return with him to St. John's Wood, and to make my luncheon at his early dinner.

On our way back I reverted to the one other subject which was now uppermost in my mind. I reiterated my resolution to discover why Eustace had not married me under the name that was really his own.

My companion shook his head, and entreated me to consider well beforehand what I proposed doing. His advice to me—so strangely do extremes meet!—was my mother-in-law's advice, repeated almost word for word. "Leave things as they are, my dear. In the interest of your own peace of mind be satisfied with your husband's affection. You know that you are his wife, and you know that he loves you. Surely that is enough?"

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I had but one answer to this. Life, on such conditions as my good friend had just stated, would be simply unendurable to me. Nothing could alter my resolution—for this plain reason, that nothing could reconcile me to living with my husband on the terms on which we were living now. It only rested with Benjamin to say whether he would give a helping hand to his master's daughter or not.

The old man's answer was thoroughly characteristic of him.

"Mention what you want of me, my dear," was all he said.

We were then passing a street in the neighborhood of Portman Square. I was on the point of speaking again, when the words were suspended on my lips. I saw my husband.

He was just descending the steps of a house—as if leaving it after a visit. His eyes were on the ground: he did not look up when the carriage passed. As the servant closed the door behind him, I noticed that the number of the house was Sixteen. At the next corner I saw the name of the street. It was Vivian Place.

"Do you happen to know who lives at Number Sixteen Vivian Place?" I inquired of my companion.

Benjamin started. My question was certainly a strange one, after what he had just said to me.

"No," he replied. "Why do you ask?"

"I have just seen Eustace leaving that house."

"Well, my dear, and what of that?"

"My mind is in a bad way, Benjamin. Every thing my husband does that I don't understand rouses my suspicion now."

Benjamin lifted his withered old hands, and let them drop on his knees again in mute lamentation over me.

"I tell you again," I went on, "my life is unendurable to me. I won't answer for what I may do if I am left much longer to live in doubt of the one man on earth whom I love. You have had experience of the world. Suppose you were shut out from Eustace's confidence, as I am? Suppose you were as fond of him as I am, and felt your position as bitterly as I feel it—what would you do?"

The question was plain. Benjamin met it with a plain answer.

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"I think I should find my way, my dear, to some intimate friend of your husband's," he said, "and make a few discreet inquiries in that quarter first."

Some intimate friend of my husband's? I considered with myself. There was but one friend of his whom I knew of—my uncle's correspondent, Major Fitz-David. My heart beat fast as the name recurred to my memory. Suppose I followed Benjamin's advice? Suppose I applied to Major Fitz-David? Even if he, too, refused to answer my questions, my position would not be more helpless than it was now. I determined to make the attempt. The only difficulty in the way, so far, was to discover the Major's address. I had given back his letter to Doctor Starkweather, at my uncle's own request. I remembered that the address from which the Major wrote was somewhere in London—and I remembered no more.

"Thank you, old friend; you have given me an idea already," I said to Benjamin. "Have you got a Directory in your house?"

"No, my dear," he rejoined, looking very much puzzled. "But I can easily send out and borrow one."

We returned to the villa. The servant was sent at once to the nearest stationer's to borrow a Directory. She returned with the book just as we sat down to dinner. Searching for the Major's name under the letter F, I was startled by a new discovery.

"Benjamin!" I said. "This is a strange coincidence. Look here!"

He looked where I pointed. Major Fitz-David's address was Number Sixteen Vivian Place—the very house which I had seen my husband leaving as we passed in the carriage!

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE WAY TO THE MAJOR.

"YES," said Benjamin. "It *is* a coincidence certainly. Still—"

He stopped and looked at me. He seemed a little doubtful how I might receive what he had it in his mind to say to me next.

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"Go on," I said.

"Still, my dear, I see nothing suspicious in what has happened," he resumed. "To my mind it is quite natural that your husband, being in London, should pay a visit to one of his friends. And it's equally natural that we should pass through Vivian Place on our way back here. This seems to be the reasonable view. What do *you* say?"

"I have told you already that my mind is in a bad way about Eustace," I answered. "*I* say there is some motive at the bottom of his visit to Major Fitz-David. It is not an ordinary call. I am firmly convinced it is not an ordinary call!"

"Suppose we get on with our dinner?" said Benjamin, resignedly. "Here is a loin of mutton, my dear—an ordinary loin of mutton. Is there any thing suspicious in *that?* Very well, then. Show me you have confidence in the mutton; please eat. There's the wine, again. No mystery, Valeria, in that claret—I'll take my oath it's nothing but innocent juice of the grape. If we can't believe in any thing else, let's believe in juice of the grape. Your good health, my dear."

I adapted myself to the old man's genial humor as readily as I could. We ate and we drank, and we talked of by-gone days. For a little while I was almost happy in the company of my fatherly old friend. Why was I not old too? Why had I not done with love, with its certain miseries, its transient delights, its cruel losses, its bitterly doubtful gains? The last autumn flowers in the window basked brightly in the last of the autumn sunlight. Benjamin's little dog digested his dinner in perfect comfort on the hearth. The parrot in the next house screeched his vocal accomplishments cheerfully. I don't doubt that it is a great privilege to be a human being. But may it not be the happier destiny to be an animal or a plant?

The brief respite was soon over; all my anxieties came back. I was once more a doubting, discontented, depressed creature when I rose to say good-by.

"Promise, my dear, you will do nothing rash," said Benjamin, as he opened the door for me.

"Is it rash to go to Major Fitz-David?" I asked.

"Yes—if you go by yourself. You don't know what sort of man he is; you don't know how he may receive you. Let me try first, and pave the way, as the saying is. Trust my

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experience, my dear. In matters of this sort there is nothing like paving the way."

I considered a moment. It was due to my good friend to consider before I said No.

Reflection decided me on taking the responsibility, whatever it might be, upon my own shoulders. Good or bad, compassionate or cruel, the Major was a man. A woman's influence was the safest influence to trust with him, where the end to be gained was such an end as I had in view. It was not easy to say this to Benjamin without the danger of mortifying him. I made an appointment with the old man to call on me the next morning at the hotel, and talk the matter over again. Is it very disgraceful to me to add that I privately determined (if the thing could be accomplished) to see Major Fitz-David in the interval?

"Do nothing rash, my dear. In your own interests, do nothing rash!"

Those were Benjamin's last words when we parted for the day.

I found Eustace waiting for me in our sitting-room at the hotel. His spirits seemed to have revived since I had seen him last. He advanced to meet me cheerfully, with an open sheet of paper in his hand.

"My business is settled, Valeria, sooner than I had expected," he began, gayly. "Are your purchases all completed, fair lady? Are *you* free too?"

I had learned already (God help me!) to distrust his fits of gayety. I asked, cautiously,

"Do you mean free for to-day?"

"Free for to-day, and to-morrow, and next week, and next month—and next year too, for all I know to the contrary," he answered, putting his arm boisterously round my waist. "Look here!"

He lifted the open sheet of paper which I had noticed in his hand, and held it for me to read. It was a telegram to the sailing-master of the yacht, informing him that we had arranged to return to Ramsgate that evening, and that we should be ready to sail for the Mediterranean with the next tide.

"I only waited for your return," said Eustace, "to send the telegram to the office."

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He crossed the room as he spoke to ring the bell. I stopped him.

"I am afraid I can't go to Ramsgate to-day," I said.

"Why not?" he asked, suddenly changing his tone, and speaking sharply.

I dare say it will seem ridiculous to some people, but it is really true that he shook my resolution to go to Major Fitz-David when he put his arm round me. Even a mere passing caress from *him* stole away my heart, and softly tempted me to yield. But the ominous alteration in his tone made another woman of me. I felt once more, and felt more strongly than ever, that in my critical position it was useless to stand still, and worse than useless to draw back.

"I am sorry to disappoint you," I answered. "It is impossible for me (as I told you at Ramsgate) to be ready to sail at a moment's notice. I want time."

"What for?"

Not only his tone, but his look, when he put that second question, jarred on every nerve in me. He roused in my mind—I can't tell how or why—an angry sense of the indignity that he had put upon his wife in marrying her under a false name. Fearing that I should answer rashly, that I should say something which my better sense might regret, if I spoke at that moment, I said nothing. Women alone can estimate what it cost me to be silent. And men alone can understand how irritating my silence must have been to my husband.

"You want time?" he repeated. "I ask you again—what for?"

My self-control, pushed to its extremest limits, failed me. The rash reply flew out of my lips, like a bird set free from a cage.

"I want time," I said, "to accustom myself to my right name."

He suddenly stepped up to me with a dark look.

"What do you mean by your 'right name?'"

"Surely you know," I answered. "I once thought I was Mrs. Woodville. I have now discovered that I am Mrs. Macallan."

He started back at the sound of his own name as if I had struck him—he started back, and turned so deadly pale that I feared he was going to drop at my feet in a swoon. Oh,

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my tongue! my tongue! Why had I not controlled my miserable, mischievous woman's tongue!

"I didn't mean to alarm you, Eustace," I said. "I spoke at random. Pray forgive me."

He waved his hand impatiently, as if my penitent words were tangible things—ruffling, worrying things, like flies in summer—which he was putting away from him.

"What else have you discovered?" he asked, in low, stern tones.

"Nothing, Eustace."

"Nothing?" He paused as he repeated the word, and passed his hand over his forehead in a weary way. "Nothing, of course," he resumed, speaking to himself, "or she would not be here." He paused once more, and looked at me searchingly. "Don't say again what you said just now," he went on. "For your own sake, Valeria, as well as for mine." He dropped into the nearest chair, and said no more.

I certainly heard the warning; but the only words which really produced an impression on my mind were the words preceding it, which he had spoken to himself. He had said: "Nothing, of course, *or she would not be here.*" If I had found out some other truth besides the truth about the name, would it have prevented me from ever returning to my husband? Was that what he meant? Did the sort of discovery that he contemplated mean something so dreadful that it would have parted us at once and forever? I stood by his chair in silence, and tried to find the answer to those terrible questions in his face. It used to speak to me so eloquently when it spoke of his love. It told me nothing now.

He sat for some time without looking at me, lost in his own thoughts. Then he rose on a sudden and took his hat.

"The friend who lent me the yacht is in town," he said. "I suppose I had better see him, and say our plans are changed." He tore up the telegram with an air of sullen resignation as he spoke. "You are evidently determined not to go to sea with me," he resumed. "We had better give it up. I don't see what else is to be done. Do you?"

His tone was almost a tone of contempt. I was too depressed about myself, too alarmed about *him*, to resent it.

"Decide as you think best, Eustace," I said, sadly. "Every way, the prospect seems a hopeless one. As long as I am

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shut out from your confidence, it matters little whether we live on land or at sea—we can not live happily."

"If you could control your curiosity," he answered, sternly, "we might live happily enough. I thought I had married a woman who was superior to the vulgar failings of her sex. A good wife should know better than to pry into affairs of her husband's with which she had no concern."

Surely it was hard to bear this? However, I bore it.

"Is it no concern of mine?" I asked, gently, "when I find that my husband has not married me under his family name? Is it no concern of mine when I hear your mother say, in so many words, that she pities your wife? It is hard, Eustace, to accuse me of curiosity because I can not accept the unendurable position in which you have placed me. Your cruel silence is a blight on my happiness, and a threat to my future. Your cruel silence is estranging us from each other at the beginning of our married life. And you blame me for feeling this? You tell me I am prying into affairs which are yours only? They are *not* yours only: I have my interest in them too. Oh, my darling, why do you trifle with our love and our confidence in each other? Why do you keep me in the dark?"

He answered with a stern and pitiless brevity,

"For your own good."

I turned away from him in silence. He was treating me like a child.

He followed me. Putting one hand heavily on my shoulder, he forced me to face him once more.

"Listen to this," he said. "What I am now going to say to you I say for the first and last time. Valeria! if you ever discover what I am now keeping from your knowledge—from that moment you live a life of torture; your tranquillity is gone. Your days will be days of terror; your nights will be full of horrid dreams—through no fault of mine, mind! through no fault of mine! Every day of your life you will feel some new distrust, some growing fear of me, and you will be doing me the vilest injustice all the time. On my faith as a Christian, on my honor as a man, if you stir a step further in this matter, there is an end to your happiness for the rest of your life! Think seriously of what I have said to you; you will have time to reflect. I am going to tell my friend that our plans for the Mediterranean are given up. I

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shall not be back before the evening." He sighed, and looked at me with unutterable sadness. "I love you, Valeria," he said. "In spite of all that has passed, as God is my witness, I love you more dearly than ever."

So he spoke. So he left me.

I must write the truth about myself, however strange it may appear. I don't pretend to be able to analyze my own motives; I don't pretend even to guess how other women might have acted in my place. It is true of *me*, that my husband's terrible warning—all the more terrible in its mystery and its vagueness—produced no deterrent effect on my mind: it only stimulated my resolution to discover what he was hiding from me. He had not been gone two minutes before I rang the bell and ordered the carriage, to take me to Major Fitz-David's house in Vivian Place.

Walking to and fro while I was waiting—I was in such a fever of excitement that it was impossible for me to sit still—I accidentally caught sight of myself in the glass.

My own face startled me, it looked so haggard and so wild. Could I present myself to a stranger, could I hope to produce the necessary impression in my favor, looking as I looked at that moment? For all I knew to the contrary, my whole future might depend upon the effect which I produced on Major Fitz-David at first sight. I rang the bell again, and sent a message to one of the chambermaids to follow me to my room.

I had no maid of my own with me: the stewardess of the yacht would have acted as my attendant if we had held to our first arrangement. It mattered little, so long as I had a woman to help me. The chambermaid appeared. I can give no better idea of the disordered and desperate condition of my mind at that time than by owning that I actually consulted this perfect stranger on the question of my personal appearance. She was a middle-aged woman, with a large experience of the world and its wickedness written legibly on her manner and on her face. I put money into the woman's hand, enough of it to surprise her. She thanked me with a cynical smile, evidently placing her own evil interpretation on my motive for bribing her.

"What can I do for you, ma'am?" she asked, in a confidential whisper. "Don't speak loud! there is somebody in the next room."

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"Bear in mind, ma'am, what you looked like when you sent for me," she said. "And just see for yourself how you look now. You're the prettiest woman (of your style) in London. Ah, what a thing pearl-powder is, when one knows how to use it!"

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FRIEND OF THE WOMEN.

I FIND it impossible to describe my sensations while the carriage was taking me to Major Fitz-David's house. I doubt, indeed, if I really felt or thought at all, in the true sense of those words.

From the moment when I had resigned myself into the hands of the chambermaid I seemed in some strange way to have lost my ordinary identity—to have stepped out of my own character. At other times my temperament was of the nervous and anxious sort, and my tendency was to exaggerate any difficulties that might place themselves in my way. At other times, having before me the prospect of a critical interview with a stranger, I should have considered with myself what it might be wise to pass over, and what it might be wise to say. Now I never gave my coming interview with the major a thought; I felt an unreasoning confidence in myself, and a blind faith in *him*. Now neither the past nor the future troubled me; I lived unreflectingly in the present. I looked at the shops as we drove by them, and at the other carriages as they passed mine. I noticed—yes, and enjoyed—the glances of admiration which chance foot-passengers on the pavement cast on me. I said to myself, "This looks well for my prospect of making a friend of the Major!" When we drew up at the door in Vivian Place, it is no exaggeration to say that I had but one anxiety—anxiety to find the Major at home.

The door was opened by a servant out of livery, an old man who looked as if he might have been a soldier in his earlier days. He eyed me with a grave attention, which relaxed little by little into sly approval. I asked for Major Fitz-David. The answer was not altogether encouraging: the man was not sure whether his master were at home or not.

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I gave him my card. My cards, being part of my wedding outfit, necessarily had the false name printed on them—*Mrs. Eustace Woodville.* The servant showed me into a front room on the ground-floor, and disappeared with my card in his hand.

Looking about me, I noticed a door in the wall opposite the window, communicating with some inner room. The door was not of the ordinary kind. It fitted into the thickness of the partition wall, and worked in grooves. Looking a little nearer, I saw that it had not been pulled out so as completely to close the doorway. Only the merest chink was left; but it was enough to convey to my ears all that passed in the next room.

"What did you say, Oliver, when she asked for me?" inquired a man's voice, pitched cautiously in a low key.

"I said I was not sure you were at home, sir," answered the voice of the servant who had let me in.

There was a pause. The first speaker was evidently Major Fitz-David himself. I waited to hear more.

"I think I had better not see her, Oliver," the Major's voice resumed.

"Very good, sir."

"Say I have gone out, and you don't know when I shall be back again. Beg the lady to write, if she has any business with me."

"Yes, sir."

"Stop, Oliver!"

Oliver stopped. There was another and longer pause. Then the master resumed the examination of the man.

"Is she young, Oliver?"

"Yes, sir."

"And—pretty?"

"Better than pretty, sir, to my thinking."

"Aye? aye? What you call a fine woman—eh, Oliver?"

"Certainly, sir."

"Tall?"

"Nearly as tall as I am, Major."

"Aye? aye? aye? A good figure?"

"As slim as a sapling, sir, and as upright as a dart."

"On second thoughts, I am at home, Oliver. Show her in! show her in!"

So far, one thing at least seemed to be clear. I had done well in sending for the chambermaid. What would Oliver's

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report of me have been if I had presented myself to him with my colorless cheeks and my ill-dressed hair?

The servant reappeared, and conducted me to the inner room. Major Fitz-David advanced to welcome me. What was the Major like?

Well, he was like a well-preserved old gentleman of, say, sixty years old, little and lean, and chiefly remarkable by the extraordinary length of his nose. After this feature, I noticed next his beautiful brown wig; his sparkling little gray eyes; his rosy complexion; his short military whisker, dyed to match his wig; his white teeth and his winning smile; his smart blue frock-coat, with a camellia in the button-hole; and his splendid ring, a ruby, flashing on his little finger as he courteously signed to me to take a chair.

"Dear Mrs. Woodville, how very kind of you this is! I have been longing to have the happiness of knowing you. Eustace is an old friend of mine. I congratulated him when I heard of his marriage. May I make a confession?—I envy him now I have seen his wife."

The future of my life was perhaps in this man's hands. I studied him attentively; I tried to read his character in his face.

The Major's sparkling little gray eyes softened as they looked at me; the Major's strong and sturdy voice dropped to its lowest and tenderest tones when he spoke to me; the Major's manner expressed, from the moment when I entered the room, a happy mixture of admiration and respect. He drew his chair close to mine, as if it were a privilege to be near me. He took my hand and lifted my glove to his lips, as if that glove were the most delicious luxury the world could produce. "Dear Mrs. Woodville," he said, as he softly laid my hand back on my lap, "bear with an old fellow who worships your enchanting sex. You really brighten this dull house. It is *such* a pleasure to see you!"

There was no need for the old gentleman to make his little confession. Women, children, and dogs proverbially know by instinct who the people are who really like them. The women had a warm friend—perhaps at one time a dangerously warm friend—in Major Fitz-David. I knew as much of him as that before I had settled myself in my chair and opened my lips to answer him.

"Thank you, Major, for your kind reception and your

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pretty compliment," I said, matching my host's easy tone as closely as the necessary restraints on my side would permit. "You have made your confession. May I make mine?"

Major Fitz-David lifted my hand again from my lap and drew his chair as close as possible to mine. I looked at him gravely and tried to release my hand. Major Fitz-David declined to let go of it, and proceeded to tell me why.

"I have just heard you speak for the first time," he said. "I am under the charm of your voice. Dear Mrs. Woodville, bear with an old fellow who is under the charm! Don't grudge me my innocent little pleasures. Lend me—I wish I could say *give* me—this pretty hand. I am such an admirer of pretty hands! I can listen so much better with a pretty hand in mine. The ladies indulge my weakness. Please indulge me too. Yes? And what were you going to say?"

"I was going to say, Major, that I felt particularly sensible of your kind welcome because, as it happens, I have a favor to ask of you."

I was conscious, while I spoke, that I was approaching the object of my visit a little too abruptly. But Major Fitz-David's admiration rose from one climax to another with such alarming rapidity that I felt the importance of administering a practical check to it. I trusted to those ominous words, "a favor to ask of you," to administer the check, and I did not trust in vain. My aged admirer gently dropped my hand, and, with all possible politeness, changed the subject.

"The favor is granted, of course!" he said. "And now, tell me, how is our dear Eustace?"

"Anxious and out of spirits," I answered.

"Anxious and out of spirits!" repeated the Major. "The enviable man who is married to You anxious and out of spirits? Monstrous! Eustace fairly disgusts me. I shall take him off the list of my friends."

"In that case, take me off the list with him, Major. I am in wretched spirits too. You are my husband's old friend. I may acknowledge to *you* that our married life is just now not quite a happy one."

Major Fitz-David lifted his eyebrows (dyed to match his whiskers) in polite surprise.

"Already!" he exclaimed. "What can Eustace be made of? Has he no appreciation of beauty and grace? Is he the most insensible of living beings?"

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"He is the best and dearest of men," I answered. "But there is some dreadful mystery in his past life—"

I could get no farther; Major Fitz-David deliberately stopped me. He did it with the smoothest politeness, on the surface. But I saw a look in his bright little eyes which said, plainly, "If you *will* venture on delicate ground, madam, don't ask me to accompany you."

"My charming friend!" he exclaimed. "May I call you my charming friend? You have—among a thousand other delightful qualities which I can see already—a vivid imagination. Don't let it get the upper hand. Take an old fellow's advice; don't let it get the upper hand! What can I offer you, dear Mrs. Woodville? A cup of tea?"

"Call me by my right name, sir," I answered, boldly. "I have made a discovery. I know as well as you do that my name is Macallan."

The Major started, and looked at me very attentively. His manner became grave, his tone changed completely, when he spoke next.

"May I ask," he said, "if you have communicated to your husband the discovery which you have just mentioned to me?"

"Certainly!" I answered. "I consider that my husband owes me an explanation. I have asked him to tell me what his extraordinary conduct means—and he has refused, in language that frightens me. I have appealed to his mother—and *she* has refused to explain, in language that humiliates me. Dear Major Fitz-David, I have no friends to take my part: I have nobody to come to but you! Do me the greatest of all favors—tell me why your friend Eustace has married me under a false name!"

"Do *me* the greatest of all favors," answered the Major. "Don't ask me to say a word about it."

He looked, in spite of his unsatisfactory reply, as if he really felt for me. I determined to try my utmost powers of persuasion; I resolved not to be beaten at the first repulse.

"I *must* ask you," I said. "Think of my position. How can I live, knowing what I know—and knowing no more? I would rather hear the most horrible thing you can tell me than be condemned (as I am now) to perpetual misgiving and perpetual suspense. I love my husband with all my heart; but I can not live with him on these terms: the mis-

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ery of it would drive me mad. I am only a woman, Major. I can only throw myself on your kindness. Don't—pray, pray don't keep me in the dark!"

I could say no more. In the reckless impulse of the moment I snatched up his hand and raised it to my lips. The gallant old gentleman started as if I had given him an electric shock.

"My dear, dear lady!" he exclaimed, "I can't tell you how I feel for you! You charm me, you overwhelm me, you touch me to the heart. What can I say? What can I do? I can only imitate your admirable frankness, your fearless candor. You have told me what your position is. Let me tell you, in my turn, how I am placed. Compose yourself—pray compose yourself! I have a smelling-bottle here at the service of the ladies. Permit me to offer it."

He brought me the smelling-bottle; he put a little stool under my feet; he entreated me to take time enough to compose myself. "Infernal fool!" I heard him say to himself, as he considerately turned away from me for a few moments. "If *I* had been her husband, come what might of it, I would have told her the truth!"

Was he referring to Eustace? And was he going to do what he would have done in my husband's place?—was he really going to tell me the truth?

The idea had barely crossed my mind when I was startled by a loud and peremptory knocking at the street door. The Major stopped and listened attentively. In a few moments the door was opened, and the rustling of a woman's dress was plainly audible in the hall. The Major hurried to the door of the room with the activity of a young man. He was too late. The door was violently opened from the outer side, just as he got to it. The lady of the rustling dress burst into the room.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEFEAT OF THE MAJOR.

MAJOR FITZ-DAVID'S visitor proved to be a plump, round-eyed, overdressed girl, with a florid complexion and straw-colored hair. After first fixing on me a broad stare of as-

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tonishment, she pointedly addressed her apologies for intruding on us to the Major alone. The creature evidently believed me to be the last new object of the old gentleman's idolatry; and she took no pains to disguise her jealous resentment on discovering us together. Major Fitz-David set matters right in his own irresistible way. He kissed the hand of the overdressed girl as devotedly as he had kissed mine; he told her she was looking charmingly. Then he led her, with his happy mixture of admiration and respect, back to the door by which she had entered—a second door communicating directly with the hall.

"No apology is necessary, my dear," he said. "This lady is with me on a matter of business. You will find your singing-master waiting for you up-stairs. Begin your lesson; and I will join you in a few minutes. *Au revoir*, my charming pupil—*au revoir*."

The young lady answered this polite little speech in a whisper—with her round eyes fixed distrustfully on me while she spoke. The door closed on her. Major Fitz-David was at liberty to set matters right with me, in my turn.

"I call that young person one of my happy discoveries," said the old gentleman, complacently. "She possesses, I don't hesitate to say, the finest soprano voice in Europe. Would you believe it, I met with her at the railway station. She was behind the counter in a refreshment-room, poor innocent, rinsing wine-glasses, and singing over her work. Good Heavens, such singing! Her upper notes electrified me. I said to myself, 'Here is a born prima donna—I will bring her out!' She is the third I have brought out in my time. I shall take her to Italy when her education is sufficiently advanced, and perfect her at Milan. In that unsophisticated girl, my dear lady, you see one of the future Queens of Song. Listen! She is beginning her scales. What a voice! Brava! Brava! Bravissima!"

The high soprano notes of the future Queen of Song rang through the house as he spoke. Of the loudness of the young lady's voice there could be no sort of doubt. The sweetness and the purity of it admitted, in my opinion, of considerable dispute.

Having said the polite words which the occasion rendered necessary, I ventured to recall Major Fitz-David to the subject in discussion between us when his visitor had entered

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the room. The Major was very unwilling to return to the perilous topic on which we had just touched when the interruption occurred. He beat time with his forefinger to the singing up-stairs; he asked me about *my* voice, and whether I sang; he remarked that life would be intolerable to him without Love and Art. A man in my place would have lost all patience, and would have given up the struggle in disgust. Being a woman, and having my end in view, my resolution was invincible. I fairly wore out the Major's resistance, and compelled him to surrender at discretion. It is only justice to add that, when he did make up his mind to speak to me again of Eustace, he spoke frankly, and spoke to the point.

"I have known your husband," he began, "since the time when he was a boy. At a certain period of his past life a terrible misfortune fell upon him. The secret of that misfortune is known to his friends, and is religiously kept by his friends. It is the secret that he is keeping from You. He will never tell it to you as long as he lives. And he has bound *me* not to tell it, under a promise given on my word of honor. You wished, dear Mrs. Woodville, to be made acquainted with my position toward Eustace. There it is!"

"You persist in calling me Mrs. Woodville," I said.

"Your husband wishes me to persist," the Major answered. "He assumed the name of Woodville, fearing to give his own name, when he first called at your uncle's house. He will now acknowledge no other. Remonstrance is useless. You must do what we do—you must give way to an unreasonable man. The best fellow in the world in other respects: in this one matter as obstinate and self-willed as he can be. If you ask me my opinion, I tell you honestly that I think he was wrong in courting and marrying you under his false name. He trusted his honor and his happiness to your keeping in making you his wife. Why should he not trust the story of his troubles to you as well? His mother quite shares my opinion in this matter. You must not blame her for refusing to admit you into her confidence after your marriage: it was then too late. Before your marriage she did all she could do—without betraying secrets which, as a good mother, she was bound to respect—to induce her son to act justly toward you. I commit no indis-

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cretion when I tell you that she refused to sanction your marriage mainly for the reason that Eustace refused to follow her advice, and to tell you what his position really was. On my part I did all I could to support Mrs. Macallan in the course that she took. When Eustace wrote to tell me that he had engaged himself to marry a niece of my good friend Doctor Starkweather, and that he had mentioned me as his reference, I wrote back to warn him that I would have nothing to do with the affair unless he revealed the whole truth about himself to his future wife. He refused to listen to me, as he had refused to listen to his mother; and he held me at the same time to my promise to keep his secret. When Starkweather wrote to me, I had no choice but to involve myself in a deception of which I thoroughly disapproved, or to answer in a tone so guarded and so brief as to stop the correspondence at the outset. I chose the last alternative; and I fear I have offended my good old friend. You now see the painful position in which I am placed. To add to the difficulties of that situation, Eustace came here this very day to warn me to be on my guard, in case of your addressing to me the very request which you have just made! He told me that you had met with his mother, by an unlucky accident, and that you had discovered the family name. He declared that he had traveled to London for the express purpose of speaking to me personally on this serious subject. 'I know your weakness,' he said, 'where women are concerned. Valeria is aware that you are my old friend. She will certainly write to you; she may even be bold enough to make her way into your house. Renew your promise to keep the great calamity of my life a secret, on your honor and on your oath.' Those were his words, as nearly as I can remember them. I tried to treat the thing lightly; I ridiculed the absurdly theatrical notion of 'renewing my promise,' and all the rest of it. Quite useless! He refused to leave me; he reminded me of his unmerited sufferings, poor fellow, in the past time. It ended in his bursting into tears. You love him, and so do I. Can you wonder that I let him have his way? The result is that I am doubly bound to tell you nothing, by the most sacred promise that a man can give. My dear lady, I cordially side with you in this matter; I long to relieve your anxieties. But what can I do?"

He stopped, and waited—gravely waited—to hear my reply.

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I had listened from beginning to end without interrupting him. The extraordinary change in his manner, and in his way of expressing himself, while he was speaking of Eustace, alarmed me as nothing had alarmed me yet. How terrible (I thought to myself) must this untold story be, if the mere act of referring to it makes light-hearted Major Fitz-David speak seriously and sadly, never smiling, never paying me a compliment, never even noticing the singing up-stairs! My heart sank in me as I drew that startling conclusion. For the first time since I had entered the house I was at the end of my resources; I knew neither what to say nor what to do next.

And yet I kept my seat. Never had the resolution to discover what my husband was hiding from me been more firmly rooted in my mind than it was at that moment! I can not account for the extraordinary inconsistency in my character which this confession implies. I can only describe the facts as they really were.

The singing went on up-stairs. Major Fitz-David still waited impenetrably to hear what I had to say—to know what I resolved on doing next.

Before I had decided what to say or what to do, another domestic incident happened. In plain words, another knocking announced a new visitor at the house door. On this occasion there was no rustling of a woman's dress in the hall. On this occasion only the old servant entered the room, carrying a magnificent nosegay in his hand. "With Lady Clarinda's kind regards. To remind Major Fitz-David of his appointment." Another lady! This time a lady with a title. A great lady who sent her flowers and her messages without condescending to concealment. The Major—first apologizing to me—wrote a few lines of acknowledgment, and sent them out to the messenger. When the door was closed again he carefully selected one of the choicest flowers in the nosegay. "May I ask," he said, presenting the flower to me with his best grace, "whether you now understand the delicate position in which I am placed between your husband and yourself?"

The little interruption caused by the appearance of the nosegay had given a new impulse to my thoughts, and had thus helped, in some degree, to restore me to myself. I was able at last to satisfy Major Fitz-David that his considerate

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and courteous explanation had not been thrown away upon me.

"I thank you, most sincerely, Major," I said. "You have convinced me that I must not ask you to forget, on my account, the promise which you have given to my husband. It is a sacred promise, which I too am bound to respect—I quite understand that."

The Major drew a long breath of relief, and patted me on the shoulder in high approval of what I had said to him.

"Admirably expressed!" he rejoined, recovering his light-hearted looks and his lover-like ways all in a moment. "My dear lady, you have the gift of sympathy; you see exactly how I am situated. Do you know, you remind me of my charming Lady Clarinda. *She* has the gift of sympathy, and sees exactly how I am situated. I should so enjoy introducing you to each other," said the Major, plunging his long nose ecstatically into Lady Clarinda's flowers.

I had my end still to gain; and, being (as you will have discovered by this time) the most obstinate of living women, I still kept that end in view.

"I shall be delighted to meet Lady Clarinda," I replied. "In the mean time—"

"I will get up a little dinner," proceeded the Major, with a burst of enthusiasm. "You and I and Lady Clarinda. Our young prima donna shall come in the evening, and sing to us. Suppose we draw out the *menu?* My sweet friend, what is your favorite autumn soup?"

"In the mean time," I persisted, "to return to what we were speaking of just now—"

The Major's smile vanished; the Major's hand dropped the pen destined to immortalize the name of my favorite autumn soup.

"*Must* we return to that?" he asked, piteously.

"Only for a moment," I said.

"You remind me," pursued Major Fitz-David, shaking his head sadly, "of another charming friend of mine—a French friend—Madame Mirliflore. You are a person of prodigious tenacity of purpose. Madame Mirliflore is a person of prodigious tenacity of purpose. She happens to be in London. Shall we have her at our little dinner?" The Major brightened at the idea, and took up the pen again. "Do tell me," he said, "what *is* your favorite autumn soup?"

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"Pardon me," I began, "we were speaking just now—"

"Oh, dear me!" cried Major Fitz-David. "Is this the other subject?"

"Yes—this is the other subject."

The Major put down his pen for the second time, and regretfully dismissed from his mind Madame Mirliflore and the autumn soup.

"Yes?" he said, with a patient bow and a submissive smile. "You were going to say—"

"I was going to say," I rejoined, "that your promise only pledges you not to tell the secret which my husband is keeping from me. You have given no promise not to answer me if I venture to ask you one or two questions."

Major Fitz-David held up his hand warningly, and cast a sly look at me out of his bright little gray eyes.

"Stop!" he said. "My sweet friend, stop there! I know where your questions will lead me, and what the result will be if I once begin to answer them. When your husband was here to-day he took occasion to remind me that I was as weak as water in the hands of a pretty woman. He is quite right. I *am* as weak as water; I can refuse nothing to a pretty woman. Dear and admirable lady, don't abuse your influence! don't make an old soldier false to his word of honor!"

I tried to say something here in defense of my motives. The Major clasped his hands entreatingly, and looked at me with a pleading simplicity wonderful to see.

"Why press it?" he asked. "I offer no resistance. I am a lamb—why sacrifice me? I acknowledge your power; I throw myself on your mercy. All the misfortunes of my youth and my manhood have come to me through women. I am not a bit better in my age—I am just as fond of the women and just as ready to be misled by them as ever, with one foot in the grave. Shocking, isn't it? But how true! Look at this mark!" He lifted a curl of his beautiful brown wig, and showed me a terrible scar at the side of his head. "That wound (supposed to be mortal at the time) was made by a pistol bullet," he proceeded. "Not received in the service of my country—oh dear, no! Received in the service of a much-injured lady, at the hands of her scoundrel of a husband, in a duel abroad. Well, she was worth it." He kissed his hand affectionately to the memory of the dead or absent

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lady, and pointed to a water-color drawing of a pretty country-house hanging on the opposite wall. "That fine estate," he proceeded, "once belonged to me. It was sold years and years since. And who had the money? The women—God bless them all!—the women. I don't regret it. If I had another estate, I have no doubt it would go the same way. Your adorable sex has made its pretty playthings of my life, my time, and my money—and welcome! The one thing I have kept to myself is my honor. And now *that* is in danger. Yes, if you put your clever little questions, with those lovely eyes and with that gentle voice, I know what will happen. You will deprive me of the last and best of all my possessions. Have I deserved to be treated in that way, and by you, my charming friend?—by you, of all people in the world? Oh, fie! fie!"

He paused and looked at me as before—the picture of artless entreaty, with his head a little on one side. I made another attempt to speak of the matter in dispute between us, from my own point of view. Major Fitz-David instantly threw himself prostrate on my mercy more innocently than ever.

"Ask of me any thing else in the wide world," he said; "but don't ask me to be false to my friend. Spare me *that* —and there is nothing I will not do to satisfy you. I mean what I say, mind!" he went on, bending closer to me, and speaking more seriously than he had spoken yet. "I think you are very hardly used. It is monstrous to expect that a woman, placed in your situation, will consent to be left for the rest of her life in the dark. No! no! if I saw you, at this moment, on the point of finding out for yourself what Eustace persists in hiding from you, I should remember that my promise, like all other promises, has its limits and reserves. I should consider myself bound in honor not to help you—but I would not lift a finger to prevent you from discovering the truth for yourself."

At last he was speaking in good earnest: he laid a strong emphasis on his closing words. I laid a stronger emphasis on them still by suddenly leaving my chair. The impulse to spring to my feet was irresistible. Major Fitz-David had started a new idea in my mind.

"Now we understand each other!" I said. "I will accept your own terms, Major. I will ask nothing of you but what you have just offered to me of your own accord."

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"What have I offered?" he inquired, looking a little alarmed.

"Nothing that you need repent of," I answered; "nothing which is not easy for you to grant. May I ask a bold question? Suppose this house was mine instead of yours?"

"Consider it yours," cried the gallant old gentleman. "From the garret to the kitchen, consider it yours!"

"A thousand thanks, Major; I will consider it mine for the moment. You know—every body knows—that one of a woman's many weaknesses is curiosity. Suppose my curiosity led me to examine every thing in my new house?"

"Yes?"

"Suppose I went from room to room, and searched every thing, and peeped in every where? Do you think there would be any chance—"

The quick-witted Major anticipated the nature of my question. He followed my example; he too started to his feet, with a new idea in his mind.

"Would there be any chance," I went on, "of my finding my own way to my husband's secret in this house? One word of reply, Major Fitz-David! Only one word—Yes or No?"

"Don't excite yourself!" cried the Major.

"Yes or No?" I repeated, more vehemently than ever.

"Yes," said the Major, after a moment's consideration.

It was the reply I had asked for; but it was not explicit enough, now I had got it, to satisfy me. I felt the necessity of leading him (if possible) into details.

"Does 'Yes' mean that there is some sort of clew to the mystery?" I asked. "Something, for instance, which my eyes might see and my hands might touch if I could only find it?"

He considered again. I saw that I had succeeded in interesting him in some way unknown to myself; and I waited patiently until he was prepared to answer me.

"The thing you mention," he said, "the clew (as you call it), might be seen and might be touched—supposing you could find it."

"In this house?" I asked.

The Major advanced a step nearer to me, and answered,

"In this room."

My head began to swim; my heart throbbed violently. I tried to speak; it was in vain; the effort almost choked me.

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In the silence I could hear the music-lesson still going on in the room above. The future prima donna had done practicing her scales, and was trying her voice now in selections from Italian operas. At the moment when I first heard her she was singing the beautiful air from the *Somnambula*, "Come per me sereno." I never hear that delicious melody, to this day, without being instantly transported in imagination to the fatal back-room in Vivian Place.

The Major—strongly affected himself by this time—was the first to break the silence.

"Sit down again," he said; "and pray take the easy-chair. You are very much agitated; you want rest."

He was right. I could stand no longer; I dropped into the chair. Major Fitz-David rang the bell, and spoke a few words to the servant at the door.

"I have been here a long time," I said, faintly. "Tell me if I am in the way."

"In the way?" he repeated, with his irresistible smile. "You forget that you are in your own house!"

The servant returned to us, bringing with him a tiny bottle of Champagne and a plateful of delicate little sugared biscuits.

"I have had this wine bottled expressly for the ladies," said the Major. "The biscuits came to me direct from Paris. As a favor to *me*, you must take some refreshment. And then—" He stopped, and looked at me very attentively.

"And then," he resumed, "shall I go to my young prima donna up-stairs, and leave you here alone?"

It was impossible to hint more delicately at the one request which I now had it in my mind to make to him. I took his hand and pressed it gratefully.

"The tranquillity of my whole life to come is at stake," I said. "When I am left here by myself, does your generous sympathy permit me to examine every thing in the room?"

He signed to me to drink the Champagne and eat a biscuit before he gave his answer.

"This is serious," he said. "I wish you to be in perfect possession of yourself. Restore your strength—and then I will speak to you."

I did as he bade me. In a minute from the time when I drank it the delicious sparkling wine had begun to revive me.

"Is it your express wish," he resumed, "that I should leave you here by yourself to search the room?"

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"It is my express wish," I answered.

"I take a heavy responsibility on myself in granting your request. But I grant it for all that, because I sincerely believe—as you believe—that the tranquillity of your life to come depends on your discovering the truth." Saying those words, he took two keys from his pocket. "You will naturally feel a suspicion," he went on, "of any locked doors that you may find here. The only locked places in the room are the doors of the cupboards under the long book-case, and the door of the Italian cabinet in that corner. The small key opens the book-case cupboards; the long key opens the cabinet door."

With that explanation, he laid the keys before me on the table.

"Thus far," he said, "I have rigidly respected the promise which I made to your husband. I shall continue to be faithful to my promise, whatever may be the result of your examination of the room. I am bound in honor not to assist you by word or deed. I am not even at liberty to offer you the slightest hint. Is that understood?"

"Certainly!"

"Very good. I have now a last word of warning to give you—and then I have done. If you do by any chance succeed in laying your hand on the clew, remember this—*the discovery which follows will be a terrible one.* If you have any doubt about your capacity to sustain a shock which will strike you to the soul, for God's sake give up the idea of finding out your husband's secret at once and forever!"

"I thank you for your warning, Major. I must face the consequences of making the discovery, whatever they may be."

"You are positively resolved?"

"Positively."

"Very well. Take any time you please. The house, and every person in it, are at your disposal. Ring the bell once if you want the man-servant. Ring twice if you wish the house-maid to wait on you. From time to time I shall just look in myself to see how you are going on. I am responsible for your comfort and security, you know, while you honor me by remaining under my roof."

He lifted my hand to his lips, and fixed a last attentive look on me.

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"I hope I am not running too great a risk," he said—more to himself than to me. "The women have led me into many a rash action in my time. Have *you* led me, I wonder, into the rashest action of all?"

With those ominous last words he bowed gravely and left me alone in the room.

CHAPTER X.

THE SEARCH.

The fire burning in the grate was not a very large one; and the outer air (as I had noticed on my way to the house) had something of a wintry sharpness in it that day.

Still, my first feeling, when Major Fitz-David left me, was a feeling of heat and oppression, with its natural result, a difficulty in breathing freely. The nervous agitation of the time was, I suppose, answerable for these sensations. I took off my bonnet and mantle and gloves, and opened the window for a little while. Nothing was to be seen outside but a paved court-yard, with a skylight in the middle, closed at the farther end by the wall of the Major's stables. A few minutes at the window cooled and refreshed me. I shut it down again, and took my first step on the way of discovery. In other words, I began my first examination of the four walls around me, and of all that they inclosed.

I was amazed at my own calmness. My interview with Major Fitz-David had, perhaps, exhausted my capacity for feeling any strong emotion, for the time at least. It was a relief to me to be alone; it was a relief to me to begin the search. Those were my only sensations so far.

The shape of the room was oblong. Of the two shorter walls, one contained the door in grooves which I have already mentioned as communicating with the front room; the other was almost entirely occupied by the broad window which looked out on the court-yard.

Taking the doorway wall first, what was there, in the shape of furniture, on either side of it? There was a card-table on either side. Above each card-table stood a magnificent china bowl, placed on a gilt and carved bracket fixed to the wall.

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I opened the card-tables. The drawers beneath contained nothing but cards, and the usual counters and markers. With the exception of one pack, the cards in both tables were still wrapped in their paper covers exactly as they had come from the shop. I examined the loose pack, card by card. No writing, no mark of any kind, was visible on any one of them. Assisted by a library ladder which stood against the book-case, I looked next into the two china bowls. Both were perfectly empty. Was there any thing more to examine on that side of the room? In the two corners there were two little chairs of inlaid wood, with red silk cushions. I turned them up and looked under the cushions, and still I made no discoveries. When I had put the chairs back in their places my search on one side of the room was complete. So far I had found nothing.

I crossed to the opposite wall, the wall which contained the window.

The window (occupying, as I have said, almost the entire length and height of the wall) was divided into three compartments, and was adorned at their extremity by handsome curtains of dark red velvet. The ample heavy folds of the velvet left just room at the two corners of the wall for two little upright cabinets in buhl, containing rows of drawers, and supporting two fine bronze productions (reduced in size) of the Venus Milo and the Venus Callipyge. I had Major Fitz-David's permission to do just what I pleased. I opened the six drawers in each cabinet, and examined their contents without hesitation.

Beginning with the cabinet in the right-hand corner, my investigations were soon completed. All the six drawers were alike occupied by a collection of fossils, which (judging by the curious paper inscriptions fixed on some of them) were associated with a past period of the Major's life when he had speculated, not very successfully, in mines. After satisfying myself that the drawers contained nothing but the fossils and their inscriptions, I turned to the cabinet in the left-hand corner next.

Here a variety of objects was revealed to view, and the examination accordingly occupied a much longer time.

The top drawer contained a complete collection of carpenter's tools in miniature, relics probably of the far-distant time when the Major was a boy, and when parents or friends had

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made him a present of a set of toy tools. The second drawer was filled with toys of another sort — presents made to Major Fitz-David by his fair friends. Embroidered braces, smart smoking-caps, quaint pincushions, gorgeous slippers, glittering purses, all bore witness to the popularity of the friend of the women. The contents of the third drawer were of a less interesting sort: the entire space was filled with old account-books, ranging over a period of many years. After looking into each book, and opening and shaking it uselessly, in search of any loose papers which might be hidden between the leaves, I came to the fourth drawer, and found more relics of past pecuniary transactions in the shape of receipted bills, neatly tied together, and each inscribed at the back. Among the bills I found nearly a dozen loose papers, all equally unimportant. The fifth drawer was in sad confusion. I took out first a loose bundle of ornamental cards, each containing the list of dishes at past banquets given or attended by the Major in London or Paris; next, a box full of delicately tinted quill pens (evidently a lady's gift); next, a quantity of old invitation cards; next, some dog's-eared French plays and books of the opera; next, a pocket-corkscrew, a bundle of cigarettes, and a bunch of rusty keys; lastly, a passport, a set of luggage labels, a broken silver snuff-box, two cigar-cases, and a torn map of Rome. "Nothing any where to interest *me*," I thought, as I closed the fifth, and opened the sixth and last drawer.

The sixth drawer was at once a surprise and a disappointment. It literally contained nothing but the fragments of a broken vase.

I was sitting, at the time, opposite to the cabinet, in a low chair. In the momentary irritation caused by my discovery of the emptiness of the last drawer, I had just lifted my foot to push it back into its place, when the door communicating with the hall opened, and Major Fitz-David stood before me.

His eyes, after first meeting mine, traveled downward to my foot. The instant he noticed the open drawer I saw a change in his face. It was only for a moment; but in that moment he looked at me with a sudden suspicion and surprise—looked as if he had caught me with my hand on the clew.

"Pray don't let me disturb you," said Major Fitz-David. "I have only come here to ask you a question."

"What is it, Major?"

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"Have you met with any letters of mine in the course of your investigations?"

"I have found none yet," I answered. "If I do discover any letters, I shall, of course, not take the liberty of examining them."

"I wanted to speak to you about that," he rejoined. "It only struck me a moment since, up-stairs, that my letters might embarrass you. In your place I should feel some distrust of any thing which I was not at liberty to examine. I think I can set this matter right, however, with very little trouble to either of us. It is no violation of any promises or pledges on my part if I simply tell you that my letters will not assist the discovery which you are trying to make. You can safely pass them over as objects that are not worth examining from your point of view. You understand me, I am sure?"

"I am much obliged to you, Major—I quite understand."

"Are you feeling any fatigue?"

"None whatever, thank you."

"And you still hope to succeed? You are not beginning to be discouraged already?"

"I am not in the least discouraged. With your kind leave, I mean to persevere for some time yet."

I had not closed the drawer of the cabinet while we were talking, and I glanced carelessly, as I answered him, at the fragments of the broken vase. By this time he had got his feelings under perfect command. He, too, glanced at the fragments of the vase with an appearance of perfect indifference. I remembered the look of suspicion and surprise that had escaped him on entering the room, and I thought his indifference a little overacted.

"*That* doesn't look very encouraging," he said, with a smile, pointing to the shattered pieces of china in the drawer.

"Appearances are not always to be trusted," I replied. "The wisest thing I can do in my present situation is to suspect every thing, even down to a broken vase."

I looked hard at him as I spoke. He changed the subject.

"Does the music up-stairs annoy you?" he asked.

"Not in the least, Major."

"It will soon be over now. The singing-master is going, and the Italian master has just arrived. I am sparing no

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pains to make my young prima donna a most accomplished person. In learning to sing she must also learn the language which is especially the language of music. I shall perfect her in the accent when I take her to Italy. It is the height of my ambition to have her mistaken for an Italian when she sings in public. Is there any thing I can do before I leave you again? May I send you some more Champagne? Please say yes!"

"A thousand thanks, Major. No more Champagne for the present."

He turned at the door to kiss his hand to me at parting. At the same moment I saw his eyes wander slyly toward the book-case. It was only for an instant. I had barely detected him before he was out of the room.

Left by myself again, I looked at the book-case—looked at it attentively for the first time.

It was a handsome piece of furniture in ancient carved oak, and it stood against the wall which ran parallel with the hall of the house. Excepting the space occupied in the upper corner of the room by the second door, which opened into the hall, the book-case filled the whole length of the wall down to the window. The top was ornamented by vases, candelabra, and statuettes, in pairs, placed in a row. Looking along the row, I noticed a vacant space on the top of the book-case at the extremity of it which was nearest to the window. The opposite extremity, nearest to the door, was occupied by a handsome painted vase of a very peculiar pattern. Where was the corresponding vase, which ought to have been placed at the corresponding extremity of the book-case? I returned to the open sixth drawer of the cabinet, and looked in again. There was no mistaking the pattern on the fragments when I examined them now. The vase which had been broken was the vase which had stood in the place now vacant on the top of the book-case at the end nearest to the window.

Making this discovery, I took out the fragments, down to the smallest morsel of the shattered china, and examined them carefully one after another.

I was too ignorant of the subject to be able to estimate the value of the vase or the antiquity of the vase, or even to know whether it were of British or of foreign manufacture. The ground was of a delicate cream-color. The ornaments

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traced on this were wreaths of flowers and Cupids surrounding a medallion on either side of the vase. Upon the space within one of the medallions was painted with exquisite delicacy a woman's head, representing a nymph or a goddess, or perhaps a portrait of some celebrated person—I was not learned enough to say which. The other medallion inclosed the head of a man, also treated in the classical style. Reclining shepherds and shepherdesses in Watteau costume, with their dogs and their sheep, formed the adornments of the pedestal. Such had the vase been in the days of its prosperity, when it stood on the top of the book-case. By what accident had it become broken? And why had Major Fitz-David's face changed when he found that I had discovered the remains of his shattered work of art in the cabinet drawer?

The remains left those serious questions unanswered—the remains told me absolutely nothing. And yet, if my own observation of the Major were to be trusted, the way to the clew of which I was in search lay, directly or indirectly, through the broken vase.

It was useless to pursue the question, knowing no more than I knew now. I returned to the book-case.

Thus far I had assumed (without any sufficient reason) that the clew of which I was in search must necessarily reveal itself through a written paper of some sort. It now occurred to me—after the movement which I had detected on the part of the Major—that the clew might quite as probably present itself in the form of a book.

I looked along the lower rows of shelves, standing just near enough to them to read the titles on the backs of the volumes. I saw Voltaire in red morocco, Shakespeare in blue, Walter Scott in green, the *History of England* in brown, the *Annual Register* in yellow calf. There I paused, wearied and discouraged already by the long rows of volumes. How (I thought to myself) am I to examine all these books? And what am I to look for, even if I do examine them all?

Major Fitz-David had spoken of a terrible misfortune which had darkened my husband's past life. In what possible way could any trace of that misfortune, or any suggestive hint of something resembling it, exist in the archives of the *Annual Register* or in the pages of Voltaire? The bare idea of such a thing seemed absurd. The mere attempt to make a

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serious examination in this direction was surely a wanton waste of time.

And yet the Major had certainly stolen a look at the book-case. And again, the broken vase had once stood on the book-case. Did these circumstances justify me in connecting the vase and the book-case as twin landmarks on the way that led to discovery? The question was not an easy one to decide on the spur of the moment.

I looked up at the higher shelves.

Here the collection of books exhibited a greater variety. The volumes were smaller, and were not so carefully arranged as on the lower shelves. Some were bound in cioth, some were only protected by paper covers; one or two had fallen, and lay flat on the shelves. Here and there I saw empty spaces from which books had been removed and not replaced. In short, there was no discouraging uniformity in these higher regions of the book-case. The untidy top shelves looked suggestive of some lucky accident which might unexpectedly lead the way to success. I decided, if I did examine the book-case at all, to begin at the top.

Where was the library ladder?

I had left it against the partition wall which divided the back room from the room in front. Looking that way, I necessarily looked also toward the door that ran in grooves—the imperfectly closed door through which I had heard Major Fitz-David question his servant on the subject of my personal appearance when I first entered the house. No one had moved this door during the time of my visit. Every body entering or leaving the room had used the other door, which led into the hall.

At the moment when I looked round something stirred in the front room. The movement let the light in suddenly through the small open space left by the partially closed door. Had somebody been watching me through the chink? I stepped softly to the door, and pushed it back until it was wide open. There was the Major, discovered in the front room! I saw it in his face—he had been watching me at the book-case!

His hat was in his hand. He was evidently going out; and he dextrously took advantage of that circumstance to give a plausible reason for being so near the door.

"I hope I didn't frighten you," he said.

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"You startled me a little, Major."

"I am so sorry, and so ashamed! I was just going to open the door, and tell you that I am obliged to go out. I have received a pressing message from a lady. A charming person—I should so like you to know her. She is in sad trouble, poor thing. Little bills, you know, and nasty tradespeople who want their money, and a husband—oh, dear me, a husband who is quite unworthy of her! A most interesting creature. You remind me of her a little; you both have the same carriage of the head. I shall not be more than half an hour gone. Can I do any thing for you? You are looking fatigued. Pray let me send for some more Champagne. No? Promise to ring when you want it. That's right! *Au revoir*, my charming friend—*au revoir!*"

I pulled the door to again the moment his back was turned, and sat down for a while to compose myself.

He had been watching me at the book-case! The man who was in my husband's confidence, the man who knew where the clew was to be found, had been watching me at the book-case! There was no doubt of it now. Major Fitz-David had shown me the hiding-place of the secret in spite of himself!

I looked with indifference at the other pieces of furniture, ranged against the fourth wall, which I had not examined yet. I surveyed, without the slightest feeling of curiosity, all the little elegant trifles scattered on the tables and on the chimney-piece, each one of which might have been an object of suspicion to me under other circumstances. Even the water-color drawings failed to interest me in my present frame of mind. I observed languidly that they were most of them portraits of ladies—fair idols, no doubt, of the Major's facile adoration—and I cared to notice no more. *My* business in that room (I was certain of it now!) began and ended with the book-case. I left my seat to fetch the library ladder, determining to begin the work of investigation on the top shelves.

On my way to the ladder I passed one of the tables, and saw the keys lying on it which Major Fitz-David had left at my disposal.

The smaller of the two keys instantly reminded me of the cupboards under the book-case. I had strangely overlooked these. A vague distrust of the locked doors, a vague doubt

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of what they might be hiding from me, stole into my mind. I left the ladder in its place against the wall, and set myself to examine the contents of the cupboards first.

The cupboards were three in number. As I opened the first of them the singing up-stairs ceased. For a moment there was something almost oppressive in the sudden change from noise to silence. I suppose my nerves must have been overwrought. The next sound in the house—nothing more remarkable than the creaking of a man's boots descending the stairs—made me shudder all over. The man was no doubt the singing-master, going away after giving his lesson. I heard the house door close on him, and started at the familiar sound as if it were something terrible which I had never heard before. Then there was silence again. I roused myself as well as I could, and began my examination of the first cupboard.

It was divided into two compartments.

The top compartment contained nothing but boxes of cigars, ranged in rows, one on another. The under compartment was devoted to a collection of shells. They were all huddled together anyhow, the Major evidently setting a far higher value on his cigars than on his shells. I searched this lower compartment carefully for any object interesting to me which might be hidden in it. Nothing was to be found in any part of it besides the shells.

As I opened the second cupboard it struck me that the light was beginning to fail.

I looked at the window: it was hardly evening yet. The darkening of the light was produced by gathering clouds. Rain-drops pattered against the glass; the autumn wind whistled mournfully in the corners of the court-yard. I mended the fire before I renewed my search. My nerves were in fault again, I suppose. I shivered when I went back to the book-case. My hands trembled: I wondered what was the matter with me.

The second cupboard revealed (in the upper division of it) some really beautiful cameos—not mounted, but laid on cotton-wool in neat card-board trays. In one corner, half hidden under one of the trays, there peeped out the white leaves of a little manuscript. I pounced on it eagerly, only to meet with a new disappointment: the manuscript proved to be a descriptive catalogue of the cameos—nothing more!

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Turning to the lower division of the cupboard, I found more costly curiosities in the shape of ivory carvings from Japan and specimens of rare silk from China. I began to feel weary of disinterring the Major's treasures. The longer I searched, the farther I seemed to remove myself from the one object that I had it at heart to attain. After closing the door of the second cupboard, I almost doubted whether it would be worth my while to proceed farther and open the third and last door.

A little reflection convinced me that it would be as well, now that I had begun my examination of the lower regions of the book-case, to go on with it to the end. I opened the last cupboard.

On the upper shelf there appeared, in solitary grandeur, one object only—a gorgeously bound book.

It was of a larger size than usual, judging of it by comparison with the dimensions of modern volumes. The binding was of blue velvet, with clasps of silver worked in beautiful arabesque patterns, and with a lock of the same precious metal to protect the book from prying eyes. When I took it up, I found that the lock was not closed.

Had I any right to take advantage of this accident, and open the book? I have put the question since to some of my friends of both sexes. The women all agree that I was perfectly justified, considering the serious interests that I had at stake, in taking any advantage of any book in the Major's house. The men differ from this view, and declare that I ought to have put back the volume in blue velvet unopened, carefully guarding myself from any after-temptation to look at it again by locking the cupboard door. I dare say the men are right.

Being a woman, however, I opened the book without a moment's hesitation.

The leaves were of the finest vellum, with tastefully designed illuminations all round them. And what did these highly ornamental pages contain? To my unutterable amazement and disgust, they contained locks of hair, let neatly into the centre of each page, with inscriptions beneath, which proved them to be love-tokens from various ladies who had touched the Major's susceptible heart at different periods of his life. The inscriptions were written in other languages besides English, but they appeared to be all equally devoted

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to the same curious purpose, namely, to reminding the Major of the dates at which his various attachments had come to an untimely end. Thus the first page exhibited a lock of the lightest flaxen hair, with these lines beneath: "My adored Madeline. Eternal constancy. Alas, July 22, 1839!" The next page was adorned by a darker shade of hair, with a French inscription under it: "Clémence. Idole de mon âme. Toujours fidèle. Hélas, 2me Avril, 1840." A lock of red hair followed, with a lamentation in Latin under it, a note being attached to the date of dissolution of partnership in this case, stating that the lady was descended from the ancient Romans, and was therefore mourned appropriately in Latin by her devoted Fitz-David. More shades of hair and more inscriptions followed, until I was weary of looking at them. I put down the book, disgusted with the creatures who had assisted in filling it, and then took it up again, by an afterthought. Thus far I had thoroughly searched every thing that had presented itself to my notice. Agreeable or not agreeable, it was plainly of serious importance to my own interests to go on as I had begun, and thoroughly to search the book.

I turned over the pages until I came to the first blank leaf. Seeing that they were all blank leaves from this place to the end, I lifted the volume by the back, and, as a last measure of precaution, shook it so as to dislodge any loose papers or cards which might have escaped my notice between the leaves.

This time my patience was rewarded by a discovery which indescribably irritated and distressed me.

A small photograph, mounted on a card, fell out of the book. A first glance showed me that it represented the portraits of two persons.

One of the persons I recognized as my husband.

The other person was a woman.

Her face was entirely unknown to me. She was not young. The picture represented her seated on a chair, with my husband standing behind, and bending over her, holding one of her hands in his. The woman's face was hard-featured and ugly, with the marking lines of strong passions and resolute self-will plainly written on it. Still, ugly as she was, I felt a pang of jealousy as I noticed the familiarly affectionate action by which the artist (with the permission of his sitters,

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of course) had connected the two figures in a group. Eustace had briefly told me, in the days of our courtship, that he had more than once fancied himself to be in love before he met with me. Could this very unattractive woman have been one of the early objects of his admiration? Had she been near enough and dear enough to him to be photographed with her hand in his? I looked and looked at the portraits until I could endure them no longer. Women are strange creatures—mysteries even to themselves. I threw the photograph from me into a corner of the cupboard. I was savagely angry with my husband; I hated—yes, hated with all my heart and soul!—the woman who had got his hand in hers—the unknown woman with the self-willed, hard-featured face.

All this time the lower shelf of the cupboard was still waiting to be looked over.

I knelt down to examine it, eager to clear my mind, if I could, of the degrading jealousy that had got possession of me.

Unfortunately, the lower shelf contained nothing but relics of the Major's military life, comprising his sword and pistols, his epaulets, his sash, and other minor accoutrements. None of these objects excited the slightest interest in me. My eyes wandered back to the upper shelf; and, like the fool I was (there is no milder word that can fitly describe me at that moment), I took the photograph out again, and enraged myself uselessly by another look at it. This time I observed, what I had not noticed before, that there were some lines of writing (in a woman's hand) at the back of the portraits. The lines ran thus:

"To Major Fitz-David, with two vases. From his friends, S. and E. M."

Was one of those two vases the vase that had been broken? And was the change that I had noticed in Major Fitz-David's face produced by some past association in connection with it, which in some way affected me? It might or might not be so. I was little disposed to indulge in speculation on this topic while the far more serious question of the initials confronted me on the back of the photograph.

"S. and E. M?" Those last two letters might stand for the initials of my husband's name—his true name—Eustace Macallan. In this case the first letter ("S.") in all probabil-

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ity indicated *her* name. What right had she to associate herself with him in that manner? I considered a little—my memory exerted itself—I suddenly called to mind that Eustace had sisters. He had spoken of them more than once in the time before our marriage. Had I been mad enough to torture myself with jealousy of my husband's sister? It might well be so; "S." might stand for his sister's Christian name. I felt heartily ashamed of myself as this new view of the matter dawned on me. What a wrong I had done to them both in my thoughts! I turned the photograph, sadly and penitently, to examine the portraits again with a kinder and truer appreciation of them.

I naturally looked now for a family likeness between the two faces. There was no family likeness; on the contrary, they were as unlike each other in form and expression as faces could be. *Was* she his sister, after all? I looked at her hands, as represented in the portrait. Her right hand was clasped by Eustace; her left hand lay on her lap. On the third finger, distinctly visible, there was a wedding-ring. Were any of my husband's sisters married? I had myself asked him the question when he mentioned them to me, and I perfectly remembered that he had replied in the negative.

Was it possible that my first jealous instinct had led me to the right conclusion after all? If it had, what did the association of the three initial letters mean? What did the wedding-ring mean? Good Heavens! was I looking at the portrait of a rival in my husband's affections—and was that rival his Wife?

I threw the photograph from me with a cry of horror. For one terrible moment I felt as if my reason was giving way. I don't know what would have happened, or what I should have done next, if my love for Eustace had not taken the uppermost place among the contending emotions that tortured me. That faithful love steadied my brain. That faithful love roused the reviving influences of my better and nobler sense. Was the man whom I had enshrined in my heart of hearts capable of such base wickedness as the bare idea of his marriage to another woman implied? No! Mine was the baseness, mine the wickedness, in having even for a moment thought it of him!

I picked up the detestable photograph from the floor, and put it back in the book. I hastily closed the cupboard door,

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fetched the library ladder, and set it against the book-case. My one idea now was the idea of taking refuge in employment of any sort from my own thoughts. I felt the hateful suspicion that had degraded me coming back again in spite of my efforts to repel it. The books! the books! my only hope was to absorb myself, body and soul, in the books.

I had one foot on the ladder, when I heard the door of the room open—the door which communicated with the hall.

I looked around, expecting to see the Major. I saw instead the Major's future prima donna standing just inside the door, with her round eyes steadily fixed on me.

"I can stand a good deal," the girl began, coolly, "but I can't stand *this* any longer."

"What is it that you can't stand any longer?" I asked.

"If you have been here a minute, you have been here two good hours," she went on. "All by yourself in the Major's study. I am of a jealous disposition—I am. And I want to know what it means." She advanced a few steps nearer to me, with a heightening color and a threatening look. "Is he going to bring *you* out on the stage?" she asked, sharply.

"Certainly not."

"He ain't in love with you, is he?"

Under other circumstances I might have told her to leave the room. In my position at that critical moment the mere presence of a human creature was a positive relief to me. Even this girl, with her coarse questions and her uncultivated manners, was a welcome intruder on my solitude: she offered me a refuge from myself.

"Your question is not very civilly put," I said. "However, I excuse you. You are probably not aware that I am a married woman."

"What has that got to do with it?" she retorted. "Married or single, it's all one to the Major. That brazen-faced hussy who calls herself Lady Clarinda is married, and she sends him nosegays three times a week! Not that I care, mind you, about the old fool. But I've lost my situation at the railway, and I've got my own interests to look after, and I don't know what may happen if I let other women come between him and me. That's where the shoe pinches, don't you see? I'm not easy in my mind when I see him leaving you mistress here to do just what you like. No offense! I speak out—I do. I want to know what you are about all by

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yourself in this room? How did you pick up with the Major? I never heard him speak of you before to-day."

Under all the surface selfishness and coarseness of this strange girl there was a certain frankness and freedom which pleaded in her favor—to my mind, at any rate. I answered frankly and freely on my side.

"Major Fitz-David is an old friend of my husband's," I said, "and he is kind to me for my husband's sake. He has given me permission to look in this room—"

I stopped, at a loss how to describe my employment in terms which should tell her nothing, and which should at the same time successfully set her distrust of me at rest.

"To look about in this room—for what?" she asked. Her eye fell on the library ladder, beside which I was still standing. "For a book?" she resumed.

"Yes," I said, taking the hint. "For a book."

"Haven't you found it yet?"

"No."

She looked hard at me, undisguisedly considering with herself whether I were or were not speaking the truth.

"You seem to be a good sort," she said, making up her mind at last. "There's nothing stuck-up about you. I'll help you if I can. I have rummaged among the books here over and over again, and I know more about them than you do. What book do you want?"

As she put that awkward question she noticed for the first time Lady Clarinda's nosegay lying on the side-table where the Major had left it. Instantly forgetting me and my book, this curious girl pounced like a fury on the flowers, and actually trampled them under her feet!

"There!" she cried. "If I had Lady Clarinda here I'd serve her in the same way."

"What will the Major say?" I asked.

"What do I care? Do you suppose I'm afraid of *him?* Only last week I broke one of his fine gimcracks up there, and all through Lady Clarinda and her flowers!"

She pointed to the top of the book-case—to the empty space on it close by the window. My heart gave a sudden bound as my eyes took the direction indicated by her finger. *She* had broken the vase! Was the way to discovery about to reveal itself to me through this girl? Not a word would pass my lips; I could only look at her.

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"Yes!" she said. "The thing stood there. He knows how I hate her flowers, and he put her nosegay in the vase out of my way. There was a woman's face painted on the china, and he told me it was the living image of *her* face. It was no more like her than I am. I was in such a rage that I up with the book I was reading at the time and shied it at the painted face. Over the vase went, bless your heart, crash to the floor. Stop a bit! I wonder whether *that's* the book you have been looking after? Are you like me? Do you like reading Trials?"

Trials? Had I heard her aright? Yes: she had said Trials.

I answered by an affirmative motion of my head. I was still speechless. The girl sauntered in her cool way to the fire-place, and, taking up the tongs, returned with them to the book-case.

"Here's where the book fell," she said—"in the space between the book-case and the wall. I'll have it out in no time."

I waited without moving a muscle, without uttering a word.

She approached me with the tongs in one hand and with a plainly bound volume in the other.

"Is that the book?" she said. "Open it, and see."

I took the book from her.

"It is tremendously interesting," she went on. "I've read it twice over—I have. Mind you, *I* believe he did it, after all."

Did it? Did what? What was she talking about? I tried to put the question to her. I struggled—quite vainly—to say only these words: "What are you talking about?"

She seemed to lose all patience with me. She snatched the book out of my hand, and opened it before me on the table by which we were standing side by side.

"I declare, you're as helpless as a baby!" she said, contemptuously. "There! *Is* that the book?"

I read the first lines on the title-page—

A COMPLETE REPORT

OF

THE TRIAL

OF

EUSTACE MACALLAN.

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I stopped and looked up at her. She started back from me with a scream of terror. I looked down again at the title-page, and read the next lines—

FOR THE ALLEGED POISONING

OF

HIS WIFE.

There, God's mercy remembered me. There, the black blank of a swoon swallowed me up.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RETURN TO LIFE.

My first remembrance when I began to recover my senses was the remembrance of Pain—agonizing pain, as if every nerve in my body were being twisted and torn out of me. My whole being writhed and quivered under the dumb and dreadful protest of Nature against the effort to recall me to life. I would have given worlds to be able to cry out—to entreat the unseen creatures about me to give me back to death. How long that speechless agony held me I never knew. In a longer or shorter time there stole over me slowly a sleepy sense of relief. I heard my own labored breathing. I felt my hands moving feebly and mechanically, like the hands of a baby. I faintly opened my eyes and looked round me—as if I had passed through the ordeal of death, and had awakened to new senses in a new world.

The first person I saw was a man—a stranger. He moved quietly out of my sight; beckoning, as he disappeared, to some other person in the room.

Slowly and unwillingly the other person advanced to the sofa on which I lay. A faint cry of joy escaped me; I tried to hold out my feeble hands. The other person who was approaching me was my husband!

I looked at him eagerly. He never looked at me in return. With his eyes on the ground, with a strange appearance of confusion and distress in his face, he too moved away out of my sight. The unknown man whom I had first noticed followed him out of the room. I called after him faint-

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ly, "Eustace!" He never answered; he never returned. With an effort I moved my head on the pillow, so as to look round on the other side of the sofa. Another familiar face appeared before me as if in a dream. My good old Benjamin was sitting watching me, with the tears in his eyes.

He rose and took my hand silently, in his simple, kindly way.

"Where is Eustace?" I asked. "Why has he gone away and left me?"

I was still miserably weak. My eyes wandered mechanically round the room as I put the question. I saw Major Fitz-David. I saw the table on which the singing girl had opened the book to show it to me. I saw the girl herself, sitting alone in a corner, with her handkerchief to her eyes as if she were crying. In one mysterious moment my memory recovered its powers. The recollection of that fatal title-page came back to me ir all its horror. The one feeling that it roused in me now was a longing to see my husband—to throw myself into his arms, and tell him how firmly I believed in his innocence, how truly and dearly I loved him. I seized on Benjamin with feeble, trembling hands. "Bring him back to me!" I cried, wildly. "Where is he? Help me to get up!"

A strange voice answered, firmly and kindly:

"Compose yourself, madam. Mr. Woodville is waiting until you have recovered, in a room close by."

I looked at him, and recognized the stranger who had followed my husband out of the room. Why had he returned alone? Why was Eustace not with me, like the rest of them? I tried to raise myself, and get on my feet. The stranger gently pressed me back again on the pillow. I attempted to resist him—quite uselessly, of course. His firm hand held me as gently as ever in my place.

"You must rest a little," he said. "You must take some wine. If you exert yourself now you will faint again."

Old Benjamin stooped over me, and whispered a word of explanation.

"It's the doctor, my dear. You must do as he tells you."

The doctor! They had called the doctor in to help them! I began dimly to understand that my fainting fit must have

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presented symptoms far more serious than the fainting fits of women in general. I appealed to the doctor, in a helpless, querulous way, to account to me for my husband's extraordinary absence.

"Why did you let him leave the room?" I asked. "If I can't go to him, why don't you bring him here to me?"

The doctor appeared to be at a loss how to reply to me. He looked at Benjamin, and said, "Will you speak to Mrs. Woodville?"

Benjamin, in his turn, looked at Major Fitz-David, and said, "Will *you?*" The Major signed to them both to leave us. They rose together, and went into the front room, pulling the door to after them in its grooves. As they left us, the girl who had so strangely revealed my husband's secret to me rose in her corner and approached the sofa.

"I suppose I had better go too?" she said, addressing Major Fitz-David.

"If you please," the Major answered.

He spoke (as I thought) rather coldly. She tossed her head, and turned her back on him in high indignation. "I must say a word for myself!" cried this strange creature, with a hysterical outbreak of energy. "I must say a word, or I shall burst!"

With that extraordinary preface, she suddenly turned my way, and poured out a perfect torrent of words on me.

"You hear how the Major speaks to me?" she began. "He blames me—poor Me—for every thing that has happened. I am as innocent as the new-born babe. I acted for the best. I thought you wanted the book. I don't know now what made you faint dead away when I opened it. And the Major blames Me! As if it was my fault! I am not one of the fainting sort myself; but I feel it, I can tell you. Yes! I feel it, though I don't faint about it. I come of respectable parents—I do. My name is Hoighty—Miss Hoighty. I have my own self-respect; and it's wounded. I say my self-respect is wounded, when I find myself blamed without deserving it. You deserve it, if any body does. Didn't you tell me you were looking for a book? And didn't I present it to you promiscuously, with the best intentions? I think you might say so yourself, now the doctor has brought you to again. I think you might speak up for a poor girl who is worked to death with singing and languages and what not—

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a poor girl who has nobody else to speak for her. I am as respectable as you are, if you come to that. My name is Hoighty. My parents are in business, and my mamma has seen better days, and mixed in the best of company."

There Miss Hoighty lifted her handkerchief again to her face, and burst modestly into tears behind it.

It was certainly hard to hold *her* responsible for what had happened. I answered as kindly as I could, and I attempted to speak to Major Fitz-David in her defense. He knew what terrible anxieties were oppressing me at that moment; and, considerately refusing to hear a word, he took the task of consoling his young prima donna entirely on himself. What he said to her I neither heard nor cared to hear: he spoke in a whisper. It ended in his pacifying Miss Hoighty, by kissing her hand, and leading her (as he might have led a duchess) out of the room.

"I hope that foolish girl has not annoyed you—at such a time as this," he said, very earnestly, when he returned to the sofa. "I can't tell you how grieved I am at what has happened. I was careful to warn you, as you may remember. Still, if I could only have foreseen—"

I let him proceed no farther. No human forethought could have provided against what had happened. Besides, dreadful as the discovery had been, I would rather have made it, and suffered under it, as I was suffering now, than have been kept in the dark. I told him this. And then I turned to the one subject that was now of any interest to me—the subject of my unhappy husband.

"How did he come to this house?" I asked.

"He came here with Mr. Benjamin shortly after I returned," the Major replied.

"Long after I was taken ill?"

"No. I had just sent for the doctor—feeling seriously alarmed about you."

"What brought him here? Did he return to the hotel and miss me?"

"Yes. He returned earlier than he had anticipated, and he felt uneasy at not finding you at the hotel."

"Did he suspect me of being with you? Did he come here from the hotel?"

"No. He appears to have gone first to Mr. Benjamin to inquire about you. What he heard from your old friend I

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can not say. I only know that Mr. Benjamin accompanied him when he came here."

This brief explanation was quite enough for me — I understood what had happened. Eustace would easily frighten simple old Benjamin about my absence from the hotel; and, once alarmed, Benjamin would be persuaded without difficulty to repeat the few words which had passed between us on the subject of Major Fitz-David. My husband's presence in the Major's house was perfectly explained. But his extraordinary conduct in leaving the room at the very time when I was just recovering my senses still remained to be accounted for. Major Fitz-David looked seriously embarrassed when I put the question to him.

"I hardly know how to explain it to you," he said. "Eustace has surprised and disappointed me."

He spoke very gravely. His looks told me more than his words: his looks alarmed me.

"Eustace has not quarreled with you?" I said.

"Oh no!"

"He understands that you have not broken your promise to him?"

"Certainly. My young vocalist (Miss Hoighty) told the doctor exactly what had happened; and the doctor in her presence repeated the statement to your husband."

"Did the doctor see the Trial?"

"Neither the doctor nor Mr. Benjamin has seen the Trial. I have locked it up; and I have carefully kept the terrible story of your connection with the prisoner a secret from all of them. Mr. Benjamin evidently has his suspicions. But the doctor has no idea, and Miss Hoighty has no idea, of the true cause of your fainting fit. They both believe that you are subject to serious nervous attacks, and that your husband's name is really Woodville. All that the truest friend could do to spare Eustace I have done. He persists, nevertheless, in blaming me for letting you enter my house. And worse, far worse than this, he persists in declaring that the event of to-day has fatally estranged you from him. 'There is an end of our married life,' he said to me, 'now she knows that I am the man who was tried at Edinburgh for poisoning my wife!"

I rose from the sofa in horror.

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"Good God!" I cried, "does Eustace suppose that I doubt his innocence?"

"He denies that it is possible for you or for any body to believe in his innocence," the Major replied.

"Help me to the door," I said. "Where is he? I must and will see him!"

I dropped back exhausted on the sofa as I said the words. Major Fitz-David poured out a glass of wine from the bottle on the table, and insisted on my drinking it.

"You shall see him," said the Major. "I promise you that. The doctor has forbidden him to leave the house until you have seen him. Only wait a little! My poor, dear lady, wait, if it is only for a few minutes, until you are stronger."

I had no choice but to obey him. Oh, those miserable, helpless minutes on the sofa! I can not write of them without shuddering at the recollection—even at this distance of time.

"Bring him here!" I said. "Pray, pray bring him here!"

"Who is to persuade him to come back?" asked the Major, sadly. "How can I, how can any body, prevail with a man—a madman I had almost said!—who could leave you at the moment when you first opened your eyes on him? I saw Eustace alone in the next room while the doctor was in attendance on you. I tried to shake his obstinate distrust of your belief in his innocence and of my belief in his innocence by every argument and every appeal that an old friend could address to him. He had but one answer to give me. Reason as I might, and plead as I might, he still persisted in referring me to the Scotch Verdict."

"The Scotch Verdict?" I repeated. "What is that?"

The Major looked surprised at the question.

"Have you really never heard of the Trial?" he said.

"Never."

"I thought it strange," he went on, "when you told me you had found out your husband's true name, that the discovery appeared to have suggested no painful association to your mind. It is not more than three years since all England was talking of your husband. One can hardly wonder at his taking refuge, poor fellow, in an assumed name. Where could you have been at the time?"

"Did you say it was three years ago?" I asked.

"Yes."

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"I think I can explain my strange ignorance of what was so well known to every one else. Three years since my father was alive. I was living with him in a country-house in Italy—up in the mountains, near Siena. We never saw an English newspaper or met with an English traveler for weeks and weeks together. It is just possible that there might have been some reference made to the Trial in my father's letters from England. If there were, he never told me of it. Or, if he did mention the case, I felt no interest in it, and forgot it again directly. Tell me—what has the Verdict to do with my husband's horrible doubt of us? Eustace is a free man. The Verdict was Not Guilty, of course?"

Major Fitz-David shook his head sadly.

"Eustace was tried in Scotland," he said. "There is a verdict allowed by the Scotch law, which (so far as I know) is not permitted by the laws of any other civilized country on the face of the earth. When the jury are in doubt whether to condemn or acquit the prisoner brought before them, they are permitted, in Scotland, to express that doubt by a form of compromise. If there is not evidence enough, on the one hand, to justify them in finding a prisoner guilty, and not evidence enough, on the other hand, to thoroughly convince them that a prisoner is innocent, they extricate themselves from the difficulty by finding a verdict of Not Proven."

"Was that the Verdict when Eustace was tried?" I asked.

"Yes."

"The jury were not quite satisfied that my husband was guilty? and not quite satisfied that my husband was innocent? Is that what the Scotch Verdict means?"

"That is what the Scotch Verdict means. For three years that doubt about him in the minds of the jury who tried him has stood on public record."

Oh, my poor darling! my innocent martyr! I understood it at last. The false name in which he had married me; the terrible words he had spoken when he had warned me to respect his secret; the still more terrible doubt that he felt of me at that moment—it was all intelligible to my sympathies, it was all clear to my understanding, now. I got up again from the sofa, strong in a daring resolution which the Scotch Verdict had suddenly kindled in me—a resolution at once too sacred and too desperate to be confided, in the first instance, to any other than my husband's ear.

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"Take me to Eustace!" I cried. "I am strong enough to bear any thing now."

After one searching look at me, the Major silently offered me his arm, and led me out of the room.

CHAPTER XII.

THE SCOTCH VERDICT.

We walked to the far end of the hall. Major Fitz-David opened the door of a long, narrow room built out at the back of the house as a smoking-room, and extending along one side of the court-yard as far as the stable wall.

My husband was alone in the room, seated at the farther end of it, near the fire-place. He started to his feet and faced me in silence as I entered. The Major softly closed the door on us and retired. Eustace never stirred a step to meet me. I ran to him, and threw my arms round his neck and kissed him. The embrace was not returned; the kiss was not returned. He passively submitted—nothing more.

"Eustace!" I said, "I never loved you more dearly than I love you at this moment! I never felt for you as I feel for you now!"

He released himself deliberately from my arms. He signed to me with the mechanical courtesy of a stranger to take a chair.

"Thank you, Valeria," he answered, in cold, measured tones. "You could say no less to me, after what has happened; and you could say no more. Thank you."

We were standing before the fire-place. He left me, and walked away slowly with his head down, apparently intending to leave the room. I followed him—I got before him—I placed myself between him and the door.

"Why do you leave me?" I said. "Why do you speak to me in this cruel way? Are you angry, Eustace? My darling, if you *are* angry, I ask you to forgive me."

"It is I who ought to ask *your* pardon," he replied. "I beg you to forgive me, Valeria, for having made you my wife."

He pronounced those words with a hopeless, heart-broken humility dreadful to see. I laid my hand on his bosom. I said, "Eustace, look at me."

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He slowly lifted his eyes to my face—eyes cold and clear and tearless—looking at me in steady resignation, in immovable despair. In the utter wretchedness of that moment, I was like him; I was as quiet and as cold as my husband. He chilled, he froze me.

"Is it possible," I said, "that you doubt my belief in your innocence?"

He left the question unanswered. He sighed bitterly to himself. "Poor woman!" he said, as a stranger might have said, pitying me. "Poor woman!"

My heart swelled in me as if it would burst. I lifted my hand from his bosom, and laid it on his shoulder to support myself.

"I don't ask you to pity me, Eustace; I ask you to do me justice. You are not doing me justice. If you had trusted me with the truth in the days when we first knew that we loved each other—if you had told me all, and more than all that I know now—as God is my witness, I would still have married you! *Now* do you doubt that I believe you are an innocent man!"

"I don't doubt it," he said. "All your impulses are generous, Valeria. You are speaking generously and feeling generously. Don't blame me, my poor child, if I look on farther than you do: if I see what is to come—too surely to come—in the cruel future."

"The cruel future!" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"You believe in my innocence, Valeria. The jury who tried me doubted it—and have left that doubt on record. What reason have *you* for believing, in the face of the Verdict, that I am an innocent man?"

"I want no reason! I believe in spite of the jury—in spite of the Verdict."

"Will your friends agree with you? When your uncle and aunt know what has happened—and sooner or later they must know it—what will they say? They will say, 'He began badly; he concealed from our niece that he had been wedded to a first wife; he married our niece under a false name. He may say he is innocent; but we have only his word for it. When he was put on his Trial, the Verdict was Not Proven. Not Proven won't do for us. If the jury have done him an injustice—if he *is* innocent—let him prove it.' That is what the world thinks and says of me. That is

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what your friends will think and say of me. The time is coming, Valeria, when you — even You — will feel that your friends have reason to appeal to on their side, and that you have no reason on yours."

"That time will never come!" I answered, warmly. "You wrong me, you insult me, in thinking it possible!"

He put down my hand from him, and drew back a step, with a bitter smile.

"We have only been married a few days, Valeria. Your love for me is new and young. Time, which wears away all things, will wear away the first fervor of that love."

"Never! never!"

He drew back from me a little farther still.

"Look at the world around you," he said. "The happiest husbands and wives have their occasional misunderstandings and disagreements; the brightest married life has its passing clouds. When those days come for *us*, the doubts and fears that you don't feel now will find their way to you then. When the clouds rise in *our* married life — when I say my first harsh word, when you make your first hasty reply — then, in the solitude of your own room, in the stillness of the wakeful night, you will think of my first wife's miserable death. You will remember that I was held responsible for it, and that my innocence was never proved. You will say to yourself, 'Did it begin, in *her* time, with a harsh word from him and with a hasty reply from her? Will it one day end with me as the jury half feared that it ended with her?' Hideous questions for a wife to ask herself! You will stifle them; you will recoil from them, like a good woman, with horror. But when we meet the next morning you will be on your guard, and I shall see it, and know in my heart of hearts what it means. Imbittered by that knowledge, my next harsh word may be harsher still. Your next thoughts of me may remind you more vividly and more boldly that your husband was once tried as a poisoner, and that the question of his first wife's death was never properly cleared up. Do you see what materials for a domestic hell are mingling for us here? Was it for nothing that I warned you, solemnly warned you, to draw back, when I found you bent on discovering the truth? Can I ever be at your bedside now, when you are ill, and not remind you, in the most innocent things I do, of what happened at that other bed-

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side, in the time of that other woman whom I married first? If I pour out your medicine, I commit a suspicious action—they say I poisoned *her* in her medicine. If I bring you a cup of tea, I revive the remembrance of a horrid doubt—they said I put the arsenic in *her* cup of tea. If I kiss you when I leave the room, I remind you that the prosecution accused me of kissing *her*, to save appearances and produce an affect on the nurse. Can we live together on such terms as these? No mortal creatures could support the misery of it. This very day I said to you, 'If you stir a step farther in this matter, there is an end of your happiness for the rest of your life.' You have taken that step — and the end has come to your happiness and to mine. The blight that cankers and kills is on you and on me for the rest of our lives!"

So far I had forced myself to listen to him. At those last words the picture of the future that he was placing before me became too hideous to be endured. I refused to hear more.

"You are talking horribly," I said. "At your age and at mine, have we done with love and done with hope? It is blasphemy to Love and Hope to say it!"

"Wait till you have read the Trial," he answered. "You mean to read it, I suppose?"

"Every word of it! With a motive, Eustace, which you have yet to know."

"No motive of yours, Valeria, no love and hope of yours, can alter the inexorable facts. My first wife died poisoned; and the verdict of the jury has not absolutely acquitted me of the guilt of causing her death. As long as you were ignorant of that, the possibilities of happiness were always within our reach. Now you know it, I say again—our married life is at an end."

"No," I said. "Now I know it, our married life has begun—begun with a new object for your wife's devotion, with a new reason for your wife's love!"

"What do you mean?"

I went near to him again, and took his hand.

"What did you tell me the world has said of you?" I asked. "What did you tell me my friends would say of you? 'Not Proven won't do for us. If the jury have done him an injustice—if he *is* innocent—let him prove it.' Those were the words you put into the mouths of my friends. I adopt

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them for mine! *I* say Not Proven won't do for *me*. Prove your right, Eustace, to a verdict of Not Guilty. Why have you let three years pass without doing it? Shall I guess why? You have waited for your wife to help you. Here she is, my darling, ready to help you with all her heart and soul. Here she is, with one object in life—to show the world and to show the Scotch Jury that her husband is an innocent man!"

I had roused myself; my pulses were throbbing, my voice rang through the room. Had I roused *him?* What was his answer?

"Read the Trial." That was his answer.

I seized him by the arm. In my indignation and my despair I shook him with all my strength. God forgive me, I could almost have struck him for the tone in which he had spoken and the look that he had cast on me!

"I have told you that I mean to read the Trial," I said. "I mean to read it, line by line, with you. Some inexcusable mistake has been made. Evidence in your favor that might have been found has not been found. Suspicious circumstances have not been investigated. Crafty people have not been watched. Eustace! the conviction of some dreadful oversight, committed by you or by the persons who helped you, is firmly settled in my mind. The resolution to set that vile Verdict right was the first resolution that came to me when I first heard of it in the next room. We *will* set it right! We *must* set it right—for your sake, for my sake, for the sake of our children if we are blessed with children. Oh, my own love, don't look at me with those cold eyes! Don't answer me in those hard tones! Don't treat me as if I were talking ignorantly and madly of something that can never be!"

Still I never roused him. His next words were spoken compassionately rather than coldly—that was all.

"My defense was undertaken by the greatest lawyers in the land," he said. "After such men have done their utmost, and have failed—my poor Valeria, what can you, what can I, do? We can only submit."

"Never!" I cried. "The greatest lawyers are mortal men; the greatest lawyers have made mistakes before now. You can't deny that."

"Read the Trial." For the third time he said those cruel words, and said no more.

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In utter despair of moving him—feeling keenly, bitterly (if I must own it), his merciless superiority to all that I had said to him in the honest fervor of my devotion and my love—I thought of Major Fitz-David as a last resort. In the disordered state of my mind at that moment, it made no difference to me that the Major had already tried to reason with him, and had failed. In the face of the facts I had a blind belief in the influence of his old friend, if his old friend could only be prevailed upon to support my view.

"Wait for me one moment," I said. "I want you to hear another opinion besides mine."

I left him, and returned to the study. Major Fitz-David was not there. I knocked at the door of communication with the front room. It was opened instantly by the Major himself. The doctor had gone away. Benjamin still remained in the room.

"Will you come and speak to Eustace?" I began. "If you will only say what I want you to say—"

Before I could add a word more I heard the house door opened and closed. Major Fitz-David and Benjamin heard it too. They looked at each other in silence.

I ran back, before the Major could stop me, to the room in which I had seen Eustace. It was empty. My husband had left the house.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MAN'S DECISION.

My first impulse was the reckless impulse to follow Eustace—openly through the streets.

The Major and Benjamin both opposed this hasty resolution on my part. They appealed to my own sense of self-respect, without (so far as I remember it) producing the slightest effect on my mind. They were more successful when they entreated me next to be patient for my husband's sake. In mercy to Eustace, they begged me to wait half an hour. If he failed to return in that time, they pledged themselves to accompany me in search of him to the hotel.

In mercy to Eustace I consented to wait. What I suffered under the forced necessity for remaining passive at that

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crisis in my life no words of mine can tell. It will be better if I go on with my narrative.

Benjamin was the first to ask me what had passed between my husband and myself.

"You may speak freely, my dear," he said. "I know what has happened since you have been in Major Fitz-David's house. No one has told me about it; I found it out for myself. If you remember, I was struck by the name of 'Macallan,' when you first mentioned it to me at my cottage. I couldn't guess why at the time. I know why now."

Hearing this, I told them both unreservedly what I had said to Eustace, and how he had received it. To my unspeakable disappointment, they both sided with my husband, treating my view of his position as a mere dream. They said it, as he had said it, "You have not read the Trial."

I was really enraged with them. "The facts are enough for *me*," I said. "We know he is innocent. Why is his innocence not proved? It ought to be, it must be, it shall be! If the Trial tell me it can't be done, I refuse to believe the Trial. Where is the book, Major? Let me see for myself if his lawyers have left nothing for his wife to do. Did they love him as I love him? Give me the book!"

Major Fitz-David looked at Benjamin.

"It will only additionally shock and distress her if I give her the book," he said. "Don't you agree with me?"

I interposed before Benjamin could answer.

"If you refuse my request," I said, "you will oblige me, Major, to go to the nearest bookseller and tell him to buy the Trial for me. I am determined to read it."

This time Benjamin sided with me.

"Nothing can make matters worse than they are, sir," he said. "If I may be permitted to advise, let her have her own way."

The Major rose and took the book out of the Italian cabinet, to which he had consigned it for safe-keeping.

"My young friend tells me that she informed you of her regretable outbreak of temper a few days since," he said as he handed me the volume. "I was not aware at the time what book she had in her hand when she so far forgot herself as to destroy the vase. When I left you in the study, I supposed the Report of the Trial to be in its customary place on the top shelf of the book-case, and I own I felt some

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curiosity to know whether you would think of examining that shelf. The broken vase—it is needless to conceal it from you now—was one of a pair presented to me by your husband and his first wife only a week before the poor woman's terrible death. I felt my first presentiment that you were on the brink of discovery when I found you looking at the fragments, and I fancy I betrayed to you that something of the sort was disturbing me. You looked as if you noticed it."

"I did notice it, Major. And I too had a vague idea that I was on the way to discovery. Will you look at your watch? Have we waited half an hour yet?"

My impatience had misled me. The ordeal of the half-hour was not yet at an end.

Slowly and more slowly the heavy minutes followed each other, and still there were no signs of my husband's return. We tried to continue our conversation, and failed. Nothing was audible; no sounds but the ordinary sounds of the street disturbed the dreadful silence. Try as I might to repel it, there was one foreboding thought that pressed closer and closer on my mind as the interval of waiting wore its weary way on. I shuddered as I asked myself if our married life had come to an end—if Eustace had really left me.

The Major saw what Benjamin's slower perception had not yet discovered—that my fortitude was beginning to sink under the unrelieved oppression of suspense.

"Come!" he said. "Let us go to the hotel."

It then wanted nearly five minutes to the half-hour. I *looked* my gratitude to Major Fitz-David for sparing me those last minutes: I could not speak to him or to Benjamin. In silence we three got into a cab and drove to the hotel.

The landlady met us in the hall. Nothing had been seen or heard of Eustace. There was a letter waiting for me upstairs on the table in our sitting-room. It had been left at the hotel by a messenger only a few minutes since.

Trembling and breathless, I ran up the stairs, the two gentlemen following me. The address of the letter was in my husband's handwriting. My heart sank in me as I looked at the lines; there could be but one reason for his writing to me. That closed envelope held his farewell words. I sat with the letter on my lap, stupefied, incapable of opening it.

Kind-hearted Benjamin attempted to comfort and encour-

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age me. The Major, with his larger experience of women, warned the old man to be silent.

"Wait!" I heard him whisper. "Speaking to her will do no good now. Give her time."

Acting on a sudden impulse, I held out the letter to him as he spoke. Even moments might be of importance, if Eustace had indeed left me. To give me time might be to lose the opportunity of recalling him.

"You are his old friend," I said. "Open his letter, Major, and read it for me."

Major Fitz-David opened the letter and read it through to himself. When he had done he threw it on the table with a gesture which was almost a gesture of contempt.

"There is but one excuse for him," he said. "The man is mad."

Those words told me all. I knew the worst; and, knowing it, I could read the letter. It ran thus:

"My beloved Valeria,—When you read these lines you read my farewell words. I return to my solitary unfriended life—my life before I knew you.

"My darling, you have been cruelly treated. You have been entrapped into marrying a man who has been publicly accused of poisoning his first wife—and who has not been honorably and completely acquitted of the charge. And you know it!

"Can you live on terms of mutual confidence and mutual esteem with me when I have committed this fraud, and when I stand toward you in this position? It was possible for you to live with me happily while you were in ignorance of the truth. It is *not* possible, now you know all.

"No! the one atonement I can make is—to leave you. Your one chance of future happiness is to be disassociated, at once and forever, from my dishonored life. I love you, Valeria—truly, devotedly, passionately. But the spectre of the poisoned woman rises between us. It makes no difference that I am innocent even of the thought of harming my first wife. My innocence has not been proved. In this world my innocence can never be proved. You are young and loving, and generous and hopeful. Bless others, Valeria, with your rare attractions and your delightful gifts. They are of no avail with *me*. The poisoned woman stands between us.

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If you live with me now, you will see her as I see her. *That* torture shall never be yours. I love you. I leave you.

"Do you think me hard and cruel? Wait a little, and time will change that way of thinking. As the years go on you will say to yourself, 'Basely as he deceived me, there was some generosity in him. He was man enough to release me of his own free will.'

"Yes, Valeria, I fully, freely release you. If it be possible to annul our marriage, let it be done. Recover your liberty by any means that you may be advised to employ; and be assured beforehand of my entire and implicit submission. My lawyers have the necessary instructions on this subject. Your uncle has only to communicate with them, and I think he will be satisfied of my resolution to do you justice. The one interest that I have now left in life is my interest in your welfare and your happiness in the time to come. Your welfare and your happiness are no longer to be found in your union with Me.

"I can write no more. This letter will wait for you at the hotel. It will be useless to attempt to trace me. I know my own weakness. My heart is all yours: I might yield to you if I let you see me again.

"Show these lines to your uncle, and to any friends whose opinions you may value. I have only to sign my dishonored name, and every one will understand and applaud my motive for writing as I do. The name justifies—amply justifies—the letter. Forgive and forget me. Farewell.

"EUSTACE MACALLAN."

In those words he took his leave of me. We had then been married—six days.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WOMAN'S ANSWER.

THUS far I have written of myself with perfect frankness, and, I think I may fairly add, with some courage as well. My frankness fails me and my courage fails me when I look back to my husband's farewell letter, and try to recall the storm of contending passions that it roused in my mind.

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No! I can not tell the truth about myself—I dare not tell the truth about myself—at that terrible time. Men! consult your observation of women, and imagine what I felt; women! look into your own hearts, and see what I felt, for yourselves.

What I *did*, when my mind was quiet again, is an easier matter to deal with. I answered my husband's letter. My reply to him shall appear in these pages. It will show, in some degree, what effect (of the lasting sort) his desertion of me produced on my mind. It will also reveal the motives that sustained me, the hopes that animated me, in the new and strange life which my next chapters must describe.

I was removed from the hotel in the care of my fatherly old friend, Benjamin. A bedroom was prepared for me in his little villa. There I passed the first night of my separation from my husband. Toward the morning my weary brain got some rest—I slept.

At breakfast-time Major Fitz-David called to inquire about me. He had kindly volunteered to go and speak for me to my husband's lawyers on the preceding day. They had admitted that they knew where Eustace had gone, but they declared at the same time that they were positively forbidden to communicate his address to any one. In other respects their "instructions" in relation to the wife of their client were (as they were pleased to express it) "generous to a fault." I had only to write to them, and they would furnish me with a copy by return of post.

This was the Major's news. He refrained, with the tact that distinguished him, from putting any questions to me beyond questions relating to the state of my health. These answered, he took his leave of me for that day. He and Benjamin had a long talk together afterward in the garden of the villa.

I retired to my room and wrote to my uncle Starkweather, telling him exactly what had happened, and inclosing him a copy of my husband's letter. This done, I went out for a little while to breathe the fresh air and to think. I was soon weary, and went back again to my room to rest. My kind old Benjamin left me at perfect liberty to be alone as long as I pleased. Toward the afternoon I began to feel a little more like my old self again. I mean by this that I could

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think of Eustace without bursting out crying, and could speak to Benjamin without distressing and frightening the dear old man.

That night I had a little more sleep. The next morning I was strong enough to confront the first and foremost duty that I now owed to myself—the duty of answering my husband's letter.

I wrote to him in these words:

"I am still too weak and weary, Eustace, to write to you at any length. But my mind is clear. I have formed my own opinion of you and your letter; and I know what I mean to do now you have left me. Some women, in my situation, might think that you had forfeited all right to their confidence. I don't think that. So I write and tell you what is in my mind in the plainest and fewest words that I can use.

"You say you love me—and you leave me. I don't understand loving a woman and leaving her. For my part, in spite of the hard things you have said and written to me, and in spite of the cruel manner in which you have left me, I love you—and I won't give you up. No! As long as I live I mean to live your wife.

"Does this surprise you? It surprises *me*. If another woman wrote in this manner to a man who had behaved to her as you have behaved, I should be quite at a loss to account for her conduct. I am quite at a loss to account for my own conduct. I ought to hate you, and yet I can't help loving you. I am ashamed of myself; but so it is.

"You need feel no fear of my attempting to find out where you are, and of my trying to persuade you to return to me. I am not quite foolish enough to do that. You are not in a fit state of mind to return to me. You are all wrong, all over, from head to foot. When you get right again, I am vain enough to think that you will return to me of your own accord. And shall I be weak enough to forgive you? Yes! I shall certainly be weak enough to forgive you.

"But how are you to get right again?

"I have puzzled my brains over this question by night and by day, and my opinion is that you will never get right again unless I help you.

"How am I to help you?

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"That question is easily answered. What the Law has failed to do for you, your Wife must do for you. Do you remember what I said when we were together in the back room at Major Fitz-David's house? I told you that the first thought that came to me, when I heard what the Scotch jury had done, was the thought of setting their vile Verdict right. Well! Your letter has fixed this idea more firmly in my mind than ever. The only chance that I can see of winning you back to me, in the character of a penitent and loving husband, is to change that underhand Scotch Verdict of Not Proven into an honest English Verdict of Not Guilty.

"Are you surprised at the knowledge of the law which this way of writing betrays in an ignorant woman? I have been learning, my dear: the Law and the Lady have begun by understanding one another. In plain English, I have looked into Ogilvie's *Imperial Dictionary*, and Ogilvie tells me, 'A verdict of Not Proven only indicates that, in the opinion of the jury, there is a deficiency in the evidence to convict the prisoner. A verdict of Not Guilty imports the jury's opinion that the prisoner is innocent.' Eustace, that shall be the opinion of the world in general, and of the Scotch jury in particular, in your case. To that one object I dedicate my life to come, if God spare me!

"Who will help me, when I need help, is more than I yet know. There was a time when I had hoped that we should go hand in hand together in doing this good work. That hope is at an end. I no longer expect you, or ask you, to help me. A man who thinks as you think can give no help to any body—it is his miserable condition to have no hope. So be it! I will hope for two, and will work for two; and I shall find some one to help me—never fear—if I deserve it.

"I will say nothing about my plans—I have not read the Trial yet. It is quite enough for me that I know you are innocent. When a man is innocent, there *must* be a way of proving it: the one thing needful is to find the way. Sooner or later, with or without assistance, I shall find it. Yes! before I know any single particular of the Case, I tell you positively—I shall find it!

"You may laugh over this blind confidence on my part, or you may cry over it. I don't pretend to know whether I am an object for ridicule or an object for pity. Of one thing only I am certain: I mean to win you back, a man vindicated

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before the world, without a stain on his character or his name —thanks to his wife.

"Write to me sometimes, Eustace; and believe me, through all the bitterness of this bitter business, your faithful and loving VALERIA."

There was my reply! Poor enough as a composition (I could write a much better letter now), it had, if I may presume to say so, one merit. It was the honest expression of what I really meant and felt.

I read it to Benjamin. He held up his hands with his customary gesture when he was thoroughly bewildered and dismayed. "It seems the rashest letter that ever was written," said the dear old man. "I never heard, Valeria, of a woman doing what you propose to do. Lord help us! the new generation is beyond my fathoming. I wish your uncle Starkweather was here: I wonder what he would say? Oh, dear me, what a letter from a wife to a husband! Do you really mean to send it to him?"

I added immeasurably to my old friend's surprise by not even employing the post-office. I wished to see the "instructions" which my husband had left behind him. So I took the letter to his lawyers myself.

The firm consisted of two partners. They both received me together. One was a soft, lean man, with a sour smile: The other was a hard, fat man, with ill-tempered eyebrows. I took a great dislike to both of them. On their side, they appeared to feel a strong distrust of me. We began by disagreeing. They showed me my husband's "instructions," providing, among other things, for the payment of one clear half of his income as long as he lived to his wife. I positively refused to touch a farthing of his money.

The lawyers were unaffectedly shocked and astonished at this decision. Nothing of the sort had ever happened before in the whole course of their experience. They argued and remonstrated with me. The partner with the ill-tempered eyebrows wanted to know what my reasons were. The partner with the sour smile reminded his colleague satirically that I was a lady, and had therefore no reasons to give. I only answered, "Be so good as to forward my letter, gentlemen," and left them.

I have no wish to claim any credit to myself in these pages

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which I do not honestly deserve. The truth is that my pride forbade me to accept help from Eustace, now that he had left me. My own little fortune (eight hundred a year) had been settled on myself when I married. It had been more than I wanted as a single woman, and I was resolved that it should be enough for me now. Benjamin had insisted on my considering his cottage as my home. Under these circumstances, the expenses in which my determination to clear my husband's character might involve me were the only expenses for which I had to provide. I could afford to be independent, and independent I resolved that I would be.

While I am occupied in confessing my weakness and my errors, it is only right to add that, dearly as I still loved my unhappy, misguided husband, there was one little fault of his which I found it not easy to forgive.

Pardoning other things, I could not quite pardon his concealing from me that he had been married to a first wife. Why I should have felt this so bitterly as I did, at certain times and seasons, I am not able to explain. Jealousy was at the bottom of it, I suppose. And yet I was not conscious of being jealous—especially when I thought of the poor creature's miserable death. Still, Eustace ought not to have kept *that* secret from me, I used to think to myself, at odd times when I was discouraged and out of temper. What would *he* have said if I had been a widow, and had never told him of it?

It was getting on toward evening when I returned to the cottage. Benjamin appeared to have been on the lookout for me. Before I could ring at the bell he opened the garden gate.

"Prepare yourself for a surprise, my dear," he said. "Your uncle, the Reverend Doctor Starkweather, has arrived from the North, and is waiting to see you. He received your letter this morning, and he took the first train to London as soon as he had read it."

In another minute my uncle's strong arms were round me. In my forlorn position, I felt the good vicar's kindness, in traveling all the way to London to see me, very gratefully. It brought the tears into my eyes—tears, without bitterness, that did me good.

"I have come, my dear child, to take you back to your old home," he said. "No words can tell how fervently I

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wish you had never left your aunt and me. Well! well! we won't talk about it. The mischief is done, and the next thing is to mend it as well as we can. If I could only get within arm's-length of that husband of yours, Valeria — There! there! God forgive me, I am forgetting that I am a clergyman. What shall I forget next, I wonder? By-the-bye, your aunt sends you her dearest love. She is more superstitious than ever. This miserable business doesn't surprise her a bit. She says it all began with your making that mistake about your name in signing the church register. You remember? Was there ever such stuff? Ah, she's a foolish woman, that wife of mine! But she means well—a good soul at bottom. She would have traveled all the way here along with me if I would have let her. I said, 'No; you stop at home, and look after the house and the parish, and I'll bring the child back.' You shall have your old bedroom, Valeria, with the white curtains, you know, looped up with blue! We will return to the Vicarage (if you can get up in time) by the nine-forty train to-morrow morning."

Return to the Vicarage! How could I do that? How could I hope to gain what was now the one object of my existence if I buried myself in a remote north-country village? It was simply impossible for me to accompany Doctor Starkweather on his return to his own house.

"I thank you, uncle, with all my heart," I said. "But I am afraid I can't leave London for the present."

"You can't leave London for the present?" he repeated. "What does the girl mean, Mr. Benjamin?"

Benjamin evaded a direct reply.

"She is kindly welcome here, Doctor Starkweather," he said, "as long as she chooses to stay with me."

"That's no answer," retorted my uncle, in his rough-and-ready way. He turned to me. "What is there to keep you in London?" he asked. "You used to hate London. I suppose there is some reason?"

It was only due to my good guardian and friend that I should take him into my confidence sooner or later. There was no help for it but to rouse my courage, and tell him frankly what I had it in my mind to do. The vicar listened in breathless dismay. He turned to Benjamin, with distress as well as surprise in his face, when I had done.

"God help her!" cried the worthy man. "The poor thing's troubles have turned her brain!"

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"I thought you would disapprove of it, sir," said Benjamin, in his mild and moderate way. "I confess I disapprove of it myself."

"'Disapprove of it' isn't the word," retorted the vicar. "Don't put it in that feeble way, if you please. An act of madness—that's what it is, if she really mean what she says." He turned my way, and looked as he used to look at the afternoon service when he was catechising an obstinate child. "You don't mean it," he said, "do you?"

"I am sorry to forfeit your good opinion, uncle," I replied. "But I must own that I do certainly mean it."

"In plain English," retorted the vicar, "you are conceited enough to think that you can succeed where the greatest lawyers in Scotland have failed. *They* couldn't prove this man's innocence, all working together. And *you* are going to prove it single-handed? Upon my word, you are a wonderful woman," cried my uncle, suddenly descending from indignation to irony. "May a plain country parson, who isn't used to lawyers in petticoats, be permitted to ask how you mean to do it?"

"I mean to begin by reading the Trial, uncle."

"Nice reading for a young woman! You will be wanting a batch of nasty French novels next. Well, and when you have read the Trial—what then? Have you thought of that?"

"Yes, uncle; I have thought of that. I shall first try to form some conclusion (after reading the Trial) as to the guilty person who really committed the crime. Then I shall make out a list of the witnesses who spoke in my husband's defense. I shall go to those witnesses, and tell them who I am and what I want. I shall ask all sorts of questions which grave lawyers might think it beneath their dignity to put. I shall be guided, in what I do next, by the answers I receive. And I shall not be discouraged, no matter what difficulties are thrown in my way. Those are my plans, uncle, so far as I know them now."

The vicar and Benjamin looked at each other as if they doubted the evidence of their own senses. The vicar spoke.

"Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that you are going roaming about the country to throw yourself on the mercy of strangers, and to risk whatever rough reception you may get in the course of your travels? You! A young woman!

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Deserted by your husband! With nobody to protect you! Mr. Benjamin, do you hear her? And can you believe your ears? I declare to Heaven *I* don't know whether I am awake or dreaming. Look at her—just look at her! There she sits as cool and easy as if she had said nothing at all extraordinary, and was going to do nothing out of the common way! What am I to do with her?—that's the serious question—what on earth am I to do with her?"

"Let me try my experiment, uncle, rash as it may look to you," I said. "Nothing else will comfort and support me; and God knows I want comfort and support. Don't think me obstinate. I am ready to admit that there are serious difficulties in my way."

The vicar resumed his ironical tone.

"Oh!" he said. "You admit that, do you? Well, there is something gained, at any rate."

"Many another woman before me," I went on, "has faced serious difficulties, and has conquered them—for the sake of the man she loved."

Doctor Starkweather rose slowly to his feet, with the air of a person whose capacity of toleration had reached its last limits.

"Am I to understand that you are still in love with Mr. Eustace Macallan?" he asked.

"Yes," I answered.

"The hero of the great Poison Trial?" pursued my uncle. "The man who has deceived and deserted you? You love him?"

"I love him more dearly than ever."

"Mr. Benjamin," said the vicar, "if she recover her senses between this and nine o'clock to-morrow morning, send her with her luggage to Loxley's Hotel, where I am now staying. Good-night, Valeria. I shall consult with your aunt as to what is to be done next. I have no more to say."

"Give me a kiss, uncle, at parting."

"Oh yes, I'll give you a kiss. Any thing you like, Valeria. I shall be sixty-five next birthday; and I thought I knew something of women, at my time of life. It seems I know nothing. Loxley's Hotel is the address, Mr. Benjamin. Good-night."

Benjamin looked very grave when he returned to me after accompanying Doctor Starkweather to the garden gate.

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"Pray be advised, my dear," he said. "I don't ask you to consider *my* view of this matter as good for much. But your uncle's opinion is surely worth considering?"

I did not reply. It was useless to say any more. I made up my mind to be misunderstood and discouraged, and to bear it. "Good-night, my dear old friend," was all I said to Benjamin. Then I turned away—I confess with the tears in my eyes—and took refuge in my bedroom.

The window-blind was up, and the autumn moonlight shone brilliantly into the little room.

As I stood by the window, looking out, the memory came to me of another moonlight night, when Eustace and I were walking together in the Vicarage garden before our marriage. It was the night of which I have written, many pages back, when there were obstacles to our union, and when Eustace had offered to release me from my engagement to him. I saw the dear face again looking at me in the moonlight; I heard once more his words and mine. "Forgive me," he had said, "for having loved you—passionately, devotedly loved you. Forgive me, and let me go."

And I had answered, "Oh, Eustace, I am only a woman—don't madden me! I can't live without you. I must and will be your wife!" And now, after marriage had united us, we were parted! Parted, still loving each other as passionately as ever. And why? Because he had been accused of a crime that he had never committed, and because a Scotch jury had failed to see that he was an innocent man.

I looked at the lovely moonlight, pursuing these remembrances and these thoughts. A new ardor burned in me. "No!" I said to myself. "Neither relations nor friends shall prevail on me to falter and fail in my husband's cause. The assertion of his innocence is the work of my life; I will begin it to-night."

I drew down the blind and lit the candles. In the quiet night, alone and unaided, I took my first step on the toilsome and terrible journey that lay before me. From the title-page to the end, without stopping to rest and without missing a word, I read the Trial of my husband for the murder of his wife.

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PART II.

PARADISE REGAINED.

CHAPTER XV.

THE STORY OF THE TRIAL.

THE PRELIMINARIES.

LET me confess another weakness, on my part, before I begin the Story of the Trial. I can not prevail upon myself to copy, for the second time, the horrible title-page which holds up to public ignominy my husband's name. I have copied it once in my tenth chapter. Let once be enough.

Turning to the second page of the Trial, I found a Note, assuring the reader of the absolute correctness of the Report of the Proceedings. The compiler described himself as having enjoyed certain special privileges. Thus, the presiding Judge had himself revised his charge to the jury. And, again, the chief lawyers for the prosecution and the defense, following the Judge's example, had revised their speeches for and against the prisoner. Lastly, particular care had been taken to secure a literally correct report of the evidence given by the various witnesses. It was some relief to me to discover this Note, and to be satisfied at the outset that the Story of the Trial was, in every particular, fully and truly given.

The next page interested me more nearly still. It enumerated the actors in the Judicial Drama — the men who held in their hands my husband's honor and my husband's life. Here is the List:

THE LORD JUSTICE CLERK,
LORD DRUMFENNICK,
LORD NOBLEKIRK, } Judges on the Bench.

THE LORD ADVOCATE (Mintlaw),
DONALD DREW, Esquire (Advocate-Depute), } Counsel for the Crown.

MR. JAMES ARLISS, W. S., Agent for the Crown.

THE DEAN OF FACULTY (Farmichael),
ALEXANDER CROCKET, Esquire (Advocate), } Counsel for the Panel (otherwise the Prisoner).

MR. THORNIEBANK, W. S.,
MR. PLAYMORE, W. S., } Agents for the Panel.

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The Indictment against the prisoner then followed. I shall not copy the uncouth language, full of needless repetitions (and, if I know any thing of the subject, not guiltless of bad grammar as well), in which my innocent husband was solemnly and falsely accused of poisoning his first wife. The less there is of that false and hateful Indictment on this page, the better and truer the page will look, to *my* eyes.

To be brief, then, Eustace Macallan was "indicted and accused, at the instance of David Mintlaw, Esquire, Her Majesty's Advocate, for Her Majesty's interest," of the Murder of his Wife by poison, at his residence called Gleninch, in the county of Mid-Lothian. The poison was alleged to have been wickedly and feloniously given by the prisoner to his wife Sara, on two occasions, in the form of arsenic, administered in tea, medicine, "or other article or articles of food or drink, to the prosecutor unknown." It was further declared that the prisoner's wife had died of the poison thus administered by her husband, on one or other, or both, of the stated occasions; and that she was thus murdered by her husband. The next paragraph asserted that the said Eustace Macallan, taken before John Daviot, Esquire, advocate, Sheriff-Substitute of Mid-Lothian, did in his presence at Edinburgh (on a given date, viz., the 29th of October), subscribe a Declaration stating his innocence of the alleged crime: this Declaration being reserved in the Indictment—together with certain documents, papers, and articles, enumerated in an Inventory—to be used in evidence against the prisoner. The Indictment concluded by declaring that, in the event of the offense charged against the prisoner being found proven by the Verdict, he, the said Eustace Macallan, "ought to be punished with the pains of the law, to deter others from committing like crimes in all time coming."

So much for the Indictment! I have done with it—and I am rejoiced to be done with it.

An Inventory of papers, documents, and articles followed at great length on the next three pages. This, in its turn, was succeeded by the list of the witnesses, and by the names of the jurors (fifteen in number) balloted for to try the case. And then, at last, the Report of the Trial began. It resolved itself, to my mind, into three great Questions. As it appeared to me at the time, so let me present it here.

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CHAPTER XVI.

FIRST QUESTION—DID THE WOMAN DIE POISONED?

THE proceedings began at ten o'clock. The prisoner was placed at the Bar, before the High Court of Justiciary, at Edinburgh. He bowed respectfully to the Bench, and pleaded Not Guilty, in a low voice.

It was observed by every one present that the prisoner's face betrayed traces of acute mental suffering. He was deadly pale. His eyes never once wandered to the crowd in the Court. When certain witnesses appeared against him, he looked at them with a momentary attention. At other times he kept his eyes on the ground. When the evidence touched on his wife's illness and death, he was deeply affected, and covered his face with his hands. It was a subject of general remark and general surprise that the prisoner, in this case (although a man), showed far less self-possession than the last prisoner tried in that Court for murder—a woman, who had been convicted on overwhelming evidence. There were persons present (a small minority only) who considered this want of composure on the part of the prisoner to be a sign in his favor. Self-possession, in his dreadful position, signified, to their minds, the stark insensibility of a heartless and shameless criminal, and afforded in itself a presumption, not of innocence, but of guilt.

The first witness called was John Daviot, Esquire, Sheriff-Substitute of Mid-Lothian. He was examined by the Lord Advocate (as counsel for the prosecution); and said:

"The prisoner was brought before me on the present charge. He made and subscribed a Declaration on the 29th of October. It was freely and voluntarily made, the prisoner having been first duly warned and admonished."

Having identified the Declaration, the Sheriff-Substitute—being cross-examined by the Dean of Faculty (as counsel for the defense)—continued his evidence in these words:

"The charge against the prisoner was Murder. This was communicated to him before he made the Declaration. The questions addressed to the prisoner were put partly by me,

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partly by another officer, the procurator-fiscal. The answers were given distinctly, and, so far as I could judge, without reserve. The statements put forward in the Declaration were all made in answer to questions asked by the procurator-fiscal or by myself."

A clerk in the Sheriff-Clerk's office then officially produced the Declaration, and corroborated the evidence of the witness who had preceded him.

The appearance of the next witness created a marked sensation in the Court. This was no less a person than the nurse who had attended Mrs. Macallan in her last illness—by name Christina Ormsay.

After the first formal answers, the nurse (examined by the Lord Advocate) proceeded to say:

"I was first sent for to attend the deceased lady on the 7th of October. She was then suffering from a severe cold, accompanied by a rheumatic affection of the left knee-joint. Previous to this I understood that her health had been fairly good. She was not a very difficult person to nurse when you got used to her, and understood how to manage her. The main difficulty was caused by her temper. She was not a sullen person; she was headstrong and violent—easily excited to fly into a passion, and quite reckless in her fits of anger as to what she said or did. At such times I really hardly think she knew what she was about. My own idea is that her temper was made still more irritable by unhappiness in her married life. She was far from being a reserved person. Indeed, she was disposed (as I thought) to be a little too communicative about herself and her troubles with persons like me who were beneath her in station. She did not scruple, for instance, to tell me (when we had been long enough together to get used to each other) that she was very unhappy, and fretted a good deal about her husband. One night, when she was wakeful and restless, she said to me—"

The Dean of Faculty here interposed, speaking on the prisoner's behalf. He appealed to the Judges to say whether such loose and unreliable evidence as this was evidence which could be received by the Court.

The Lord Advocate (speaking on behalf of the Crown) claimed it as his right to produce the evidence. It was of the utmost importance in this case to show (on the testi-

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mony of an unprejudiced witness) on what terms the husband and wife were living. The witness was a most respectable woman. She had won, and deserved, the confidence of the unhappy lady whom she attended on her death-bed.

After briefly consulting together, the Judges unanimously decided that the evidence could not be admitted. What the witness had herself seen and observed of the relations between the husband and wife was the only evidence that they could receive.

The Lord Advocate thereupon continued his examination of the witness. Christina Ormsay resumed her evidence as follows:

"My position as nurse led necessarily to my seeing more of Mrs. Macallan than any other person in the house. I am able to speak from experience of many things not known to others who were only in her room at intervals.

"For instance, I had more than one opportunity of personally observing that Mr. and Mrs. Macallan did not live together very happily. I can give you an example of this, not drawn from what others told me, but from what I noticed for myself.

"Toward the latter part of my attendance on Mrs. Macallan, a young widow lady named Mrs. Beauly — a cousin of Mr. Macallan's — came to stay at Gleninch. Mrs. Macallan was jealous of this lady; and she showed it in my presence only the day before her death, when Mr. Macallan came into her room to inquire how she had passed the night. 'Oh,' she said, 'never mind how *I* have slept! What do you care whether I sleep well or ill? How has Mrs. Beauly passed the night? Is she more beautiful than ever this morning? Go back to her — pray go back to her! Don't waste your time with me!' Beginning in that manner, she worked herself into one of her furious rages. I was brushing her hair at the time; and feeling that my presence was an impropriety under the circumstances, I attempted to leave the room. She forbade me to go. Mr. Macallan felt, as I did, that my duty was to withdraw, and he said so in plain words. Mrs. Macallan insisted on my staying in language so insolent to her husband that he said, 'If you can not control yourself, either the nurse leaves the room or I do.' She refused to yield even then. 'A good excuse,' she said, 'for getting back to Mrs. Beauly. Go!' He took her at her word, and

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walked out of the room. He had barely closed the door before she began reviling him to me in the most shocking manner. She declared, among other things she said of him, that the news of all others which he would be most glad to hear would be the news of her death. I ventured, quite respectfully, on remonstrating with her. She took up the hair-brush and threw it at me, and then and there dismissed me from my attendance on her. I left her, and waited below until her fit of passion had worn itself out. Then I returned to my place at the bedside, and for a while things went on again as usual.

"It may not be amiss to add a word which may help to explain Mrs. Macallan's jealousy of her husband's cousin. Mrs. Macallan was a very plain woman. She had a cast in one of her eyes, and (if I may use the expression) one of the most muddy, blotchy complexions it was ever my misfortune to see in a person's face. Mrs. Beauly, on the other hand, was a most attractive lady. Her eyes were universally admired, and she had a most beautifully clear and delicate color. Poor Mrs. Macallan said of her, most untruly, that she painted.

"No; the defects in the complexion of the deceased lady were not in any way attributable to her illness. I should call them born and bred defects in herself.

"Her illness, if I am asked to describe it, I should say was troublesome—nothing more. Until the last day there were no symptoms in the least degree serious about the malady that had taken her. Her rheumatic knee was painful, of course—acutely painful, if you like—when she moved it; and the confinement to bed was irksome enough, no doubt. But otherwise there was nothing in the lady's condition, before the fatal attack came, to alarm her or any body about her. She had her books and her writing materials on an invalid table, which worked on a pivot, and could be arranged in any position most agreeable to her. At times she read and wrote a good deal. At other times she lay quiet, thinking her own thoughts, or talking with me, and with one or two lady friends in the neighborhood who came regularly to see her.

"Her writing, so far as I knew, was almost entirely of the poetical sort. She was a great hand at composing poetry. On one occasion only she showed me some of her poems. I

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am no judge of such things. Her poetry was of the dismal kind, despairing about herself, and wondering why she had ever been born, and nonsense like that. Her husband came in more than once for some hard hits at his cruel heart and his ignorance of his wife's merits. In short, she vented her discontent with her pen as well as with her tongue. There were times—and pretty often too—when an angel from heaven would have failed to have satisfied Mrs. Macallan.

"Throughout the period of her illness the deceased lady occupied the same room—a large bedroom situated (like all the best bedrooms) on the first floor of the house.

"Yes: the plan of the room now shown to me is quite accurately taken, according to my remembrance of it. One door led into the great passage, or corridor, on which all the doors opened. A second door, at one side (marked B on the plan), led to Mr. Macallan's sleeping-room. A third door, on the opposite side (marked C on the plan), communicated with a little study, or book-room, used, as I was told, by Mr. Macallan's mother when she was staying at Gleninch, but seldom or never entered by any one else. Mr. Macallan's mother was not at Gleninch while I was there. The door between the bedroom and this study was locked, and the key was taken out. I don't know who had the key, or whether there were more keys than one in existence. The door was never opened to my knowledge. I only got into the study, to look at it along with the housekeeper, by entering through a second door that opened onto the corridor.

"I beg to say that I can speak from my own knowledge positively about Mrs. Macallan's illness, and about the sudden change which ended in her death. By the doctor's advice I made notes at the time of dates and hours, and such like. I looked at my notes before coming here.

"From the 7th of October, when I was first called in to nurse her, to the 20th of the same month, she slowly but steadily improved in health. Her knee was still painful, no doubt; but the inflammatory look of it was disappearing. As to the other symptoms, except weakness from lying in bed, and irritability of temper, there was really nothing the matter with her. She slept badly, I ought perhaps to add. But we remedied this by means of composing draughts prescribed for that purpose by the doctor.

"On the morning of the 21st, at a few minutes past six, I

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got my first alarm that something was going wrong with Mrs. Macallan.

"I was awoke at the time I have mentioned by the ringing of the hand-bell which she kept on her bed-table. Let me say for myself that I had only fallen asleep on the sofa in the bedroom at past two in the morning from sheer fatigue. Mrs. Macallan was then awake. She was in one of her bad humors with me. I had tried to prevail on her to let me remove her dressing-case from her bed-table, after she had used it in making her toilet for the night. It took up a great deal of room; and she could not possibly want it again before the morning. But no; she insisted on my letting it be. There was a glass inside the case; and, plain as she was, she never wearied of looking at herself in that glass. I saw that she was in a bad state of temper, so I gave her her way, and let the dressing-case be. Finding that she was too sullen to speak to me after that, and too obstinate to take her composing draught from me when I offered it, I laid me down on the sofa at her bed foot, and fell asleep, as I have said.

"The moment her bell rang I was up and at the bedside, ready to make myself useful.

"I asked what was the matter with her. She complained of faintness and depression, and said she felt sick. I inquired if she had taken any thing in the way of physic or food while I had been asleep. She answered that her husband had come in about an hour since, and, finding her still sleepless, had himself administered the composing draught. Mr. Macallan (sleeping in the next room) joined us while she was speaking. He too had been aroused by the bell. He heard what Mrs. Macallan said to me about the composing draught, and made no remark upon it. It seemed to me that he was alarmed at his wife's faintness. I suggested that she should take a little wine, or brandy and water. She answered that she could swallow nothing so strong as wine or brandy, having a burning pain in her stomach already. I put my hand on her stomach—quite lightly. She screamed when I touched her.

"This symptom alarmed us. We went to the village for the medical man who had attended Mrs. Macallan during her illness: one Mr. Gale.

"The doctor seemed no better able to account for the change for the worse in his patient than we were. Hearing

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her complain of thirst, he gave her some milk. Not long after taking it she was sick. The sickness appeared to relieve her. She soon grew drowsy and slumbered. Mr. Gale left us, with strict injunctions to send for him instantly if she was taken ill again.

"Nothing of the sort happened; no change took place for the next three hours or more. She roused up toward half-past nine and inquired about her husband. I informed her that he had returned to his own room, and asked if I should send for him. She said 'No.' I asked next if she would like any thing to eat or drink. She said 'No' again, in rather a vacant, stupefied way, and then told me to go down-stairs and get my breakfast. On my way down I met the housekeeper. She invited me to breakfast with her in her room, instead of in the servants' hall as usual. I remained with the housekeeper but a short time—certainly not more than half an hour.

"Coming up-stairs again, I met the under-housemaid sweeping on one of the landings.

"The girl informed me that Mrs. Macallan had taken a cup of tea during my absence in the housekeeper's room. Mr. Macallan's valet had ordered the tea for his mistress by his master's directions. The under-housemaid made it, and took it up-stairs herself to Mrs. Macallan's room. Her master, she said, opened the door when she knocked, and took the tea-cup from her with his own hand. He opened the door widely enough for her to see into the bedroom, and to notice that nobody was with Mrs. Macallan but himself.

"After a little talk with the under-housemaid, I returned to the bedroom. No one was there. Mrs. Macallan was lying perfectly quiet, with her face turned away from me on the pillow. Approaching the bedside, I kicked against something on the floor. It was a broken tea-cup. I said to Mrs. Macallan, 'How comes the tea-cup to be broken, ma'am?' She answered, without turning toward me, in an odd, muffled kind of voice, 'I dropped it.' 'Before you drank your tea, ma'am?' I asked. 'No,' she said; 'in handing the cup back to Mr. Macallan, after I had done.' I had put my question, wishing to know, in case she had spilled the tea when she dropped the cup, whether it would be necessary to get her any more. I am quite sure I remember correctly my question and her answer. I inquired next if she had been long alone.

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She said, shortly, 'Yes; I have been trying to sleep.' I said, 'Do you feel pretty comfortable?' She answered, 'Yes,' again. All this time she still kept her face sulkily turned from me toward the wall. Stooping over her to arrange the bedclothes, I looked toward her table. The writing materials which were always kept on it were disturbed, and there was wet ink on one of the pens. I said, 'Surely you haven't been writing, ma'am?' 'Why not?' she said; 'I couldn't sleep.' 'Another poem?' I asked. She laughed to herself —a bitter, short laugh. 'Yes,' she said, 'another poem.' 'That's good,' I said; 'it looks as if you were getting quite like yourself again. We sha'n't want the doctor any more to-day.' She made no answer to this, except an impatient sign with her hand. I didn't understand the sign. Upon that she spoke again, and crossly enough, too—'I want to be alone; leave me.'

"I had no choice but to do as I was told. To the best of my observation, there was nothing the matter with her, and nothing for the nurse to do. I put the bell-rope within reach of her hand, and I went down-stairs again.

"Half an hour more, as well as I can guess it, passed. I kept within hearing of the bell; but it never rang. I was not quite at my ease—without exactly knowing why. That odd, muffled voice in which she had spoken to me hung on my mind, as it were. I was not quite satisfied about leaving her alone for too long a time together—and then, again, I was unwilling to risk throwing her into one of her fits of passion by going back before she rang for me. It ended in my venturing into the room on the ground-floor called the Morning-Room, to consult Mr. Macallan. He was usually to be found there in the forenoon of the day.

"On this occasion, however, when I looked into the Morning-Room it was empty.

"At the same moment I heard the master's voice on the terrace outside. I went out, and found him speaking to one Mr. Dexter, an old friend of his, and (like Mrs. Beauly) a guest staying in the house. Mr. Dexter was sitting at the window of his room up-stairs (he was a cripple, and could only move himself about in a chair on wheels), and Mr. Macallan was speaking to him from the terrace below.

"'Dexter!' I heard Mr. Macallan say. 'Where is Mrs. Beauly? Have you seen any thing of her?'

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"Mr. Dexter answered, in his quick, off-hand way of speaking, 'Not I. I know nothing about her.'

"Then I advanced, and, begging pardon for intruding, I mentioned to Mr. Macallan the difficulty I was in about going back or not to his wife's room without waiting until she rang for me. Before he could advise me in the matter, the footman made his appearance and informed me that Mrs. Macallan's bell was then ringing—and ringing violently.

"It was then close on eleven o'clock. As fast as I could mount the stairs I hastened back to the bedroom.

"Before I opened the door I heard Mrs. Macallan groaning. She was in dreadful pain; feeling a burning heat in the stomach and in the throat, together with the same sickness which had troubled her in the early morning. Though no doctor, I could see in her face that this second attack was of a far more serious nature than the first. After ringing the bell for a messenger to send to Mr. Macallan, I ran to the door to see if any of the servants happened to be within call.

"The only person I saw in the corridor was Mrs. Beauly. She was on her way from her own room, she said, to inquire after Mrs. Macallan's health. I said to her, 'Mrs. Macallan is seriously ill again, ma'am. Would you please tell Mr. Macallan, and send for the doctor?' She ran down-stairs at once to do as I told her.

"I had not been long back at the bedside when Mr. Macallan and Mrs. Beauly both came in together. Mrs. Macallan cast a strange look on them (a look I can not at all describe), and bade them leave her. Mrs. Beauly, looking very much frightened, withdrew immediately. Mr. Macallan advanced a step or two nearer to the bed. His wife looked at him again in the same strange way, and cried out—half as if she was threatening him, half as if she was entreating him —'Leave me with the nurse. Go!' He only waited to say to me in a whisper, 'The doctor is sent for,' and then he left the room.

"Before Mr. Gale arrived Mrs. Macallan was violently sick. What came from her was muddy and frothy, and faintly streaked with blood. When Mr. Gale saw it he looked very serious. I heard him say to himself, 'What does this mean?' He did his best to relieve Mrs. Macallan, but with no good result that I could see. After a time she seemed to suffer less. Then more sickness came on. Then there was another

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intermission. Whether she was suffering or not, I observed that her hands and feet (whenever I touched them) remained equally cold. Also, the doctor's report of her pulse was always the same—'very small and feeble.' I said to Mr. Gale, 'What is to be done, sir?' And Mr. Gale said to me, 'I won't take the responsibility on myself any longer; I must have a physician from Edinburgh.'

"The fastest horse in the stables at Gleninch was put into a dog-cart, and the coachman drove away full speed to Edinburgh to fetch the famous Doctor Jerome.

"While we were waiting for the physician, Mr. Macallan came into his wife's room with Mr. Gale. Exhausted as she was, she instantly lifted her hand and signed to him to leave her. He tried by soothing words to persuade her to let him stay. No! She still insisted on sending him out of her room. He seemed to feel it—at such a time, and in the presence of the doctor. Before she was aware of him, he suddenly stepped up to the bedside and kissed her on the forehead. She shrank from him with a scream. Mr. Gale interfered, and led him out of the room.

"In the afternoon Doctor Jerome arrived.

"The great physician came just in time to see her seized with another attack of sickness. He watched her attentively, without speaking a word. In the interval when the sickness stopped, he still studied her, as it were, in perfect silence. I thought he would never have done examining her. When he was at last satisfied, he told me to leave him alone with Mr. Gale. 'We will ring,' he said, 'when we want you here again.'

"It was a long time before they rang for me. The coachman was sent for before I was summoned back to the bedroom. He was dispatched to Edinburgh for the second time, with a written message from Dr. Jerome to his head servant, saying that there was no chance of his returning to the city and to his patients for some hours to come. Some of us thought this looked badly for Mrs. Macallan. Others said it might mean that the doctor had hopes of saving her, but expected to be a long time in doing it.

"At last I was sent for. On my presenting myself in the bedroom, Doctor Jerome went out to speak to Mr. Macallan, leaving Mr. Gale along with me. From that time as long as the poor lady lived I was never left alone with her. One of

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the two doctors was always in her room. Refreshments were prepared for them; but still they took it in turns to eat their meal, one relieving the other at the bedside. If they had administered remedies to their patient, I should not have been surprised by this proceeding. But they were at the end of their remedies; their only business in the room seemed to be to keep watch. I was puzzled to account for this. Keeping watch was the nurse's business. I thought the conduct of the doctors very strange.

"By the time that the lamp was lit in the sick-room I could see that the end was near. Excepting an occasional feeling of cramp in her legs, she seemed to suffer less. But her eyes looked sunk in her head; her skin was cold and clammy; her lips had turned to a bluish paleness. Nothing roused her now—excepting the last attempt made by her husband to see her. He came in with Doctor Jerome, looking like a man terror-struck. She was past speaking; but the moment she saw him she feebly made signs and sounds which showed that she was just as resolved as ever not to let him come near her. He was so overwhelmed that Mr. Gale was obliged to help him out of the room. No other person was allowed to see the patient. Mr. Dexter and Mrs. Beauly made their inquiries outside the door, and were not invited in. As the evening drew on the doctors sat on either side of the bed, silently watching her, silently waiting for her death.

"Toward eight o'clock she seemed to have lost the use of her hands and arms: they lay helpless outside the bedclothes. A little later she sank into a sort of dull sleep. Little by little the sound of her heavy breathing grew fainter. At twenty minutes past nine Doctor Jerome told me to bring the lamp to the bedside. He looked at her, and put his hand on her heart. Then he said to me, 'You can go down-stairs, nurse: it is all over.' He turned to Mr. Gale. 'Will you inquire if Mr. Macallan can see us?' he said. I opened the door for Mr. Gale, and followed him out. Doctor Jerome called me back for a moment, and told me to give him the key of the door. I did so, of course; but I thought this also very strange. When I got down to the servants' hall I found there was a general feeling that something was wrong. We were all uneasy—without knowing why.

"A little later the two doctors left the house. Mr. Macallan had been quite incapable of receiving them and hearing

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what they had to say. In this difficulty they had spoken privately with Mr. Dexter, as Mr. Macallan's old friend, and the only gentleman then staying at Gleninch.

"Before bed-time I went up-stairs to prepare the remains of the deceased lady for the coffin. The room in which she lay was locked, the door leading into Mr. Macallan's room being secured, as well as the door leading into the corridor. The keys had been taken away by Mr. Gale. Two of the men-servants were posted outside the bedroom to keep watch. They were to be relieved at four in the morning—that was all they could tell me.

"In the absence of any explanations or directions, I took the liberty of knocking at the door of Mr. Dexter's room. From his lips I first heard the startling news. Both the doctors had refused to give the usual certificate of death! There was to be a medical examination of the body the next morning."

There the examination of the nurse, Christina Ormsay, came to an end.

Ignorant as I was of the law, I could see what impression the evidence (so far) was intended to produce on the minds of the jury. After first showing that my husband had had two opportunities of administering the poison—once in the medicine and once in the tea—the counsel for the Crown led the jury to infer that the prisoner had taken those opportunities to rid himself of an ugly and jealous wife, whose detestable temper he could no longer endure.

Having directed his examination to the attainment of this object, the Lord Advocate had done with the witness. The Dean of Faculty—acting in the prisoner's interests—then rose to bring out the favorable side of the wife's character by cross-examining the nurse. If he succeeded in this attempt, the jury might reconsider their conclusion that the wife was a person who had exasperated her husband beyond endurance. In that case, where (so far) was the husband's motive for poisoning her? and where was the presumption of the prisoner's guilt?

Pressed by this skillful lawyer, the nurse was obliged to exhibit my husband's first wife under an entirely new aspect. Here is the substance of what the Dean of Faculty extracted from Christina Ormsay:

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"I persist in declaring that Mrs. Macallan had a most violent temper. But she was certainly in the habit of making amends for the offense that she gave by her violence. When she was quiet again, she always made her excuses to me, and she made them with a good grace. Her manners were engaging at such times as these. She spoke and acted like a well-bred lady. Then, again, as to her personal appearance. Plain as she was in face, she had a good figure; her hands and feet, I was told, had been modeled by a sculptor. She had a very pleasant voice, and she was reported when in health to sing beautifully. She was also (if her maid's account was to be trusted) a pattern in the matter of dressing for the other ladies in the neighborhood. Then, as to Mrs. Beauly, though she was certainly jealous of the beautiful young widow, she had shown at the same time that she was capable of controlling that feeling. It was through Mrs. Macallan that Mrs. Beauly was in the house. Mrs. Beauly had wished to postpone her visit on account of the state of Mrs. Macallan's health. It was Mrs. Macallan herself—not her husband—who decided that Mrs. Beauly should not be disappointed, and should pay her visit to Gleninch then and there. Further, Mrs. Macallan (in spite of her temper) was popular with her friends and popular with her servants. There was hardly a dry eye in the house when it was known she was dying. And, further still, in those little domestic disagreements at which the nurse had been present, Mr. Macallan had never lost his temper, and had never used harsh language: he seemed to be more sorry than angry when the quarrels took place."—Moral for the jury: Was this the sort of woman who would exasperate a man into poisoning her? And was this the sort of man who would be capable of poisoning his wife?

Having produced this salutary counter-impression, the Dean of Faculty sat down; and the medical witnesses were called next.

Here the evidence was simply irresistible.

Doctor Jerome and Mr. Gale positively swore that the symptoms of the illness were the symptoms of poisoning by arsenic. The surgeon who had performed the post-mortem examination followed. He positively swore that the appearance of the internal organs proved Doctor Jerome and Mr. Gale to be right in declaring that their patient had died

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poisoned. Lastly, to complete this overwhelming testimony, two analytical chemists actually produced in Court the arsenic which they had found in the body, in a quantity admittedly sufficient to have killed two persons instead of one. In the face of such evidence as this, cross-examination was a mere form. The first Question raised by the Trial—Did the Woman Die Poisoned?—was answered in the affirmative, and answered beyond the possibility of doubt.

The next witnesses called were witnesses concerned with the question that now followed—the obscure and terrible question, Who Poisoned Her?

CHAPTER XVII.

SECOND QUESTION—WHO POISONED HER?

The evidence of the doctors and the chemists closed the proceedings on the first day of the Trial.

On the second day the evidence to be produced by the prosecution was anticipated with a general feeling of curiosity and interest. The Court was now to hear what had been seen and done by the persons officially appointed to verify such cases of suspected crime as the case which had occurred at Gleninch. The Procurator-Fiscal—being the person officially appointed to direct the preliminary investigations of the law—was the first witness called on the second day of the Trial.

Examined by the Lord Advocate, the Fiscal gave his evidence, as follows:

"On the twenty-sixth of October I received a communication from Doctor Jerome, of Edinburgh, and from Mr. Alexander Gale, medical practitioner, residing in the village or hamlet of Dingdovie, near Edinburgh. The communication related to the death, under circumstances of suspicion, of Mrs. Eustace Macallan, at her husband's house, hard by Dingdovie, called Gleninch. There were also forwarded to mé, inclosed in the document just mentioned, two reports. One described the results of a post-mortem examination of the deceased lady, and the other stated the discoveries made after a chemical analysis of certain of the interior organs of her body. The result in both instances proved to demon-

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stration that Mrs. Eustace Macallan had died of poisoning by arsenic.

"Under these circumstances, I set in motion a search and inquiry in the house at Gleninch and elsewhere, simply for the purpose of throwing light on the circumstances which had attended the lady's death.

"No criminal charge in connection with the death was made at my office against any person, either in the communication which I received from the medical men or in any other form. The investigations at Gleninch and elsewhere, beginning on the twenty-sixth of October, were not completed until the twenty-eighth. Upon this latter date—acting on certain discoveries which were reported to me, and on my own examination of letters and other documents brought to my office—I made a criminal charge against the prisoner, and obtained a warrant for his apprehension. He was examined before the Sheriff on the twenty-ninth of October, and was committed for trial before this Court."

The Fiscal having made his statement, and having been cross-examined (on technical matters only), the persons employed in his office were called next. These men had a story of startling interest to tell. Theirs were the fatal discoveries which had justified the Fiscal in charging my husband with the murder of his wife. The first of the witnesses was a sheriff's officer. He gave his name as Isaiah Schoolcraft.

Examined by Mr. Drew—Advocate-Depute, and counsel for the Crown, with the Lord Advocate—Isaiah Schoolcraft said:

"I got a warrant on the twenty-sixth of October to go to the country-house near Edinburgh called Gleninch. I took with me Robert Lorrie, assistant to the Fiscal. We first examined the room in which Mrs. Eustace Macallan had died. On the bed, and on a movable table which was attached to it, we found books and writing materials, and a paper containing some unfinished verses in manuscript, afterward identified as being in the handwriting of the deceased. We inclosed these articles in paper, and sealed them up.

"We next opened an Indian cabinet in the bedroom. Here we found many more verses on many more sheets of paper in the same handwriting. We also discovered, first some letters, and next a crumpled piece of paper thrown aside in a corner of one of the shelves. On closer examination, a chem-

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ist's printed label was discovered on this morsel of paper. We also found in the folds of it a few scattered grains of some white powder. The paper and the letters were carefully inclosed, and sealed up as before.

"Further investigation of the room revealed nothing which could throw any light on the purpose of our inquiry. We examined the clothes, jewelry, and books of the deceased. These we left under lock and key. We also found her dressing-case, which we protected by seals, and took away with us to the Fiscal's office, along with all the other articles that we had discovered in the room.

"The next day we continued our examination in the house, having received in the interval fresh instructions from the Fiscal. We began our work in the bedroom communicating with the room in which Mrs. Macallan had died. It had been kept locked since the death. Finding nothing of any importance here, we went next to another room on the same floor, in which we were informed the prisoner was then lying ill in bed.

"His illness was described to us as a nervous complaint, caused by the death of his wife, and by the proceedings which had followed it. He was reported to be quite incapable of exerting himself, and quite unfit to see strangers. We insisted nevertheless (in deference to our instructions) on obtaining admission to his room. He made no reply when we inquired whether he had or had not removed any thing from the sleeping-room next to his late wife's, which he usually occupied, to the sleeping-room in which he now lay. All he did was to close his eyes, as if he were too feeble to speak to us or to notice us. Without further disturbing him, we began to examine the room and the different objects in it.

"While we were so employed, we were interrupted by a strange sound. We likened it to the rumbling of wheels in the corridor outside.

"The door opened, and there came swiftly in a gentleman —a cripple—wheeling himself along in a chair. He wheeled his chair straight up to a little table which stood by the prisoner's bedside, and said something to him in a whisper too low to be overheard. The prisoner opened his eyes, and quickly answered by a sign. We informed the crippled gentleman, quite respectfully, that we could not allow him to be in the room at this time. He appeared to think nothing of

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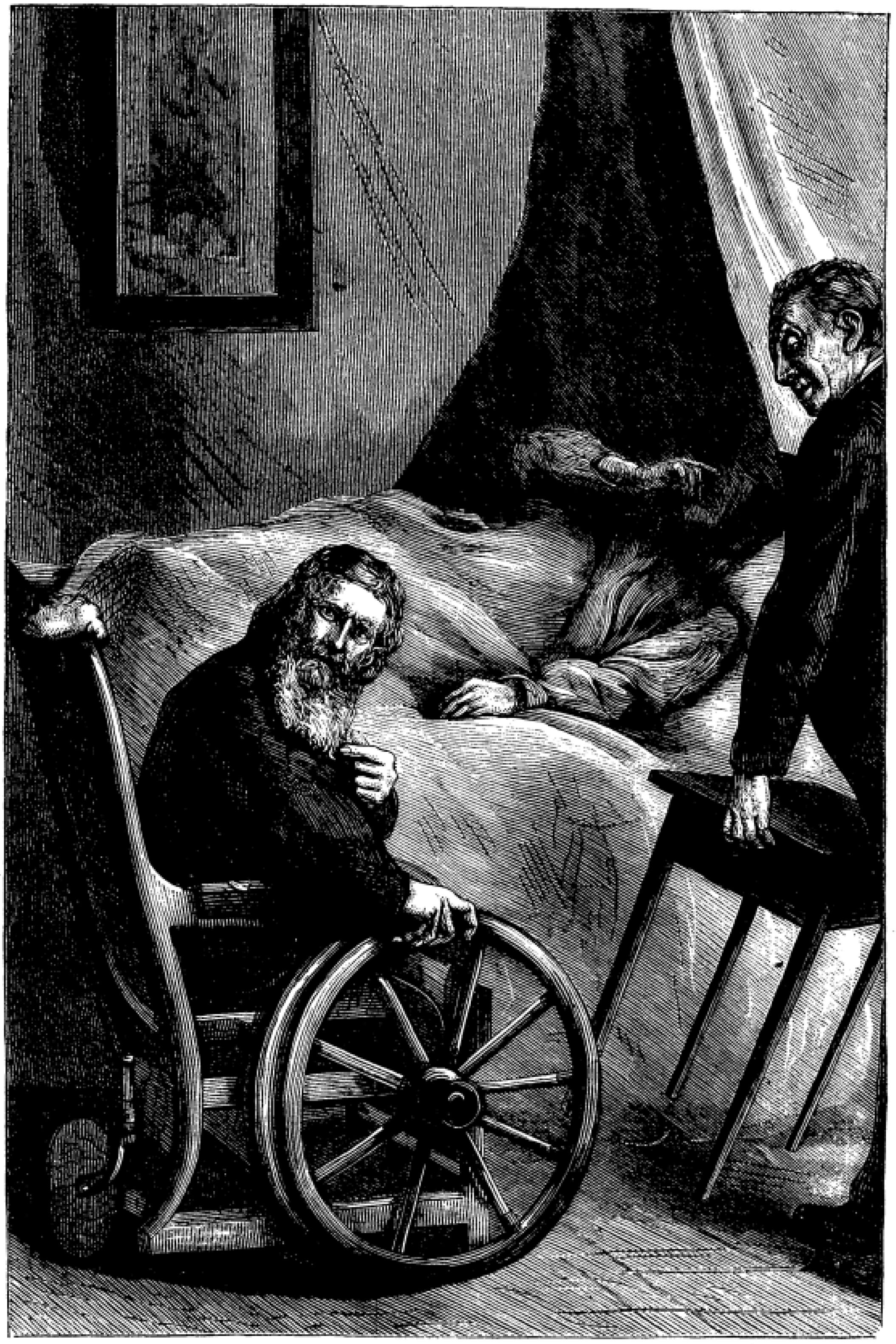

"I TOOK HIS CHAIR AND PULLED IT AWAY."

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what we said. He only answered, 'My name is Dexter. I am one of Mr. Macallan's old friends. It is you who are intruding here—not I.' We again notified to him that he must leave the room; and we pointed out particularly that he had got his chair in such a position against the bedside table as to prevent us from examining it. He only laughed. 'Can't you see for yourselves,' he said, 'that it is a table, and nothing more?' In reply to this we warned him that we were acting under a legal warrant, and that he might get into trouble if he obstructed us in the execution of our duty. Finding there was no moving him by fair means, I took his chair and pulled it away, while Robert Lorrie laid hold of the table and carried it to the other end of the room. The crippled gentleman flew into a furious rage with me for presuming to touch his chair. 'My chair is Me,' he said: 'how dare you lay hands on Me?' I first opened the door, and then, by way of accommodating him, gave the chair a good push behind with my stick instead of my hand, and so sent it and him safely and swiftly out of the room.

"Having locked the door, so as to prevent any further intrusion, I joined Robert Lorrie in examining the bedside table. It had one drawer in it, and that drawer we found secured.

"We asked the prisoner for the key.

"He flatly refused to give it to us, and said we had no right to unlock his drawers. He was so angry that he even declared it was lucky for us he was too weak to rise from his bed. I answered civilly that our duty obliged us to examine the drawer, and that if he still declined to produce the key, he would only oblige us to take the table away and have the lock opened by a smith.

"While we were still disputing there was a knock at the door of the room.

"I opened the door cautiously. Instead of the crippled gentleman, whom I had expected to see again, there was another stranger standing outside. The prisoner hailed him as a friend and neighbor, and eagerly called upon him for protection from us. We found this second gentleman pleasant enough to deal with. He informed us readily that he had been sent for by Mr. Dexter, and that he was himself a lawyer, and he asked to see our warrant. Having looked at it, he at once informed the prisoner (evidently very much to the

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prisoner's surprise) that he must submit to have the drawer examined, under protest. And then, without more ado, he got the key, and opened the table drawer for us himself.

"We found inside several letters, and a large book with a lock to it, having the words 'My Diary' inscribed on it in gilt letters. As a matter of course, we took possession of the letters and the Diary, and sealed them up, to be given to the Fiscal. At the same time the gentleman wrote out a protest on the prisoner's behalf, and handed us his card. The card informed us that he was Mr. Playmore, now one of the Agents for the prisoner. The card and the protest were deposited, with the other documents, in the care of the Fiscal. No other discoveries of any importance were made at Gleninch.

"Our next inquiries took us to Edinburgh—to the druggist whose label we had found on the crumpled morsel of paper, and to other druggists likewise whom we were instructed to question. On the twenty-eighth of October the Fiscal was in possession of all the information that we could collect, and our duties for the time being came to an end."

This concluded the evidence of Schoolcraft and Lorrie. It was not shaken on cross-examination, and it was plainly unfavorable to the prisoner.

Matters grew worse still when the next witnesses were called. The druggist whose label had been found on the crumpled bit of paper now appeared on the stand, to make the position of my unhappy husband more critical than ever.

Andrew Kinlay, druggist, of Edinburgh, deposed as follows:

"I keep a special registry book of the poisons sold by me. I produce the book. On the date therein mentioned the prisoner at the bar, Mr. Eustace Macallan, came into my shop, and said that he wished to purchase some arsenic. I asked him what it was wanted for. He told me it was wanted by his gardener, to be used, in solution, for the killing of insects in the greenhouse. At the same time he mentioned his name—Mr. Macallan, of Gleninch. I at once directed my assistant to put up the arsenic (two ounces of it), and I made the necessary entry in my book. Mr. Macallan signed the entry, and I signed it afterward as witness. He paid for the arsenic, and took it away with him wrapped up in two papers, the outer wrapper being labeled with my name and

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