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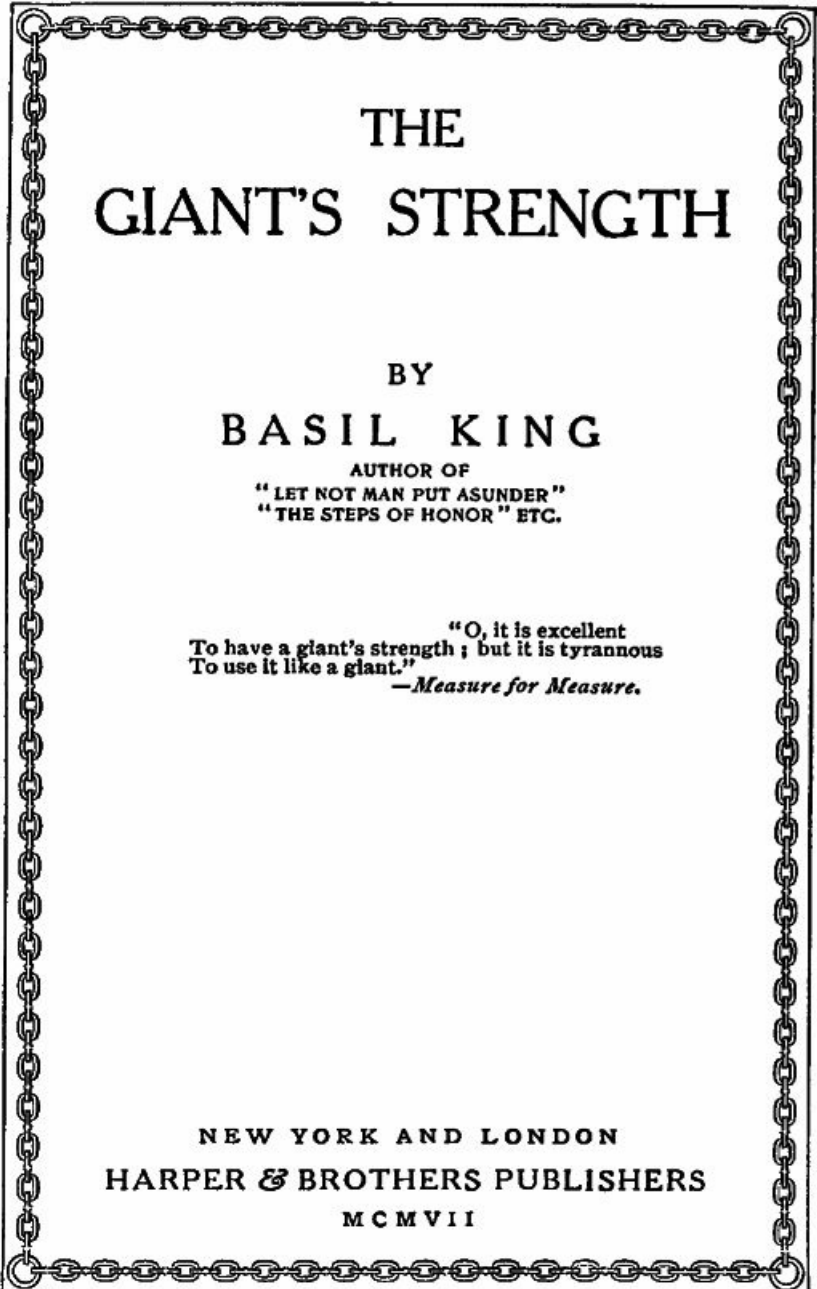
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THE
GIANT'S STRENGTH

BY
BASIL KING

AUTHOR OF
"LET NOT MAN PUT ASUNDER"
"THE STEPS OF HONOR" ETC.

"O, it is excellent
To have a giant's strength ; but it is tyrannous
To use it like a giant."
—*Measure for Measure.*

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TO
THE DEAR AND BLESSED MEMORY OF

GEORGE WRIGHT HODGSON

"Whatever way my days decline,
I felt and feel, tho' left alone,
His being working in mine own,
The footsteps of his life in mine."
In Memoriam.

THE GIANT'S STRENGTH

CHAPTER I

As it was the entr'acte of the opera the lobby of the Casino was filled with a gay and noisy cosmopolitan crowd. All the more, therefore, was it a proof of the celebrity to which Paul Trafford had attained that his entry caused a distinct and general thrill of curiosity. A man who was reckoned the richest in the world could not be other than an object of supreme interest to people whose first cry was money. The fact that he had arrived at Monte Carlo the day before had been as much a topic of conversation as if he had been King Edward or the Czar. Now that he appeared and was recognized, princes, duchesses, and adventurers instinctively fell back a little, making way for him and his party to pass on. Here and there some one claimed the privilege of his acquaintance, and bowed before his nod as before a pope's benediction. Those who followed in his train were besieged with greetings. Mr. and Mrs. George Trafford were actually cut off from the procession and made prisoners of war. The Duke of Wiltshire only maintained his position at Miss Trafford's side by being rude to people, and turning his back on them.

As for Paula herself, she passed on, between her father and the man she had almost promised to marry, unmoved by the stir she created. She was aware of it, but she was used to it. Having been so constantly her father's companion during the last four years, she had come to take public attention as a matter of course. At first the interest she inspired had been impersonal—the interest inseparable from one whom the American press called "the greatest heiress on earth." Her fortune was compared with that of the Queen of Holland, and of the daughters of the Rothschild and Rockefeller families, but that was all. Now, however, at twenty-two, she was emerging from the golden mist that had surrounded her, and was assuming personality. The flowering of her beauty had done something towards this. People had found it superfluous that a girl with so much money should have a complexion like rose-petals floating in milk. They resented the fact that her figure had needless grace, and her face an expression of appeal which there was no resisting. Rumors of marriage sprang up wherever she appeared. The girl knew these things without taking actual account of them, or letting them form part of her daily consciousness. At this minute she could ignore the fact that her looks were being criticised and her income appraised, in gazing about her, with amusement, at the novelty of the scene.

"We're now in one of those spots of No-man's-land," said the Duke of Wiltshire, as they entered the first saloon, "which modern civilization likes to set apart as cities of refuge from the rule of caste and conventionality."

Paula turned her soft eyes slowly towards him. They were blue eyes with black lashes—the Celtic eyes inherited from her father's mother—the eyes in which faith is mingled with superstition, in which self-devotion has a dash of insincerity, and in which laughter never wholly hides the mist of tears. Between the brows there was a tiny, perpendicular furrow, like that of a person endeavoring to see through the rights and wrongs of things, and conscientiously trying to be sure. It was this puzzled, inquiring look that the Duke of Wiltshire specially loved in her. It gave him an opportunity for the kind of explanatory work in which he excelled in the House of Lords.

"Haven't you noticed," he went on, in answer to Paula's unspoken interrogation, "that in all the great capitals of the world—London, Paris, and New York, for instance—there are two or three expensive restaurants and luxurious hotels, where on crossing the very threshold one steps outside all the limitations of nationality, moral prejudice, and class distinction?"

"That's very true," Paul Trafford said, in corroboration.

He liked to listen to Wiltshire's reflections on subjects that he himself had never thought about. "He's always widening your mind in some direction where you never looked before," he remarked, now and then, to Paula. The girl was glad to believe it. It was one more attraction of mind, where physical charms were so lacking; it was one more explanation of her willingness to marry him. She liked him. "No one could help liking him," she often told herself; and yet as they moved slowly along amid the crowd, with so many eyes upon them, she regretted the fact that he was shorter than herself, and that he had this air of hopeless mediocrity. The men of her own family were all equipped for command. Her father, who had been a New England farmer's son, and himself a farmer's boy, overtopped most men by a head, and was undeniably handsome. Even her cousin George, who was big and lumbering, had something dominating about him. It seemed strange to her, therefore, that this English duke, the head of the illustrious house of Holroyd, the descendant of a line whose good looks had helped to make Holbein, Vandyck, and Reynolds famous, should have been sent into the world by the great capricious Mother with the seal of the commonplace indelibly set upon him. She could not stifle in

herself the knowledge that she was sorry for this; and yet as her glance took in once more the details of his dull-blue eyes, his stubby, sandy beard, and the stocky figure that defied the reformatory arts of the most expensive tailors in London, she was conscious, too, of a throb of pity, of almost tender pity, that he to whom so much had been given should have to contend with such obvious disadvantages.

"You've only got to look about you," Wiltshire went on, with the enthusiasm of a man airing his own ideas, "to see that Monte Carlo is the great city of refuge of our time. To people whose outward appearance warrants the green ticket of admission, the reign of liberty, equality, and fraternity has set in as nearly as possible on earth. Look there!" he continued. "That's the Grand-Duke Dmitri standing on tiptoe to look over the shoulder of Aarons, the money-lender, one of the greatest rascals unhung. That pretty English girl, asking Aarons to place her stake for her, wouldn't touch him anywhere else with the end of her parasol. In every direction you can see the same flinging together of odd contrasts—the same suspension of the rules that govern organized society elsewhere."

Paula listened and smiled, but said nothing in response, gazing about her to verify his observations for herself.

Against a background of tawdry splendor the great ladies of all worlds combined to produce an effect of elegance. There was a place for Aspasia and Madame de Staël alike. So, too, with the men; great lords, great bankers, and great adventurers met and mingled with the unprejudiced freedom of souls in the future state. Among the seated players the card-sharper elbowed the countess, and the fashionably dressed young man of the world jostled the faded grandmother in rusty crape. It was clear to Paula that in the Temple of Chance there was no respect of persons, and that the worshippers loved to have it so. In this heated atmosphere and under those glaring lights, it was as if a complex civilization suddenly resolved itself into its constituent elements, and men and women went back to the primitive, predatory instincts that time and experience had taught them to conceal.

CHAPTER II

On the outer ring of spectators around the table in the centre of the room, they paused to look on.

"*Faites vos jeux, messieurs,*" the croupier was saying, in a voice nasally mechanical.

Paula's eyes were instantly attracted to the game. The sight of large sums of money to be lost and won appealed, by some hereditary instinct, to her imagination. She looked at the players facing her, and saw them enriched or impoverished with dramatic suddenness. She was sure the girl in a bright-red hat, with a wide-meshed blue veil making unnatural tints on powder and rouge, would end her days in want. The gray-bearded old man, carefully placing a five-franc piece *en carré*, would have his homeward fare paid by the authorities. The purse-lipped woman, in shabby widow's weeds, working an elaborate system all over the tableau, would win a lot of money. The good-looking young man, smilingly throwing down the maximum stake *en plein*, would be ruined and would shoot himself.

"*Rien ne va plus,*" the croupier cried again, and the players drew back their hands to await the result of Fate.

"Your father has been called away to be presented to the Grand-Duke Dmitri," Wiltshire whispered to Paula, but she only nodded to signify that she had heard.

When the croupier turned the wheel and threw the ball she felt her heart-strings tighten. In the whirling thing before her the blindest and most obscure forces of the universe seemed visibly at work. Destiny was staked on a chance that kept beyond all foresight and eluded all calculation. It was strange, daring, and exciting. She wondered how the girl in the red hat could gaze indifferently about her while the wheel spun round. She wondered how the young man could turn with a jesting remark to the companion standing behind him. She wondered still more at the effect upon them all when the rotations of the wheel began to slacken speed, when the ball clicked and tapped and staggered, whirling round and round in a slow, wild, drunken way, till it fell, at last, as if exhausted, into the decisive number. The widow saw her system swept away, and without a shadow of expression on her stony face began to work out a new one. The girl in the red hat put down another louis on the exact spot whence the last had disappeared. The old man replaced his five-franc piece by one of ten. The young man who had played *en plein* received the value of his stake thirty-five times over.

"*Faites vos jeux, messieurs,*" the croupier called again. He was a stout man of fifty, swarthy and commonplace, but Paula could not help investing him with some of the inexorable power of the Parcaë.

"You seem interested," the Duke whispered, behind her.

"It's tremendous," she returned, over her shoulder. "It's awful. It's as if one had got to the very springs of all happenings, as if one were in touch with the power that has made the world and flung us, haphazard, on to it."

"Wiltshire," said her father, slipping into the crowd, beside them, "the Grand-Duke wants to meet you. Paula, dear, you can wait for us here a minute. We sha'n't be long."

"Very well, papa, dear. I shall be all right."

She was not sorry to have them go, for it enabled her to give herself up to the spectacle of the game. The wheel was twirled again and again, always with variations on the same result. It gave her a thrill to see the croupier rake the gold and silver in, with a sort of lavish indifference to its value. There was something superb, too, in the careless ease with which he pushed about to the successful players the various multiplications of their stakes. As each winner picked up his gains she regretted that she had not put down a louis just where he had put his. She wondered what would happen if she did. She wondered whether the obscure, blind power that was throwing destinies about would have anything in store for her.

"If I knew how, I'd do it," she said to herself, looking up and down the table to see exactly what the others did.

Just then a man across the table threw down a ten-franc piece on *pair*. She had seen him do it several times in succession, and on each occasion he had lost. It was an easy conclusion that if *pair* lost *impair* would win. It was the simplest form of the game, and before she realized what she was about her own ten francs were down. The wheel spun and slackened speed; the ball clicked and staggered and stopped. She held her breath, with her eyes fixed upon her stake.

"If he rakes it in," she thought, "I shall know I've lost."

But no! From the ends of the table the sure, relentless hand swept up the gold and silver into one central pile. Here and there a few isolated stakes were left, her own among the number. A minute later she found two gold coins where she had put down one.

She picked them up timidly, and looked across at the young man. *Pair* had lost again, and she felt sorry for him. He was not in evening dress, and she guessed, from slight indications, that he was poor. Her first thought was that it was a pity for him to waste his money; her second, that the stake she had won was practically that which he had lost. At the idea the tiny furrow deepened for an instant between her brows, and the gold piece clinched in her hand seemed to burn through her glove. She had a confused, mistaken notion that she had taken the money from him, that if she had not played he might have won.

"I oughtn't to have done it," she said to herself, half turning to go away. But the young man threw down another ten-franc piece on *pair*. It was an opportunity, she thought, for him to recover the money she had taken from him. It was not likely that she would win again, and her loss must of necessity be his gain. Once more she put her stake down on *impair*, and, with eyes fixed on it, awaited the result.

Again the croupier raked the gold and silver in, and the young man's stake went with the rest. This time the very coin he had forfeited was pushed across the table to her. She picked it up and slipped it into her glove, looking over at him to see what he would do. If he stopped she would stop, if he went on she would give him the chance to win his money back. She was sure it was *his* money, and she felt some humiliation in going home with twenty francs that belonged to a passing stranger. Unconsciously to herself her interest was the more sincere because of the fact that he was tall and good-looking. "Certainly a gentleman," she commented, "and with such a striking face."

For an instant he seemed to hesitate; then his bit of gold fell on *pair*. A second later Paula's fell on *impair*. The result was the same as before; it was so the next time and the next. On the sixth spin *pair* won and *impair* lost, but with the seventh *impair's* run of luck began again. Paula felt herself growing desperate. The palm of her left-hand glove seemed bursting with gold, but in honor towards the poor young man she could not stop till he did. She did not reason that he could win back his money from the bank; she thought it must be from her. Of one thing she was glad: he had not noticed her at all or glanced in her direction. She could, therefore, look at him, with her money in her hand, ready to throw her stake when he threw his.

The widow was elaborating a new arrangement of her system, taking coin after coin from a small black bag. The girl in the blue veil was playing with two louis instead of one, gesticulating her orders to the croupier as to where they should be placed. The lad who had put his stake *en plein* was now playing it *à cheval*.

"*Rien ne va plus!*"

Paula started and looked at the young man across the table. He had put nothing down. He had evidently lost all he could afford. What she had won she should be obliged to keep. The obscure powers of chance had been true to their reputation, and had given the luck to those who had no need of it.

Her hand, with the glove full of gold, fell heavily at her side. Perhaps the unfortunate man had lost everything he possessed and would be driven to take his life, as she understood ruined gamblers generally were. She had a wild thought of asking her father to go and beg him to take his money back, when the victim's eyes wandered, apparently by accident, in her direction. For a fraction of a second their glances met, but Paula felt herself coloring and turned away.

"Why—what!"

The broken exclamation came from the Duke of Wiltshire, as he pushed his way through the crowd to take his place again at her side.

"Have you been crying?—or playing?—or what?" he demanded, when he was near enough to speak. For the first time in their acquaintance he assumed a tone of authority.

"I haven't been crying," she said, hurriedly. "I've been playing, and I've won a lot of money. I don't quite know what to do with it."

"So ho!" he laughed. "That's what you do when your father's back is turned!"

"I sha'n't do it again," she said, in some confusion, as she moved out of the ring immediately around the table. "You see it was this way. I played against that tall young man over there. Don't look now because he'll notice it. That is, whatever he did on one side of the table I did on the other, and he always lost and I always won. I'm so sorry. He didn't look as if he could afford to lose—and he didn't keep on."

"What young man do you mean? I don't see him."

"He's tall, and well set-up, with a pointed brown beard and rather gleaming eyes. No; he's gone," she added, stealing a glance to where he had been standing. "Ah, there he is now, coming round the table. He's coming this way. Don't look; he'll know I've been speaking of him. Come away. There's papa. Let us go to him."

But it was too late. The unknown young man and the Duke were already shaking hands, with the cordiality of long-standing friendship. Paula tried to slip out of her embarrassment by gliding round them and taking her place beside her father. He was talking to a knot of people she did not know, but she was near enough to him to be under his protection, while not so far from the Duke as to escape hearing some of the remarks between him and the stranger.

Through the hum of movement and conversation about her she caught a sympathetic barytone quality of voice. From the English precision of his enunciation and the American plaintiveness of his inflections, she guessed he was one of those fellow-countrymen of her own who have lived or studied abroad. The Duke catechised him freely, and he replied with the sort of detail one gives only to one's friends.

He had been working in Rome, and would have remained till after Easter, only that he had a couple of commissions for portraits in Paris. Oh yes; commissions did come in, but very slowly. Perhaps it would be different some day. Yes, his mother was quite accustomed to her blindness now, but so feeble that they might lose her at any minute. Marah was well, and, as usual, working hard. He was staying only a day or two at Monte Carlo, just to break the journey from Rome. He hoped to have something in the next Salon, though he had nothing ready yet. Perhaps if Lady Alice were passing through Paris, she would look in, and give him the benefit of her advice.

Then came the question Paula was afraid of. Would the Duke tell him who was the tall young lady, in a blue dress and black hat, who had spoken to him on turning away from the table? Of the reply she caught only the end of the sentence—"and you must know her."

She felt herself flushing with embarrassment, but as the Duke approached she knew the only dignified thing to do was to turn and greet him pleasantly.

"Miss Trafford," he said, with the awkward air he always had at such moments, "I want you to know a very old friend of ours, Mr. Roger Winship."

"Mr. Winship's face," she laughed, "is perfectly familiar to me. I've been watching him from the other side of the roulette-table for nearly half an hour."

"And you saw the ill-will of the gods against me," he returned, easily. "But I had the gratification of knowing that I couldn't lose unless you won. That was something."

"Haven't we met before?" she asked, with a hurried change of topic.

"No; never."

The quick decisiveness of tone as well as the curious gleam of his eyes, in speaking the brief words, were details she remembered afterwards.

"And yet," she persisted, "your name is very well known to me. I've heard it often."

"That isn't impossible," he admitted, with a forced smile, "though you must have been very young."

"I know I've heard of a Roger Winship," she continued, as if searching in her memory. "It must have been my father—"

"Probably," he interrupted; "but it was so long ago—"

"That it was your father's name and not yours that I've heard mentioned. Were you going to say that?"

"It was a long time ago," he repeated, the forced smile gone. "I don't suppose that either you or I—"

He hesitated, and Paula saw that it would be best to let the subject drop. The Duke broke in with a remark or two, and after a few further words Winship bade them good-evening and passed on.

"What am I to do with all this money?" Paula asked, when she and Wiltshire were alone again.

"You might give it in charity," he suggested.

"No; I wouldn't do that. I couldn't give in charity money to which I felt some one else had a prior claim. And," she pursued, with some hesitation, "I suppose I was right in fancying that he is poor?"

"Oh yes; he's poor enough. He's a portrait-painter, and still has his way to make. Alice got to know him and his sister when she took it into her head to study art in Paris. She brings them over every now and then to stay with us at Edenbridge, or, at least she did till the poor old lady grew too blind. I like this young fellow. He's full of ideas, and we've had some jolly talks together."

"I've heard your sister spoken of as a great authority on art. Does she think this Mr. Winship—?"

"She says she doesn't think—she knows. In ten years' time, she believes, he will have such a place as Sargent holds to-day."

"Then, what shall I do with the money?" Paula said again.

"What *can* you do but give it away or spend it?"

"I can keep it," she returned, thoughtfully. "I may find a way of getting him to take it back."

CHAPTER III

"What connection have I with the name of Roger Winship?"

"Oh, that dreadful man!" Mrs. Trafford cried, with a little gasp. "I haven't heard of him for years."

"Do you mean old Roger Winship?" George Trafford asked, yawning, as he slipped down lazily in his arm-chair and stretched his legs before the fire.

"I mean any Roger Winship," Paula replied. "I've heard the name to-night, and I seem to have known it before."

"How on earth did it happen?" came from Mrs. Trafford.

"There was a young man at the Casino, rather an interesting-looking man, a friend of the Duke's. The Duke spoke to him and then introduced him to me. I'd noticed him before that."

"I'm surprised at the Duke. It's very queer the sort of people who seem to know one another nowadays."

Mrs. Trafford spoke with as much severity as a beaming content would permit. Handsome, dimpling, and energetic, she was spending her middle-age in the serene satisfaction of seeing all her dreams fulfilled.

The daughter of a New England coal merchant, her modest fortune had been the foundation on which the colossal Coal Trust had been built up. It was to her credit to have married a poor man, certain that a great industrial empire awaited him. She had married for love, against the wishes of her family, but her love had been based on admiration. Her husband and she had passed through good years and evil years, had lived sparingly, had watched and planned and combined, and made their business march with the march of the country. She had seen him rise, with the swiftness and sureness of a Bonaparte, to the highest financial position, first in Vermont, then in New England, then in America, then in the world. Before he was sixty or she was fifty, Trafford was a name to go with Rothschild. It was a name that meant not only the power of money, but the power of power—the success of those who threw in their destinies with it, and the ruin of those who opposed it.

During the years in which the great trust was being organized and maintained, the Traffords had lived in an atmosphere of battle. There were suits in the law courts, appeals to supreme courts, State legislatures to be managed, Congress to be appeased, foreign trade-marts to be invaded, and small competitors to be crushed out at home. It had been exciting, and often dramatic; but as middle-age drew on and most of the ends had been gained, it was pleasant to settle down and enjoy the hardly won laurels in peace. George Trafford, whose late father, Andrew Trafford, had shared the family elevation, was equal now to taking his uncle's place in everything but the supreme command. In the exercise of this office Paul Trafford himself was never idle, hurrying now to one great capital, now to another, with but brief intervals to spend with his wife and daughter at home.

Home now meant Paris. The dust of conflict being still thick in New York, it was natural that Mrs. Trafford, at least, should prefer a place of abode where she could breathe more freely. It was not less natural that the enticements of fashion and fine weather, as well as the needs of Mrs. Trafford's health, should draw them in winter to the Riviera. The coming of the George Traffords from America, as well as the possibility of Paula's engagement to the Duke of Wiltshire—a possibility which was only awaiting her final word to become a certainty—offered reasons for assembling something like a family party.

At the present minute they were spending the last desultory half-hour of the evening in Mrs. Trafford's sitting-room, before parting for the night. Mr. Trafford had already gone to his apartment, and Mrs. George, beating back a yawn with the gloves she had just pulled off, was preparing to take her husband off to theirs. Paula, dressed as she came from the Casino, sat by a window from which she had pulled the curtain back. Under the starlight, the sea gleamed duskily, reflecting here and there the lamps of the yachts anchored in the tiny bay. Lights, too, ran in a long, slanting line down the sea-wall to the Condamine, while more lights still punctured the dark mass of the town of Monaco, looming, high and ancient, against the sky.

"The Duke couldn't help introducing him to me," Paula explained, in answer to her mother's objections. "I was standing near, and he asked who I was. Besides, we'd noticed each other before that."

"Noticed each other?" Mrs. George queried, with just the glimmer of a smile.

"In the Casino at Monte Carlo," George Trafford began, "strange ladies don't notice strange gentlemen unless—"

"It was this way," Paula hastened to say. "I'd won a lot of money from him—"

"You'd—what?" Mrs. Trafford gasped. "You don't mean to say you played in that dreadful place?"

"I didn't play exactly. I just put down ten francs on a sort of square to see what would happen."

"Well?"

"Well, he had ten francs on the corresponding square on the opposite side, and he lost and I won."

"That wasn't winning from him," George Trafford corrected; "it was winning from the bank."

"It seemed like winning from him," Paula insisted.

"Was that all?" the mother inquired, anxiously.

"No. We went on—six or seven times. He lost every time but one. I've brought home all this!"

She pulled off her glove and let the gold pieces slip from her palm on to the nearest table. They lay about separately, like stars. Mrs. Trafford and Mrs. George both leaned forward to see; George Trafford turned his head to look without changing his position.

"One—two—three," Mrs. Trafford counted—"fifty francs in all. Well, it isn't very much."

"It was a good deal to him, I fancy," Paula remarked. "The Duke admitted that he wasn't well off. Who is he, George?"

"If he is old Roger Winship's son—" George Trafford began, lazily.

"He is," Paula interrupted; "or at least he hinted as much. He seemed to speak as if his family had had some connection with us."

"Did he say that?" Mrs. Trafford asked, with a gleam of her old readiness for conflict.

"Not exactly," Paula explained. "He only wouldn't talk of it when I said I seemed to know his name. Who is he?"

"Old Roger Winship," George Trafford went on, in his comfortable, lazy tone, "was one of the men who, twenty years ago, had the folly, the hardihood, and the ill-luck to oppose your father."

"And what then?"

"Then," Trafford laughed—"then he was ruined."

"Oh!"

"That is," Mrs. Trafford added, in explanation, "he would have been ruined if he had lived. As it was—"

"His son was ruined," Paula finished, seeing her mother hesitate.

"No, his widow, poor thing," Mrs. Trafford corrected, pityingly.

"Was she ruined by—by us?" Paula continued, a little tremulously.

"No, by herself," George Trafford replied, promptly.

He pulled himself up in his chair and spoke with emphasis. You could see that it was one of the subjects that kindled him into interest by the way in which his eyes awoke from their blue benignity to dart out a ray like steel. It was then that you realized in him the presence of the new type—the essentially modern and chiefly American type—the son of the hugely wealthy, self-made man; the son to whom has passed the blood of a peasant with the power of a prince, and a command of means far in excess of anything he knows how to use. As Trafford dragged his heavy figure into an upright posture in

his chair, his large jaw set, his head thrown back, and his keen eyes flashing, there was the implication that he could do what Paul Trafford himself had done if there were need to begin the work again. But his was another duty—the duty of the second generation to keep what had been won. It was a task consistent with a large-handed, easy mode of life, with leisure for a certain sort of simple cultivation, with praiseworthy, philanthropic undertaking, and with interest in everything that made for the general public good. The least competent judge of character could read in George Trafford's rather ponderous, clean-shaven face the presence of the loyal, honest citizen, who would have straightforward, sensible views on every subject, from ward politics to the nude in art. It was not an aristocratic face; its features, excellent in themselves, were so placed together as to be without distinction; a mustache would have softened the hard lines of the mouth and a beard would have veiled the too aggressive chin; but in the general expression there was at least frankness, open-mindedness, and a sense of power coupled with a look of kindness. Undoubtedly that look of kindness came from his eyes. They were blue eyes with black lashes, like his cousin Paula's, only smaller and more deeply set. Where hers ranged about with a sort of searching, puzzled wonder, his twinkled good-naturedly, until some sudden topic of politics, business, or American patriotism made them blaze. A good man, was the universal opinion in New York regarding George Trafford; a safe man, a man to be found in the forefront of any movement to help on the common weal; but a man who, in all matters of money, was of Paul Trafford's own stock and blood.

"She ruined herself," he repeated, with greater energy. "She, too, was possessed of the insane conviction that she could fight your father and beat him. She wasn't the only woman who ever tried it, but no other kept at it so doggedly and desperately that there was no choice at last but to club her down."

"Of course," Mrs. Trafford interposed, "she worked for sympathy on the fact that she was a woman; and she got it—there's no denying that. It was one of the injustices that was done your father and which he is always so ready to forgive."

"I didn't know," Paula said, with a more decided tremor in the voice, "that papa fought with—women."

"There are no women in business," Mrs. George Trafford observed, in her clear, cold way; "there are only competitors."

"Your father never fights with any one," George Trafford cried, forcibly. "It is others who fight with him. They won't let him alone. His success is what they can't pardon, and the less so when they compare it with their own failure. There's never been a man who has tried harder than your father to do good to others, and there's never been one who has had more harm done to him."

In his tone there was a mingling of pride and indignation. Mrs. Trafford raised her lace handkerchief to her eyes. Even Mrs. George Trafford, who had only a connection by affinity with the great financier, threw up her head with admiration when the trumpet was blown in his praise.

Paula herself felt a strange oppression about the heart. Like the rest of the Traffords she had set up the man who had made them what they were as a kind of demigod. She had done more than the rest of them; for, into the worship they all accorded him, she had infused a self-devotion of which she alone was capable. As the youngest of the family it was she who had known him least as a man of business and most as a man of the world. In all her recollection of him he had never been anything but the great personage whose goings and comings were as important as those of kings. During his later years, when the immensity of his affairs obliged him to travel much, she was his frequent companion. She helped him in collecting rare old books and works of art, and filled some of the gaps in his early education; but she never saw him otherwise than as the financial potentate, who had taught statesmen to look to him for advice and bishops for benefactions, and who could buy anything that was good enough.

To be the daughter of such a man had given her a kind of royalty—the royalty of money. Wherever they went they were treated with a spontaneous awe, scarcely less deferential than if they had sprung from the line of Charlemagne. Governments and aristocracies did them honor, and sovereigns received them on a footing curiously like that of equality. As for republics and democracies, they had hailed Paul Trafford at first as the type they could produce at their very best—the man who out of small beginnings could rise to vastness of power, and then dispense his means not merely in sumptuous living, but in founding hospitals, building churches, endowing seats of learning, and leaving a name that time could only consecrate. It was not strange that Paula, living in the radiation of so strong a character, should give him more than filial affection. For this very reason certain suggestions made to-night seemed to her like a desecration. To fight with a woman! To club her down! There are no women in business, only competitors! What did it mean? For a few minutes she kept silence, pondering her cousin's words. She looked straight before her, trouble clouding in her Celtic eyes and the little furrow of perplexity deepening between the brows.

"Did Mrs. Winship—?" she began, with some hesitation.

"For mercy's sake, Paula," Mrs. Trafford exclaimed, hastily, "don't get those Winships on the brain! I thought they were dead and buried long ago, and, dear knows, they've given us trouble enough."

"Let her go on, Aunt Julia," George Trafford reasoned, calmly. "Since the subject has come up, she'd better know it just as it is."

"I was going to ask," Paula said, with dignity, "if Mrs. Winship thought that papa had done her wrong."

"Most people think you do them wrong if you do things better than they can," Trafford answered, quickly. "There's no kind of business, from the stage to the church, in which the strong worker isn't held as an enemy by the feeble and the indifferent. That's inseparable from human nature, and your father has had to face it. The hostility he has encountered has been in proportion to his success; so, naturally, it's been colossal."

"And I've never known him to utter a harsh word," Mrs. Trafford observed, quaveringly. "As each new attack has arisen, he has faced about to crush it. When that's been done he has given it no more thought—if it hasn't been to help those he has beaten. Where he has seen people with ability he has often taken them into his own employment; and there are plenty of wealthy men to-day who can tell you that their fortunes were made when your father singled them out as clever opponents. There's Henry Desmond, for instance, who was only an obscure young lawyer at Utica until he gained the McTavish case against us. From that very moment your father kept his eye on him, and when the Brewer action was brought in Albany he put the whole case in Desmond's hand. That made Desmond what he is; and there are hundreds of others of whom the same thing is true. Your father has the most wonderful way of converting enemies into friends. It's a sort of art of his. I've never heard of it anywhere else—unless it was in Mary Queen of Scots."

"Couldn't he have done that with the Winships?" Paula asked, returning to the personal point.

"In business," Trafford explained, swinging himself round so as to lean over the arm of his chair, and speaking for Paula's benefit—"in business, most men, when they can't get best, will turn themselves about so as to put up with second-best. They will even accept third-best and fourth-best rather than go with no advantage whatever. But every now and then you meet some one with whom it must be all or nothing. They'll not bargain, or compromise, or meet you half-way, or resort to any of the shifts with which business men have often to be content. They'll fight you to the bitter end, and die before they yield. In fact, they're people with the fighting rather than the business instinct, and when you meet them they leave you no choice but to crush them out of your way."

"Were the Winships like that?"

"Yes, they were. They were like that, only worse. You could no more beat modern methods into old Roger Winship's mind than you could into a mountain of brass. Because he was the largest owner of coal-lands in New Hampshire, he looked upon himself as a sort of ruler by divine right. For nearly thirty years he had operated the Devlin Mines—"

"But they're ours!" Paula exclaimed.

"Now—yes," Trafford assented, with a short laugh. "But when your father first cast his eyes on them the Devlin Coal Company was practically old Roger Winship. He worked the mines and sold the coal, in a humdrum, provincial, old-fashioned way, and made a handsome income. Then came your father—with new ideas, big ideas, and victory behind him all along the line."

"But papa didn't want to take the Devlin Mines from Mr. Winship?"

"No; not at all. He was only developing the plan with which he had begun—that he should control the entire output and sale of coal in the sphere under his immediate influence. As you know, that, sphere expanded as he went on, like a growing empire. At first, when he was a young man, he thought of coal production only within the State of Vermont—didn't he, aunt?"

"He spoke only of that," Mrs. Trafford corrected. "His thoughts from the beginning were as vast as his business afterwards came to be."

"At any rate," George Trafford continued, "he began with Vermont, quietly and, as we should think nowadays, very

modestly. And yet, so complete was his system, and so thorough his organization in every detail, that in a few years there was not a bushel of coal mined or sold from Canada to the Massachusetts line that wasn't under his direct control. He had got possession of every important company and annexed every customer, great and small. Where any one showed fight, he pushed him out of the market. He had his agents everywhere—not only in every town but in every office. There wasn't a carload of coal that crossed the state of which he didn't know the quality, the value, and the destination. If it wasn't his, his agents went after it and offered the dealer a better quality at a cheaper rate. If the dealer refused, then they went to his customers and cut the prices right under the dealer's nose. In five years' time there was practically not a merchant in Vermont who could sell a ton of coal if he hadn't bought it from your father."

"But the Devlin Mines are in New Hampshire," Paula argued, eager to know about the Winships.

"We're coming to that," Trafford went on, enthusiastically. "It wasn't natural that a business such as his had come to be should stop within the limits of a state. It spilled over on every side: into New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, the Middle States—everywhere. It crossed the whole country; the farther the net went out the easier it seemed to throw it farther still. His system was so perfect that the thing seemed to go of itself. In reality his method was simple; it lay in three main points: First, to get control of the means of transportation by rebates from the great railway and steamship lines—rebates allowed to him and refused to others; then to sweep out competition by annexing rival companies; and lastly to keep up prices by limiting the supply. If an independent company refused to yield to his demands, then he laid siege to it—siege as regular, as thorough, as patient, and as systematic as that of a fortress. He invested it, so to speak, by sea and land. He cut off its means of transportation by prohibitive rates and its customers by low prices. If there was litigation, he was almost invariably victorious. In the end the rebellious company did one of two things—it capitulated and came in, or it went bankrupt and Uncle Paul bought it."

Trafford threw back his great head, with a sense of exultation in so much industrial triumph. Mrs. Trafford sighed softly as she recalled the old days of action. Paula sat quite still, her eyes fixed upon her cousin with a sort of astonished fascination, as her mind tried to comprehend these strange—these brutal—mysteries of business.

"You ought to say, George," young Mrs. Trafford suggested, "that your uncle never struck until he had made the most generous proposals."

"That's true, Laura," her husband agreed. "Paula should understand that; and the Winships make an excellent illustration. The Devlin Company," he pursued, in a tone of narrative, "had already been pretty hard hit by us before your father began to give them open attention. Of course, he'd known for years what he was going to do with them, but he's never one to act before the time. When he was ready—that is to say, when he had secured his rebates on all their railways, when he held their customers in the hollow of his hand, when, by his agents whom he kept in their employ, he knew their business better than they did themselves—he made his offer. It was a good one, or it wouldn't have come from him. As nearly as I remember, it was this: They were to hand over to the Vermont Mining Company—that was your father, of course—for the period of twenty years, the mines, the plant, and all their own time. He was to put in twenty thousand dollars and his rebates; that is to say, they were to have the same transportation advantages as ourselves. They were to limit their output to a given quantity, and in return Uncle Paul was to guarantee them a profit of fifty thousand dollars a year. Any profit over fifty thousand was to go to him."

"Most generous, I call it," young Mrs. Trafford commented.

"And yet the old man refused it," Trafford said, with a short laugh.

"Why?" Paula asked, trying to keep up with her cousin's explanations.

"Why?" he echoed. "Because those whom the gods wish to destroy they first make mad. Old Roger Winship thought he could pit himself against the man whose financial conquests were by this time the talk of two worlds. You see, for forty years the Winships had done a steady, respectable business in the played-out, live-and-let-live way that used to be the standard. They had no notion of progress, or energy, or real competition. Your father had begun to eat the heart out of their trade before they ever heard of him. By the time they began to wake up they were as good as ruined already. Your father knew it but they didn't. When they took in the fact they threatened him with all the rigor of the law."

"Only," Mrs. Trafford added, "they went beyond the limits of propriety. They said your father was no better than a common thie—well, no, I won't say it. He himself is the last to bear malice, and an example to us all."

"At any rate," George Trafford pursued, "your father stepped in just then with his offer. He was always for peace and fair-dealing, and he knew the psychological moment had come. He knew, too, just how it would be taken, and laid out his plan of action for five or six years ahead. If the Devlin hadn't been a sort of family company, with all the shares in a few hands, they would probably have come in after the first storm of threats had blown over. A body of share-holders are generally ready in the long run to eat humble-pie if their dividends are assured them. But, you see, the Devlin was practically Roger Winship, a proud, stubborn, high-tempered old fellow of a by-gone school. As hereditary coal king of New Hampshire, he felt himself a match for any mushroom Trafford, and so he set to work."

"Very cleverly, it must be admitted," Mrs. Trafford observed. "Your father always says that he went straight for the weak point of the whole system."

"Yes—the rebates," Trafford went on. "Uncle knew that if the question of rebates was ever seriously raised in law he couldn't hold out beyond a certain point."

"Do you mean that papa knew he was making use of an illegal privilege?" Paula asked.

Trafford was not expecting a question of so much acumen, and replied, somewhat slowly:

"Nothing is illegal till it's proved so. He only made use of the rebates until it was shown that he couldn't. It was a matter of public benefit to have the question fought out and settled. So when the New Hampshire Central refused the Winships the same rates for transportation as they had given to the Vermont Mining Company, the Devlin took the matter into court. Of course your father stood behind the railroad, and the case was argued in the Court of Common Pleas. The railroad lost, just as he thought it would; but see what a general he is! He had the whole campaign mapped out. The railroad appealed to the District Court, your father in the mean time having the use of his rebates. The railroad lost again. Then it appealed to the Supreme Court of the State. Still the rebates went on, while at the same time your father was cutting off from the Devlin every ton of business. Before the case was heard at Concord old Roger Winship died from a stroke of apoplexy."

"Brought on," Mrs. Trafford explained, "purely by bad temper and his refusal to accept your father's offer. Now, tell her, George, of your uncle's magnanimity."

"It was just this," said Trafford—"just what you would have expected him to do. He went to Mrs. Winship personally and renewed the offer he had made two years before. In the mean time, please take notice, the Devlin's business had gone from bad to worse, and yet he actually renewed the offer as it stood."

Trafford leaned back, his thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his evening waistcoat, and watched the effect of this information upon Paula. The girl could only gaze at him with the same troubled expression of inquiry, waiting for him to go on.

"But Mrs. Winship," he continued, "had as little mind for compromise as her husband. The railroad having already lost twice, she was persuaded it would lose again. Once there were no more rebates, she was sure the Devlin would do its old work again. Well, the railroad lost the third time, and appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. For the poor lady that was a staggerer, just as your father supposed it would be. Still, she had the pluck—or the folly, whichever you choose to call it—to struggle on. The case went before the Supreme Court of the United States, and the railroad lost again. Mrs. Winship was victorious; but—and this is what your father had foreseen during the whole six years the fight had lasted—the Devlin Coal Company was already in the hands of a receiver, and legal expenses had eaten up all the Winships' private means."

Trafford, having ended his story, fell back dramatically into the depths of his chair.

"We took over the Devlin Mines the next year," Mrs. Trafford concluded. "The Winships had mismanaged them terribly. Once they were thoroughly worked they became the most paying of all our properties."

There was a long silence, broken only when young Mrs. Trafford reminded her husband that it was time to say good-night.

"Did any more of our money come like that?" Paula asked, suddenly.

"Like what?" Trafford demanded.

"Like what, Paula?" came from Mrs. Trafford herself, with a suggestion of protest in her tone.

"Like that," the girl said, confusedly—"like the money we got from the Winships."

"We got nothing from the Winships," Trafford declared. "We haven't a dollar that we didn't get in business."

"Was it honorable business?"

The question slipped out unawares. Trafford strode towards her. He stood looking down at her, his hands in the pockets of his evening jacket, his feet planted apart, and his eyes shooting out their steely rays.

"Look here, Paula," he said, in a tone of rough kindness, "you have for a father one of the greatest men God ever raised up—a man with a big mind, a big heart, a big nature; a man who out of nothing has created one of the first positions in the world; a man who has not only transformed the business of the country, but given new conceptions of business to the whole earth. Now, such a man as that is bound to have enemies, and he has them. All his life long he has been persecuted, vilified, and traduced. He has gone from court to court, and from one committee of investigation to another. What has been his crime? He has made money. He has made a lot of money. To people who've tried to make money and haven't made it, that's crime enough to warrant any kind of hounding down. But take the people who haven't tried to make money; take the people whose ambitions are elsewhere and whose minds are impartial. Is there any one among them who isn't proud to take your father by the hand and accept what he has to give? Is there a philanthropist, from Cardinal Gibbons to Bishop Potter, who isn't glad of his subscription? Is there an institution, from Harvard University to St. John's Floating Hospital, that doesn't accept his donation without questioning the means by which the money came to be his? He has built a cathedral at Burlington, a hospital at Des Moines, an orphanage in St. Louis; he has endowed a School of Mining at one university, and an Institute of Manual Arts at another; there are charitable schemes all over the country that owe their chief support to your father. Is there a doubtful note on the part of any person or any corporation, civil or ecclesiastical, that has received his benefactions? None. Mind you, I'm quoting to you not the common standard of the world, but the standard of men devoted to the religious, moral, or educational welfare of their fellows. One and all they have taken his money as money which he had an honest right to bestow. Now, isn't that enough for you? Haven't you got a mass of moral testimony there that nobody can go behind or bring into dispute? The man who impeaches your father to-day must practically impeach all the religious, philanthropic, and educational opinion in the United States. Don't you begin to do it."

He stood looking down at her, smiling in kindly admonition. Young Mrs. Trafford came up and slipped her arm through his, smiling down at her too. The mother joined them, with an affectionate injunction to dismiss all foolish and fatiguing thoughts and go to bed.

The girl made no reply to any of them. She smiled rather wistfully in response to their good-night wishes, and told them she would put out the lights. Then she sat still, alone and pondering, trying to sift and co-ordinate the mass of information she had just received.

It was late when she rose to go away. On the table beside her lay the five gold pieces she had brought home an hour or two ago. "The Winship money," she half muttered to herself. "What father did to his father I seem to have done to him."

She picked up the coins one by one and pressed them in her palm. Suddenly, before she could control herself, the tears rose and ran down her cheeks. As she dashed them away it seemed as if a figure rose before her through the mist they made. It was not the man with the brown beard and the gleaming eyes she had seen that night; it was the blind woman, who had gone on from court to court and from year to year, till her father had been forced at last to "club her down."

CHAPTER IV

Of all the Trafford family it was Paula who had least of the clearness of vision and promptness of action that were so remarkable in her parents. Her thought worked slowly and somewhat illogically. She was not capable of large conceptions, and when she tried to trace for herself a definite line of duty it soon lost itself in vagueness. In a small way of life she would have fulfilled the daily task with scrupulous devotion, helped by the very absence of choice; but as mistress of a fortune such as that which she was already allowed to spend she felt herself bewildered. It was as if she had a bird's range of flight without the bird's instinct for finding the way.

She was conscious of this as she sat, on the following morning, looking over her correspondence. Everything in the room about her suggested wealth. She herself, in a soft, trailing garment that seemed to be woven of gossamer and the petals of pale-pink flowers, looked as far removed from the practical side of life as a Princess de Lamballe or Dauphiness Marie Antoinette. Her coffee, brought to her in the gold-plate service kept in the hotel as a delicate attention to passing royalties, was beside her on the table, and she sipped as she read.

The Duke's daily letter she glanced through first, laying it down with a sigh. When she had read the notes from her friends, she separated the letters of invitation from those of premature congratulation on her reported engagement. Then she attacked the large pile of envelopes, the nature of whose contents she knew only too well. They were all requests for contributions of money to charities of various kinds, and she swept them aside with a gesture of impatience. In spite of herself, her thoughts went back to the man she had seen last night—the man who was "evidently a gentleman," but who "looked poor."

For a man to "look poor" seemed to Paula the last touch of the pitiable. All the men with whom she had much to do had at least the outward air of riches. This man, on the contrary, bore the very stamp of one obliged to deny himself. Yes, that was it. She could see it now. It was not poverty that he expressed so much as self-denial. The very clothes he wore were threadbare. She had noticed that detail, sub-consciously at the time, and now it came back to her significantly. Well, he had a mother and a sister dependent on him; it was only too likely that he should be forced into personal privation. It was not the nobleness of the sacrifice that appealed to Paula; that was not the standard by which she had been taught to judge; it was rather the pitifulness involved in the necessity for making that kind of sacrifice at all. The men of her family put forth gigantic efforts, and carried them out to gigantic successes. She understood that; she was used to it; but that a man of her own world, one who was on such footing as to be casually presented to herself—that such a man should be driven to pinching, sordid, petty economies in clothing, and perhaps in food, had in it something of the shameful. It put him at once, in her imagination, into the class of people without money—the seekers, the wheedlers, the beggars. She was not indifferent to poverty, but she could not help being distrustful of it. She had seen so much of it, fawning and whining, with the back bent and the hand out-stretched! She could not remember the time when they, the Traffords, had not been tracked down by petitioners. They had moved among them like European tourists among Egyptian fellaheen, with cries for backsheesh forever ringing in their ears. Whether from the individual or the institution, the demand for money never ceased.

She had come to give carelessly, with a kind of royal prodigality, but none the less with a certain contempt for those who asked of her. They wearied her, they goaded her. There were so many of them that she was tempted to class every one who had not huge means of his own among their number. For the minute she saw Roger Winship there. He was poor; that surely was a sufficient reason why he should put his hand out like the rest.

Then came the thought of what had made him poor. She went over again the discussion of last night. Her father had eaten the heart out of the Winships' business before they had ever heard of him! He had laid out his plan of campaign to ruin them five or six years ahead! What did it mean? What could she do? Could she do anything? Was there a right and a wrong to the situation?

She leaned her head on her hand and tried to think; but the complex questions at issue were of the sort that baffled her intelligence. Her mind could only shift aimlessly about, as in a labyrinth, where all the paths led to nothing. She felt herself beating about in despair, in search of a way, when Mrs. George Trafford came tripping in and pointed out the direction.

She had knocked lightly at the door, but had entered without waiting for an answer. She, too, was in a morning costume, but one significantly unlike Paula's. It was of white linen, belted in at the waist with pale blue. It was neat and trim and

cleared the ground, setting off her small figure to perfection.

"Good-morning, Laura," Paula said, rather wearily.

"Good-morning, dear," Mrs. Trafford returned, briskly.

They kissed each other in a pecking fashion, and Mrs. Trafford sank into the nearest chair. No one could see her without being sure that she was the sort of woman to go to her point at once.

"I simply *had* to come to you, dear, before you had a chance to go out. I've been so distressed about the conversation of last night. I've told George that he shouldn't hurl things at you like that."

"What things?" Paula demanded, holding herself erect, and flushing.

"About your father, dear. You might easily misunderstand—"

"I should never misunderstand to the extent of thinking he had done wrong," the girl said, haughtily.

"No, of course not. But I know exactly how you feel, because I've had times of feeling that way myself."

"You mean—?" Paula began, and stopped abruptly. Her eyes clouded, and the tiny furrow marked itself between her brows as she gazed straight before her, trying to shape her thought.

Mrs. Trafford leaned back in her chair and waited. She was a pretty woman, with the cold, clear-cut daintiness of a statuette in *biscuit de Sèvres*. When George Trafford married her it was a surprise to every one but herself. A Western girl, the daughter of a doctor in a small country town, she had the Western ability to meet poverty just as, when it came, she had the Western readiness to accept wealth. She had not looked for wealth—certainly not such wealth as George Trafford's—but she knew her capacity to fill any position, and she entered upon her new career with plenty of self-confidence.

The marriage was something of a public event, especially in the West. Even in New York there was some curiosity over the advent of a penniless country girl suddenly lifted to such a giddy height of fortune. Laura knew that people expected her head to be turned. They looked at least to be amused by that wild splashing in money supposed to be characteristic of those who have been hurriedly made rich, especially when their antecedents have lain beyond the Mississippi. But they had reckoned without the personal knowledge of one who knew thoroughly her own mind. In coming to New York Laura felt herself raised up for the purpose of illustrating the correct and conscientious use of wealth.

By this time the social position of the Traffords in New York had been secured. After living in Cleveland, St. Louis, Washington, and elsewhere, according to the needs of Mr. Trafford's growing empire, they had come to New York as comparative strangers. Their reception by the high powers ruling there had been one of mingled coldness and curiosity. Little by little, however, they had passed through the necessary stages of initiation, so that when Mrs. George Trafford made her entry it was into an uncontested place. In spite of the Mississippi, there was no reason why, as a bride unusually pretty and incomparably rich, she should not become one of that chosen oligarchy of ladies whose golden sceptre sways over the American metropolis.

And yet she had the courage to snub—gently, courteously, but none the less decidedly to snub—those two great potentates, Mrs. Van Rensselaer Smith and Mrs. Stuyvesant Jones, when, through sheer kindness, they united their rival forces to come and tell her so. She should have no time for mere amusement she informed them. The duties of her position would tax her strength to the utmost. Besides, she shrank from ostentation, from anything that made a parade of the mere power to spend. True refinement lay in making as little display as possible, didn't it? None, in fact, could know it better than themselves. The responsibility of wealth involved so many considerations for others that one's self and one's legitimate, one's natural tastes were driven to the background.

She looked at them with such clear, gray eyes, was so frank, so naïve, and (as they thought) so Western, that Mrs. Van Rensselaer Smith and Mrs. Stuyvesant Jones were nonplussed rather than offended. They liked her for her independence, and were certainly amused. If she wanted to help others with her money, goodness knew there was room enough, they said, when they went away. They were the last people in the world to object to it. Besides, when she had helped a few, she would have enough of such a thankless task as that. She had snubbed them—that was plain—but they were so unused to the process that they almost enjoyed it. She would have other ideas when she was a little older, and then they would

take her up again.

But the years were slipping by and Laura was true to the principles with which she started. The only display she made was of the fact that she made no display; her only ostentation was that of her lack of ostentation. She made no secret of the fact that she looked upon wealth as a heavy burden. "Mr. Trafford and I have no pleasure like that of giving away," she sighed, not only in private but in public. They did give away on a scale of superb munificence. By confining their gifts to what would refine, elevate, and educate the masses at large, they took care not to pauperize or encourage idleness. Schools, colleges, libraries, and art museums had the chief benefit of their generosity. The grim want of individuals did not appeal to them, "because," so Mrs. Trafford said, "there were so few cases in which the after-effects of charity were not deleterious." She liked to feel that her liberality had a sound commercial basis.

"You needn't be afraid to speak out with me, Paula, dear," she said, encouragingly, when the girl had been a long time silent. "As I've told you already, I've been through it all, and I want to help you. Before I married George I'd heard lots of things about Uncle Trafford that—well, that rather shocked me."

Again Paula lifted her head haughtily, but Laura hurried on.

"I had to reason everything out before I could see how right he was. If I hadn't been able to come to that conclusion I could never have accepted George. Now, here's a principle which, George says, people in our position must never lose sight of: you can't go behind the law. If the law is on your side, you must be right."

"But can't the law be outwitted?" Paula asked, ponderingly. "It seems to me I've heard of that."

"I believe it can, but George says Uncle Trafford never tried to do it. That's where he's been so able."

"Did he—? Tell me frankly, Laura, please. I know he didn't, but I *must* ask you. Did he, in your opinion, ever do anything that wasn't honorable?"

"George says," Mrs. Trafford answered, slowly, "that business is a good deal like whist. Each player holds his portion of the cards, out of which he's permitted to win the game by any means short of cheating. It's acknowledged beforehand that there's no place in the play for mercy or unselfishness. The game goes to him who can get it. There are commonly accepted rules that he can observe or not, as he chooses. What justifies him is his success, and if he wins the question of honor or dishonor isn't raised. Now, dear, your father is an amazingly clever player of the game. He can win it when his opponents hold all the best cards and more than half the trumps. It isn't his place to consider them; it's his duty to take the tricks. If he takes a great many tricks—a great, great many tricks—his skill can't be called dishonor, can it? It's skill, that's all; and nothing is more admirable than skill in anything."

"But if it's skill to bring trouble and worry and want to some people, and to others—to us, for instance—millions more than we can ever use—"

"There's no such skill as that, dear," Mrs. Trafford argued, in a virtuous tone. "From the beginning of history wealth has always been a stewardship, and it has gone into the hands of certain stewards. If you are a steward, it's much more important to fulfil your stewardship than to question the means by which you were appointed."

"But," said Paula, doubtfully, "couldn't part of the stewardship be—to make reparation?"

"Reparation isn't as easy as it looks, dear. It's not only a matter of giving, but a matter of taking. When one side is willing to offer it, the other, perhaps, isn't ready to accept it."

"But if it were money? Anybody would accept money."

"No, anybody won't accept money, strange as it may seem. There are people—we may not know many of them—but there *are* people who put money a long way after pride. I've got a good mind to tell you something that George and I have always kept from you. It would show you."

Paula looked her interrogation.

"It's about your father."

"Do tell me, Laura, please."

"Well, the beginning of it was a long time ago, when we lived in Turtonville, Wisconsin. It was ages before I ever imagined I should marry one of the Traffords. Your father at that time had some trouble out there with a man named Marshall. I don't know exactly what it was, but it was something like what we were talking of last night."

"Not the Winships?" Paula cried, painfully. "There wasn't another case like that? Tell me, Laura!"

"No, it wasn't a bit like that, it was just something in the same line. What I'm coming to is this: Marshall was the rich man of Turtonville. He had something to do with coal, of course; and he had four daughters, all very plain. One of them was an old maid from the time I can begin to remember. Well, when the trouble started, your father began pushing Marshall and pushing him and pushing him—till at last he pushed him out of his business altogether. Then Marshall shot himself."

"Oh, Laura, don't tell me any more."

"It was all Marshall's fault, dear. Your father didn't make him shoot himself. That was perfectly gratuitous on Marshall's part. But it's about the old Miss Marshalls that I want to tell you. After their father died and they were so poor, they had to turn their hands to anything for a living. They did sewing and made cake and put up pickles and painted doilies—"

"Oh, how dreadful, Laura!"

"And they did pretty well till the eldest one fell ill. That was the very summer I was married; and one day, in the winter after, I happened to mention them to your father."

"Oh, I'm so glad. I know he was good to them!"

"Yes; he sent them a thousand dollars, anonymously, through their minister. He gave the strictest orders that his name was never to be known, but when they had spent a couple of hundred of it the foolish clergyman told them. That was enough. The sick one got up out of her dying bed and went to work. It was as if her pride had healed her. For two years they toiled and saved till they had got together as much as they had spent. Then they returned the full thousand to your father. He told me about it, and I know it cut him to the quick. He's forgiven them, though, great heart that he is! And he's asked me several times to do what I can for them."

"And you've done it, Laura?"

"Indeed I have! I couldn't send them money, of course, after their treatment of Uncle Trafford. Besides, I never run the risk of pauperizing any one. What I've done has been to give them work. They sew beautifully, and I've managed to let them have all the house-linen, both for Newport and Tuxedo, without a suspicion on their part that it was for our family. Naturally, I had to do it through a third person, for they wouldn't have touched it if they had known."

"Are there really people in the world who feel towards us like that?" Paula questioned, with an air of distress.

"I suppose," Mrs. Trafford replied, in her practical way—"I suppose they feel towards us much as the French do towards the Germans. It can't be very pleasant for the Germans to be hated so, and yet they have Alsace-Lorraine to console them. I don't blame the Miss Marshalls. I say it's very natural in their situation. I do all I can to alleviate their condition, and I believe I succeed. Their work is really exquisite, and I find that, even after paying the express charges, it is cheaper than it would be in New York. Now the third person of whom I spoke—if you must know who it is, it's that Miss Green who works in the College Settlement in Bleecker Street—she wants me to take a lot of their painted doilies, but I feel that I must draw the line at that."

"I'll take them," Paula said, instantly. "I'll take as many as they can paint, if they go on painting all the rest of their lives."

It was this sort of impulsive generosity that contradicted all Mrs. Trafford's well-thought-out principles of benevolence. It lacked the element of the practical good of both parties, as well as the sense of the responsibility of wealth.

"Then you'd be making a mistake," she said, bluntly. "You'd be wasting both your own money and their time. There are three useful things that they can do: they can sew, they can make cake, and they can put up pickles. Why on earth should they want to do painting—?"

"But painting is a useful thing," Paula interrupted, a little warmly.

"Exactly. And that brings me right to the thing I came in to say. I know what's been on your mind ever since last night. I

know it, because it's been on my mind, too. I always feel for those cases where there's been a previous—connection with the family, so to speak. I know it's Uncle Trafford's wish that we should make things as easy for them as we can. Now, why shouldn't you have this Mr. Winship paint your portrait?"

"Oh, Laura. I couldn't!" the girl cried, flushing.

"Couldn't? Of course you could. It's the thing to do. He could paint you and the Duke and me and our little Paul, and perhaps I might even get George to sit to him. I suppose Aunt Trafford never would. Anyhow, he could do all of us, and we'd pay him very good prices—nothing fabulous, mind you, nothing of that kind, but what for him would be generous prices. Just think of all it would mean to him! It wouldn't be only the money—though that, of course, would be a great deal—it would be the *réclame*, the advertisement. It would pose him before the world; it would set him up for life. Then we should be rid of the worry of thinking about him. Of course, I can see it would be a bore to you," she added, as Paula still seemed to hesitate, "but people like ourselves, with the responsibility of wealth upon them, can't stop at a duty merely because, it's a bore."

"You're a wonderful woman, Laura," Paula said at last, her eyes suffused with that Celtic softness which is midway between smiles and tears. "You've such good ideas, and such sound ones. I won't say that I'll do it, but I'll think it over. But if I come to it," she went on, stammering slightly, "you—mustn't think—that it is because I have any doubt of—of—father."

As she uttered the last words there came a sharp rap at the door, and Paul Trafford himself entered.

CHAPTER V

He strode in with his characteristic air of command, and Paula, springing up, threw her arms about him. The two were always expressive in their affection for each other, but this morning there was in Paula's "Oh, papa!" a variety of emotions of which she herself could have given but a confused account. It was as if she had received him back again after the nightmare of having lost him. He clasped her to him, looking down at her with that kind of impressive tenderness for which very strong faces alone have the capacity.

If was no wonder that she was proud of him—this handsome giant of over six feet three, before whom all the fast-barred gates of life had yielded. Even age seemed powerless to lay more than the lightest hand upon him. His sixty-five years had deepened the lines on his rocklike face, and brought a little gray into the mustache that curving upward revealed the set of the close lips, but they had done little more. The hair was scarcely silvered, and the eyes still had the vivacity of an eager, stern-faced boy's. They were the Trafford eyes—blue with black lashes, and, in his case, with heavy, overhanging brows.

Paula slipped from his embrace, and they exchanged the usual morning greetings. Trafford kissed his niece, and inquired for George and little Paul. It was clear to the two women, accustomed to observe the slightest signs of his wishes, that he had come on some special errand; so Laura, after reminding Paula that she and the Duke were to lunch with George and herself at Ciro's, made some excuse for running away.

Paula resumed her seat, while her father moved about the room with unusual restlessness.

"That's a pretty thing you've got on," he observed, coming back to her side. "Aren't you looking a little pale to-day?" he continued, stroking her cheek "What's all this?"

He turned over, with a toss, the letters of petition she had opened, and, with characteristic attention to small details, ran his eye over them.

"You might send something there," he advised, "and there. I wouldn't pay any regard to that. You might inquire into this one; and, of course, you must see that that poor little French girl has what comfort you can give her. I'm going to Vienna," he finished, abruptly. "Oh no, papa!" she pleaded. "Not now! Not just now!"

"I must, dear. I've tried to get out of it, but there are very large interests at stake, and I'm obliged to go."

He drew a small chair towards her and sat down. With his arms folded on the table, he looked across at her. Before that gaze her own glance fell. It was as though the mingling of strength and adoration in it were too much for her to support without flinching. The roselike color came and went in her cheek, and stole up into her white, blue-veined temples, while Paul Trafford wondered, as he did ten times every day, how it was that, out of his sheer force and his wife's mere buxomness, there had sprung this exquisite flower of a child.

"Yes, dear, I'm obliged to go," he repeated. "I'm sorry it has to be now—just now. You know why, don't you?"

She lifted her eyes and let them fall again.

"I suppose I do, papa."

"I don't want to hurry you," he went on, with what, for him, was curious timidity, "and I wouldn't on my own account—not for a second. But, darling, we ought to think of—of him, oughtn't we? Don't you think he's been very patient? It's over a month now."

"I find it very hard to decide, papa."

"Could you tell me why, dear? I might be able to help you."

"You'd like it very much, wouldn't you, papa?"

"Yes; but that isn't a reason for you," he answered, promptly. "I want my little girl to marry to please herself, not me."

"And yet I can't help taking what pleases you into consideration—into deep consideration. And I've wondered a little papa," she continued, looking up at him, "why you've been so anxious about this one, when you've been so indifferent, if

not opposed, to the others."

"I'll tell you, darling. I'll give you my point of view. But, mark you, it can't be yours; it mustn't be yours. From the very nature of things, you and I approach this subject from different angles. First of all, I have to remember that I'm no longer a young man, and that I have a great treasure to leave behind."

"But, papa, darling, I'd rather not think of it in that light."

"No, but I must. There's the difference of angle at once. If one of your brothers had lived, or even one of your sisters, perhaps, I shouldn't feel so keenly about it as I do. But you're all that's left to us—"

"Then why not keep me with you as long as possible?"

"We're not going to lose you. We shall never be far away from you, at any time. Your mother and I have quite made up our minds to that. Life wouldn't be worth anything to me if I couldn't see my little girl when I wanted to; that is, within reason."

She leaned across the table and laid her hand on his, smiling into his face with shining eyes.

"And so, dearest, since my treasure is so great, it would be a comfort to me, as I go downhill, to know that it was in safe, in very safe, hands."

"And you think his are the best?"

"They are the best I know. I can't think of any man I've ever met of whom I should feel sure, with so few reserves—without any reserves at all. Listen to me," he pursued, in another tone, patting her hand, which still lay out-stretched towards him on the table. "Listen to me, and I'll expose my whole reason to you in a way you will understand. I repeat, that it is the reason which guides me, but it's not to guide you. Yours must be a different motive and a surer one. Still, it may help you in making your decision, if you know what has enabled me to come to mine. In the first place, he loves you. Of course, you know that."

She nodded and let her eyes fall again.

"Then, I think my little girl has, to say the least, a very sincere regard for him."

She nodded again, still with eyes downcast.

"And then, he's not a man who would love to-day and forget to-morrow. He is essentially good, kind, loyal, and devoted. Your mother and I would have none of that wretched uncertainty of parents who say to each other, 'Oh, I hope he will be good to her!' We would be sure of that beforehand. You see, dear, we've protected you so, we've got so strongly the habit of protecting you, that it's like pain to us to think that any wind of unkindness could ever blow on you."

"Papa, darling," she broke in, with a choking of the voice, "couldn't I stay with you always, and not marry any one?"

"Certainly, dear. There's not the slightest reason why you shouldn't be an old maid, if you want to. But, in the mean time, let me go on. Wiltshire is not only a good man who loves you, but he's a very rich man."

"I shouldn't think that mattered," she said, lifting her head suddenly.

"Only in this way, that in our position it's a guarantee. He's one of the rich men of a rich country. There's no possible reason why he should marry any woman for any other object than herself. Mind you, I'm far from saying that if you married a poor man it might not be for love, love on both sides. But I'll go as far as this: there's no poor man you could marry for whom, however much he loved you, your wealth would not be an overpowering consideration. The very change it would bring into the daily circumstances of his life would oblige him to give his mind to it, perhaps more than to you. I must keep repeating, dear, that that's a point which weighs with me, though I shouldn't expect you to give it undue importance."

"I don't think I could," she said, with a wistful smile.

"All right. So much the better. Now for one thing more. Wiltshire is not only a good man, and a rich man, but he's a man of very high rank. He can give his wife one of the best positions in the world, as the world counts positions."

"I thought our own was very good as it is."

He raised himself and laughed.

"You're quite right," he returned. "It *is* a good position. But it's rather like that of the Bonapartes—good as long as you can keep it. It's a position that depends upon a strong man, and requires a strong man to maintain it. And I want my little daughter to have the best of everything without the hardship of the struggle. If you were a boy, I should feel differently; but as it is, I want to see you in a place that will be based on something broader and solidier than the mere possession of money. I want you to be where criticism and accusation can't touch you. You've never known to what an extent I've been assailed by them—and not only I, but every one with whom I have had much to do. We've kept you out of it as far as possible, but we couldn't do so always. They've struck at your mother and George and Laura, and even at my friends. Very soon they will begin to strike at you, simply because you are my child."

"I should be proud of it," she declared, throwing back her head with something of his own flashing of the eye.

"You wouldn't be proud of it long. The press of our country is perfectly pitiless on those who rise an inch above the general mediocrity. It spares no feeling and respects no sanctuary. The mere fact that you are Paul Trafford's daughter will make you a target to that great section of the public that has never ceased to pursue me with the most relentless hostility."

"But what could they say against me?"

"Nothing *against* you, darling—nothing against you. They could only rifle the privacy of your domestic life, and besmirch you with a hundred vulgarities. You might not perceive it, but it would be madness to me. It's only over here that we have some respite from that kind of thing, and, therefore, it's over here I should like to see you find a refuge. If you were like some women—like Laura, for instance—I mightn't hesitate to expose you to it; but, being what you are, I should like to see you so far removed from it all that even the echo of slanderous curiosity couldn't reach you. There," he broke off, "I think I've had my say."

She rose from her place, and came slowly to him, round the table.

"Thank you, papa," she said, simply, slipping her arm over his shoulder and bending down her cheek against his brow. "Whatever I do, you'll love me just the same, won't you?"

For answer, he drew her slim white fingers to his lips. It vexed her that, at that very instant, George's words of last night should have returned to her memory like the refrain of some hideous song:

"Your father was obliged at last to club her down."

CHAPTER VI

"Couldn't you take me somewhere?" Paula asked, turning with a smile to the Duke as they pushed back their chairs after lunch at Ciro's. "Laura and George are going to Cap Martin, and I have nothing to do."

"We might motor over to Eze and see Alice," he suggested.

"No; let's walk up to Monaco. I've never been there, and you know you promised to take me."

The Duke was radiant—or as near radiant as any one could be with so little power of facial expression. As they traversed the Galérie Charles III., on their way out, he bumped into people and overturned chairs, with a joy in walking with his mistress like that of an affectionate dog. From the hotels and restaurants the crowds were sauntering towards the Casino, and there were so many salutes and greetings to exchange that only the most broken remarks were possible till they neared the sea-wall. Paula knew they offered a topic of conversation to passers-by, strangers and friends alike; and again she was conscious of the utterly foolish wish that he had been taller, and that in his springlike attire and soft gray hat he had less the air of a prosperous grocer on the stage. If she had not known that he was only thirty-eight, looking it up for herself in Debrett, she would certainly have put him down as fifty. She blamed herself for such thoughts as these, when she knew, as well as her father did, his many sterling virtues. They chatted of indifferent things as they descended towards the Condamine, and Paula wondered how he would turn the talk into the channel he preferred. She wondered even more what reply she would make to him when he did.

"Have you seen your friend Mr. Winship to-day?" she summoned up courage to ask, as they ascended the brick-paved footway that leads up the face of the cliff to the old town of Monaco.

"Yes; for a minute this morning. He's over at Eze, spending the day at Alice's."

Paula caught herself up before she could regret not having accepted the Duke's suggestion after luncheon. "They know each other very well, I think you said."

"Oh, very well. You must come over and see Alice's little place some day, too. I fancy she's only been waiting for some definite—"

"Oh, I'm out of breath!" Paula exclaimed, suddenly, turning round. "Do let us wait a bit. What a glorious view!"

The level of the Condamine lay beneath them in the foreground, a cluster of tawny, yellow houses roofed in ochre red. On the height behind, Monte Carlo, with its hotels and villas, terraced one above another, sloped steeply down towards the sea. Still farther back, shutting in the horizon, the mountains of dull brown and olive green were crowned with a light, glistening January snow. On the pale, bottle-green of the bay the Prince of Monaco's yacht made a sharp white streak. Gray green on the sea lay the long stretch of Cap Martin, covered with hoary olive-woods and dotted with white villas. Then, on and on, into the east, followed the successive headlands towards Italy, flecked with snow at the highest points, and unchanged, except in the number of their clustering towns, since the days when the Phoenicians toiled along in their high-beaked triremes, on their way towards Cornwall or Marseilles.

"It's like those bits of landscape," Paula said, with a timid attempt to bring the conversation back to the theme she had started—"those bits of landscape which the old Italian masters show you through a window, behind a Last Supper, or a—portrait."

"Do you think so?" Wiltshire argued, in his literal way. "Isn't it rather that the old painters give you a glimpse of the life of their day?—a line of hills, a village, a castle, a religious procession, a knight riding with his hounds, a ploughman working in the fields. This is too little typical for what they wanted; and besides, it isn't the life that has grown out of the soil, but the one which idlers from other lands have implanted on it." So they fell to discussing Monte Carlo, and Paula was foiled again. She sighed softly to herself as they moved on, and, after passing through an old gray gateway vaulted with yellow arches, came up into the Place du Palais.

On the left, across the great square, stood the old town, a mass of mellow red and orange. The palace, a long, simple structure with battlemented towers, lay on the right. The Monagasque sentries, in blue-and-red uniforms, and sweeping, picturesque, blue cloaks, had the air of stepping through some romantic play. In the background, to the north and west, the Tête du Chien rose like a majestic couchant mastiff keeping watch over the Principality. Between its paws Cap d'Ail,

with its terraces, olive-trees, and red-roofed villas, lay like a plaything. In towards the shore the sea reflected all the shades that mingle in a peacock's breast, while farther away, towards Spain and Africa, it deepened into Homeric wine-dark violet.

"How wonderful!" Paula murmured, just above her breath. "This air! This immensity!"

She moved a step or two in advance, as though eager to cross the level Place and reach some spot where she could best command the whole sea-line of the hills, from the distant east to the distant west, from the blue vagueness of Piedmont, past San Remo, past Bordighera, past Mentone, past Cap Martin, past Monaco, past Nice, past Cannes, on into the golden haze that hung above Provence. When she stood still, at the western edge of the terrace, the Duke came to her side and explained where the different points of interest lay.

"This is what we come to Monte Carlo for," he said. "It isn't to be in the tide of fashion; it's because nature seems to have chosen the Principality of Monaco as the single point of vantage from which to behold all her beauties in one glance. We soon tire of Monte Carlo, but this—"

With a gesture that was not without dignity, he indicated the vast panorama of sea and sky, of headland and town, of blossoming gardens and snows on the hills. Paula thought she saw another far-off opening, and carefully pointed her remarks towards it.

"How much you enjoy beauty—I mean beauty for its own sake. There are so few people who do. Now, I take only a second-hand interest in it. I like to have seen Egypt or Switzerland or California, in order to be able to follow with some intelligence what others say about them. But with you it's different. So it is with your sister—or it seemed to me so the few times I've seen her."

"Oh, Alice is all right. She really knows about it, and I don't. She lives for art and artists."

"And I'm sure she does a lot of good. I thought what you said about her last night was so charming—I mean about her taking that poor blind lady, Mrs. Winship, to stay with you at Edenbridge."

"Oh, you'll like Alice when you know her well. She's got her queer ways, like any other old maid with ten thousand a year, but her heart is sound."

"Tell me about them—about the Winships."

He turned to her with a faint smile.

"Haven't we something else to talk of first?"

"No, not first—afterwards. Couldn't we go somewhere—out of the sun—and sit down?"

"We should be likely to find seats over there."

"I wanted to ask your advice about something," she ventured, timidly, as they entered the wonderful garden that clammers over the cliff, and goes down, down, down till it almost meets the sea.

"Here's a good place, don't you think?"

He pointed to a bench, in a nook formed by giant cacti of every sinister shape, massed in with pink and red geraniums growing like tall shrubs. Overhead there was a shade of cedar, cypress, and pine, while far below the blue-green sea broke with a monotonous rumble.

"My advice?" he questioned, as they sat down.

"You're such a good friend," she murmured, tremulously. "I'm in a great deal of perplexity."

"Is it about me?"

"Partly; but it isn't only that."

"You know that I should never want to bring the shadow of a care upon you—not even if it was to give me what I want

so much. You're sure of that, aren't you?"

"That's why I turn to you," she said, simply. "There's no one else in the world I could trust in the same way."

"And you'll never regret having given me your confidence, however full it may be. I know I'm not much to look at, but at least I can offer you devotion and truth to the uttermost—to the uttermost."

"I want you to tell me about the Winships," she began again, looking down at the tip of her parasol, with which she traced aimless lines in the sand. "How did you come to know them?"

"Oh, it was a long time ago—let me see—ten, eleven, twelve—yes, it must be quite fifteen years ago. After my mother died and Alice was free, she went to Paris for a year or two to study art. In the atelier where she worked she fell in with Marah Winship."

"Is that the sister of the man I saw last night?"

"Yes, an older sister—a good deal older. She must be somewhere about Alice's age, not far off fifty."

"And does she paint, too?"

"Yes, poor thing."

"Why do you say poor thing?"

"Because she's had such a hard life. She had only the smallest kind of talent, if she had any at all, and yet she made herself a painter by sheer determination and pluck. I've heard Alice say that, in the atelier, they used to think she couldn't possibly succeed, and yet she did—in a measure. 'I had to succeed,' she has told me herself—but that was afterwards, when Alice used to have them at Edenbridge."

"Why had she to succeed?"

"You see, their father was dead, and they had lost all their money. There was a mother to be taken care of—a splendid, majestic creature, when first I knew them, but already growing blind. Then there was this brother—"

"But he's a man."

"I'm speaking of fifteen years ago. He was only a lad then. The sister thought he had it in him to become one of the great portrait-painters of the day, and so she brought him to Paris to give him the best chance. By Jove! she's been a plucky one! I've never seen anything like it. She has not only worked like a slave, but she's done the impossible. She's turned herself into what nature never meant her to become, and she's made a living for them all—a poor living, it must be admitted, and one of great privation, but a living all the same, and somehow they've managed to pull through."

"Do you know why they've been so poor?"

It was more the tone than the question that astonished Wiltshire.

"No," he replied, rather blankly.

"It's because we took their money and their mines, and everything they had, away from them."

"We? Who?"

"Our family—my father. Oh, Duke, I didn't know anything about it till last night, and to-day I feel as if we were a band of robbers. When I think of the way we've lived, and the way they've lived—"

"Tell me about it," he said, soothingly, as she broke off, choking.

"I don't think I can. There's so little to tell—and yet so much. It's all so dreadful—and it's—it's my father, Duke."

"For that very reason you shouldn't be in a hurry to judge—"

"I know, but I can't help it. It's like a kind of jealousy in me—a jealousy for his honor, that I thought so far above attack."

The Duke's mouth twitched with a queer, significant expression, while a look of pity stole into his dull eyes.

"This Miss Winship's father was my father's competitor, and my father crushed him and ruined him and killed him. He died in the middle of all sorts of lawsuits, and then my father ruined the widow—the poor lady, who, you say, is blind. Everything they possessed came to us—I can't exactly tell you how, but my cousin George would explain it if you asked him."

"I can guess."

"Yes, because you understand about business. But it's all so cruel, Duke. I spend a great deal of money, but I can't spend it fast enough. I don't know what to buy that I haven't bought over and over again, and yet the money heaps itself up in spite of me. And now, when you tell me of that poor Marah, working against the grain, trying to achieve the impossible, and doing it—"

Her tone rose, with a sharp, nervous inflection, till she found herself unable to go on.

"There's one thing we must never forget," Wiltshire said, kindly. "We're the inheritors of the past; we're not the creators of it. All sorts of complicated situations come down to us, and in them we can only grope our way. You inherit the situation your father made for you, and Mr. Winship inherits that which his father made for him. You and I know too little to judge either side. We're too remote from all the conditions to apportion out the real rights and wrongs—"

"And therefore," Paula interrupted, somewhat bitterly, "we should settle down complacently to accept things as they are."

"Not quite that. But if we can't accept things as they are, we mustn't try to force them into being what they can't become. We can only learn by degrees how to adjust what's wrong—"

"But you can adjust anything with money—that is, if you have enough."

"Not everything, unhappily."

"But I could adjust this."

"You mean that you could give the Winships money? Oh no, you couldn't."

"I don't mean that I could give them alms, or do anything with condescension. But couldn't I give them a great deal—as much as they ever lost—more than that? I have a great deal of money of my own—I don't know how much—but it must be a large sum—and I'd give it all to them. You could help me. You know them, and I could do it through you, if you only would—"

"Softly, softly. You couldn't do anything of that sort. They wouldn't take it. Things aren't managed so directly as that in this complicated world. They'd be offended, you know. They wouldn't listen to me—"

"Oh yes, they would. Everybody listens when it's a question of getting money. You'd beg it as a favor. You'd say it was not in pity for them, but in kindness to me. You'd put it that way. And they'd take it. I know they would. I've never seen any one refuse money—if it was enough. Oh, Duke, do!"

She ended abruptly, with a quaver in her voice, like a little wail. Wiltshire sprang to his feet, and took two or three turns up and down the gravel-path. Returning, he resumed his seat beside her.

"You mustn't do anything rash in the matter," he said, gently. "You mustn't have the air of seeming to judge your father."

"I don't," she answered, quickly. "I know he didn't do anything wrong. I should never admit otherwise. Only—"

She did not finish the sentence, and Wiltshire, leaning towards her, laid his hand on hers.

"Dear Paula," he whispered, "couldn't we let it be, until you and I could manage it together?"

She did not withdraw her hand from his touch, but the eyes she lifted towards him were full of the mute appeal of an animal begging to be let off.

"You've never answered my question—my great question," he went on, tenderly.

"I've been trying to," she managed to say.

"And you don't find it easy?"

She shook her head, letting her eyes fall again.

"But you've been making the effort?"

"Yes," she murmured, just audibly.

"And it's been a great effort?"

"Yes."

"So great, in fact, that you don't feel the strength to make it."

"I'm trying to," she said, hurriedly. "I want to."

"You want to? In what way?"

Again she lifted her appealing eyes to him.

"I—I—want to please father," she stammered, "and make you happy, and—and—"

"And sacrifice yourself," he added.

"It wouldn't be a sacrifice if I could do those two things," she stammered on.

"That is," he corrected, "not so great a sacrifice but that you could make it."

She nodded her assent. A few seconds passed in silence, when Wiltshire slowly withdrew his hand and sat erect.

"I've hurt you," Paula cried, turning sharply towards him. "That isn't what I meant to say. You haven't understood me. I'm ready to be your wife, if it will make you happy. Indeed, I'm ready. You don't know how I honor you, how good I think you, how—"

"Oh yes, I do," he broke in, with a wan smile. "I only thought that perhaps it might be possible, after all, for a woman to do a little more than honor me, and think me—"

"I'm sure it is," Paula insisted, warmly. "Let me try, let me—"

"Oh, but you have tried. And such things as that don't come from trying. They come spontaneously, or not at all. I'm not hurt. I know you far too well to think you would hurt anything that breathes—and still less me. But I'll tell you something. We've always been good friends, haven't we—that is, for three or four years past?"

"Very."

"And I've rather spoiled things between us by bringing up this subject, which, I might have known from the first, was impossible. Suppose we go back to what we were before. Suppose we blot all this out, as if it had never happened. Wouldn't that be a relief to you?"

"Yes," she said, in an unsteady voice.

"Then we'll do it. I won't undertake to give up hoping. No one could to whom you hadn't absolutely said no. But I sha'n't bother you with my hopes, and if, in the end, I have to bury them—why, then, we'll see."

"How good you are!" Paula said, softly, two big tears falling in spite of her efforts to keep them back.

"Don't say that," he protested. "You speak of goodness only because you don't know—love. But you're tired," he added, rising. "Wouldn't you like me to take you home? I dare say we shall find a fiacre in the Place that will take us down by the carriage-road."

Late that evening, when Paul Trafford kissed his daughter to say good-night, she twined her arm over his shoulder and detained him.

"I've seen the Duke," she whispered, "and he wouldn't have me."

"He—" Trafford began, in a puzzled voice.

"He thought it was a sacrifice on my part," she explained, looking up at him with glowing eyes, "and he wouldn't let me make it. It's all over."

"And would it have been a—sacrifice?" he demanded, with shaggy brows drawn together.

"Not if I could have pleased you."

His face cleared as he bent low and kissed her again.

"Then I shall only keep my little girl the longer," was all he said.

CHAPTER VII

"I'm going to do it, Laura," Paula whispered, as they approached the luncheon-table. "I mean the portrait. I've got his address, and I'm going this afternoon."

There was no time to say more, for Mrs. Trafford entered the room, followed by George Trafford and little Paul.

There had been several reasons for their return to Paris in the early days of February. The protracted absence of Mr. Trafford in Germany and Russia was the one they spoke of openly. The Duke's silent departure from Monte Carlo, taking the spirit out of their little band, was a subject they mentioned to one another only when Paula was not there. The sudden anxiety of Mrs. Trafford about her own health, and her haste to see a doctor in Paris, was a matter that they dared not discuss at all.

"Where's everybody going this afternoon?" Mrs. Trafford demanded a half-hour later, with the briskness which her courage enabled her to maintain.

"Where are *you* going, Aunt Trafford?" Laura inquired, warily.

"Oh, I've got a lot of things to do. First, I have the committee for the Bazar de la Charité; the Princesse de Friédland counts on me absolutely this year. Then I have to go to a meeting at the American Art-Students' Home. Then I must drop in at the Duchesse de Dodoville's *gôûter*. By-the-way, I could come back and take you there, Laura. You'll want some tea."

"I simply *must* go to the Bon Marché," Mrs. George Trafford declared. "I have all sorts of things to buy for Paul. I'll get my tea at Rumpelmeyer's or Colombin's on the way back."

"Then couldn't you come, Paula?" Mrs. Trafford continued. "I hate going into crowded rooms alone—especially in French houses; and I speak so badly."

Paula knew the moment had come, and nerved herself to reply in her usual tone.

"I can't go, mother, dear," she said, as calmly as she could. "I've got to see about sittings for a portrait I'm going to have painted."

It seemed to Paula as if her commonplace words fell with curious solemnity on the stillness of the room. She knew that, in spite of herself, she was coloring.

George Trafford took his cigar from his lips and looked round at her over his shoulder.

"You seem to be lost in admiration of yourself, Paula," he observed. "You had a portrait last year by Carolus Duran, and one by Chartran the year before."

"I don't like either of them," she returned, her eyes searching the depths of her empty coffee-cup.

"And yet they weren't considered to be what you'd call unfair to the original," he went on.

"I'm sure I don't know where you'll hang it," Mrs. Trafford complained, looking round the splendid room. "If you put another item on the walls of this house we'll smother."

"I was thinking of making it a present to George."

"Oh, don't put the responsibility of stowing it away on me," Trafford cried. "Laura and I have already more stuff than we can handle."

"I don't know about that, George, dear," Laura argued. "It might be nice in years to come for Paul. We've got so little in the way of ancestral things to leave him. And they say that, in forty or fifty years from now—that would be easily within Paul's lifetime—some of the great portrait-painters of the present day will have become what Romney and Gainsborough are for us."

"It's a good while to look ahead to," Trafford laughed. "But I suppose if ancestors hadn't had foresight descendants

wouldn't have privileges. Who's your man, Paula? Give us an American this time, won't you? Say Sargent, or some of those fellows."

"He *is* an American," Paula replied, "but he isn't Sargent. He's a new painter. I believe he has remarkable talent. We spoke of him one night at Monte Carlo. You told me about him, George. His name is Winship."

Mrs. Trafford gave a little scream and let her coffee-cup fall with a crash on the floor.

"Paula Trafford," she cried, "if you want to kill me, do it now; don't let it be by inches."

"You do beat everything, Paula," her cousin observed, grimly, "for getting things on the brain. I'll bet fifty cents that you've been turning those Winships over in your head ever since the subject came up, two or three weeks ago."

"Lady Alice knows them," Paula stammered, in excuse. "She says he's wonderful—and he isn't recognized—and his mother is blind—and they're so poor—and—"

"Goodness knows," Mrs. Trafford expostulated, "there are plenty of poor people in the world without hunting up your own father's enemies. I don't believe the portrait is anything but a pretext for—"

"Even so, Aunt Trafford, dear," Mrs. George interrupted, in her reasonable tone, "don't you think it's just what Uncle Trafford would like? Haven't you known him time and time again turn round on the beaten and the bitter and the sore and hold out the helping hand to them? Is there any one who knows better than he how to take the sting from hostility? And isn't it part of the responsibility of wealth—?"

"Oh, you needn't tell me!" Mrs. Trafford gasped, impatiently. She disliked so much having the higher way pointed out to her by Mrs. George that she often hurried in advance to take it. "I know better than any one what he is, and the sort of example he sets us. If to return good for evil is the motto of his life, it may well be that of ours. Paula, my child," she added, with a quick change of front, "if it be your will to help these people, do it. I withdraw all objection. If you like, I'll pay for the portrait. I believe it would please your father, though I think we'd better not say anything about it. Yes, I *will* pay for it. I don't care what it costs."

"Thank you, mother, dear," Paula said, rising, eager to escape, now that her point was gained. "I'd rather pay for it myself."

"All I beg of you," Mrs. Trafford cried, as Paula left the room, "is not to bring the young man here."

"But where can I have my sittings?" Paula questioned, from the doorway.

"Where you like. Have them in the Louvre, or in Notre Dame, or anywhere else you please; but don't bring the young man here. I should faint if I saw him. Take a maid with you, take two maids, take ten maids if you will, but don't—bring—the young—man here."

"Do you think that's wise?" Trafford questioned; but Paula was already out of hearing.

Half an hour later her coupé turned from the Rue Mazarine into the narrow Passage de la Nativité and stopped before an ancient, fortress-like gate. Traces of Renaissance sculpture were visible on the battered stone, while in a niche over the portal stood a crowned but time-worn statue of the Virgin and Child. When the footman clanged the gong a wrinkled old woman opened a small door cautiously. Paula descended and asked the way to Mr. Winship's studio.

A minute afterwards she found herself in a spacious court-yard, paved with flat stone, which time had forced into various levels, the interstices being filled here and there with tufts of grass. Low, weatherworn gray buildings in the Renaissance style surrounded the court-yard on three sides. In the centre of the space the stone basin of a long-disused fountain was gradually crumbling away, throwing slightly out of the perpendicular the elaborate wrought-iron tracery which rose above it, surmounted by a cross. The place was evidently an old convent, violated probably at the Revolution, and since then become one of those spots, more common in Paris than elsewhere, in which poverty can take refuge and still keep some sense of dignity. To Paula, picking her way across the court towards the entrance the *concierge* had pointed out, everything about her seemed oppressively ancient. It was picturesque enough; in a mournful way it was even stately; but to think of any one actually living there made her shudder. The Winships themselves were well content to have discovered, in the heart of the city, so charming a retreat, while Paula could think only of outcasts

seeking shelter among broken, empty tombs.

Now that she was here, she had none of the nervousness or fluttering of the heart from which she had often suffered in thinking the matter over. On the contrary, in her velvet and sables she felt herself imposing. The ease with which the conversation at the luncheon-table had passed off gave to the undertaking an air of being a matter of course. Besides, after all, there was no tremendous difficulty to overcome. She would have such a conversation as she had held at other times with M. Chartran or M. Carolus Duran, and would come away. On the question of price she would, naturally, have to surprise the young artist; but such surprises were generally borne by their recipients with good grace. For everything else she counted on her own dignity, tact, and knowledge of the world.

The entry was so dark, and the slippery stairs were so steep, that on the landing Paula waited for a minute beside a window to take breath. The view here was less severe than that below. In the foreground, just beyond the court, there were gardens—such friendly, ancient, unexpected gardens, hidden from the streets, as one finds everywhere in Paris, and nowhere else in the world. Farther off rose the venerable tower of St.-Germain-des-Pres; farther off still, the square of the Odéon displayed its simple lines, while, as culminating-point to the prospect, the columned dome of the Panthéon lifted itself into the winter air.

As Paula gazed outward she rehearsed once more the first few phrases she should use to Winship. Suddenly she seemed to hear music—the faint tinkling of an air with which she was familiar. When she turned from the window to go up the second flight of stairs the sounds became more distinct.

Presently she heard a voice singing—a woman's voice, sweet and in tune, but thin and worn, like the tone of the old piano on which the singer was playing her accompaniment. Once on the landing, Paula could hear the words quite plainly:

"O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, till
The night is gone.
And with the morn those angel faces smile
Which I have loved long since, and lost awhile."

There was an *Amen*, just as they sing in churches, and then the tinkling music ceased. Paula took a step forward towards the closed door through which the sounds had proceeded. It was that indicated to her by the *concierge*, but she hoped to find herself mistaken. While she was ready to deal with Winship himself, she had not counted on finding herself face to face with the women of his family. But no! she was not mistaken. It was the door. The card on it bore the name "Winship." She was half inclined to turn away, when a high-pitched, quavering voice arrested her attention.

"Thank you, Marah, dear. That's very nice—very comforting."

The enunciation had that slow, emphatic distinctness which belongs to aged persons of strong will. Paula was about to ring, when the voice began again, reciting in a loud, clear, trembling monotone:

"Lead, kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom,
Lead Thou me on;
The night is dark and I am far from home,
Lead Thou me on.
Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see
The distant scene; one step enough for me."

"One step enough for me—one step enough for me," the voice repeated, softly, like an echo, and Paula summoned up force to ring.

There was a second or two of bustling movement within, and then the door was opened.

For a brief instant Paula hesitated, in surprise. She had expected a servant of some sort, and held her card, half-drawn from her card-case, in her hand. Before her she saw a little, gray-haired lady, with snapping black eyes and a face that might have betokened any of the complex shades from cynical kindness to jesting severity. Everything about her was austere simple, from the parting of her gray hair to the falling of her black gown, covered up, just now, with a huge

white apron like a pinafore. Paula had a minute of feeling herself very tall and very much overdressed.

"Is Mr. Winship at home?" she managed to ask at last.

"If you'll be good enough to come in, I'll see."

The voice was hard, the utterance crisp, and the smile that accompanied the words had the bright flash of winter sunlight.

Marah Winship led the way in, with a quick, awkward motion that bespoke a nature too busy to think of grace. Paula followed, and after a step or two stood still, with another slight shock of surprise.

It was not like going into any other house she had ever visited. There was no hallway or anteroom or vestibule. On crossing the threshold she passed at once into the full domestic life of the family. She had entered an immense, barnlike apartment, which was evidently studio and living-room in one. The floor was bare, except for a few of the commoner sorts of Oriental rugs. The walls were hung with an ordinary dark-red stuff which formed a background for the unframed sketches—portraits, landscapes, and architectural drawings—pinned up here and there against it. At the far end of the room there was an easel on which the work was covered up with a loosely thrown cloth. A couple of lay-figures stood in grotesque attitudes in a corner, while near them was an open grand-piano of old-fashioned make. It was only vaguely that Paula took these details in, for after the first glance her eyes were drawn to a tall figure seated quite near her, in a high, thronelike chair.

Paula knew at once that this was the woman who had done battle with her father, until he had been obliged "to club her down." The immediate impression was that of a person sitting very still and erect, her feet planted firmly on a red cushion, and a large volume—evidently a Bible—in raised letters, open on her knees. Over the white hair a lace scarf, of beautiful design, came to a point on the forehead, and fell in lappets to the shoulders. The severity of the black gown was relieved by a fichu of soft white stuff, fastened on the breast with a large, old-fashioned brooch set with emeralds. Clearly, the face had been handsome once, and even haughty; but now all that had been passionate or self-willed in it was subdued by time and sorrow into sweetness. There was no color there at all—only the waxlike transparency of the aged. As Paula entered, the sightless eyes were raised towards her, as if with one more useless, piteous attempt to pierce the darkness.

Marah Winship had allowed Paula to stand still a moment and gaze. It was one of her rare bits of pleasure—that instant when a stranger beheld her mother for the first time and betrayed his astonished admiration. It was the old maid's only coquetry; it was all that remained of the vivacity and pride that had been hers in the days before the family disasters. When ruin overtook them, she gave up once and forever all impossible hopes for herself. She had not been without a young woman's love of happy trifles; nor without a pleasant vague anticipation of a home, with children of her own; nor without the half-shy, half-rapturous thought that if a certain one of the young men with whom she danced during the winter season in Boston ever asked her, it would not be in vain. But when the great financial battle was fought to a finish, she renounced everything of that kind. She saw her life's work before her. It was, first, to make a man of Roger, the boy who was so much younger than herself as to seem less like a brother than a son; then it was to shield from the cruelest winds of adversity the mother who had done her best and failed.

She crushed out her own longings with that cynical suppression of regret which some women can command, and set herself to her task. She learned the meaning of sacrifice, privation, penury, failure, and, at last, of faint, almost pitiable, success. But she achieved her purpose—she made a man of Roger; and during the long, hard years Mrs. Winship never knew how long and hard they were. Marah protected her at least from that. As the mother grew older and blinder, it became easier to deceive her—easier to make her believe there was plenty of food because she had enough, easier to persuade her that life was happy because she knew only smiles. Out of the wreck of their pretty things Marah had snatched a few old jewels, a few odds and ends of lace—not much, but enough to keep alive in her mother's consciousness the conviction that she was "still a lady." Marah was satisfied with that, as far as a hungry, unfed heart is ever satisfied. The day's work was always lighter if some one pointed to her mother and whispered, "Isn't she a picture!"

Paula did not say that, but she was conscious of an overwhelming sentiment of pity. It was not only pity, it was a feeling of responsibility. Everything about her was to her eyes so poverty-stricken—while she was spending the money which would have provided for this helplessness the setting to which it was entitled. During the second or two that had passed since she entered the room, her mind had worked faster than it had ever worked before. Wild schemes rose confusedly in her heart, and it was almost exultantly that she felt it in her power to change all this, making amends for a cruel past by a

sudden raining down of happiness. Notwithstanding her sense of the wrong that had been done, she could not help feeling, as she stood in the vast, bare room, a little like a fairy godmother.

But when Marah Winship spoke, Paula was recalled, of necessity, to the circumstances of the moment.

"I think my brother is in; I will go and see. May I ask what name I ought to give him?"

"Miss Trafford—Miss Paula Trafford."

She spoke slowly and distinctly; she meant also to speak reassuringly. She hoped the very sound of the name would be the signal that, after the long years, the victors were coming to give back the spoils and hold out the olive-branch of peace. She was surprised to see Marah start and grow pale, while her black eyes snapped with a sparkle like that of electricity.

"I—I don't think my brother can be in," she returned, coldly.

"I want very much to see him. Won't you make sure?"

Paula spoke in the gentle tone of command that came from her sense of power. Marah Winship had suffered too many defeats at the hands of wealth to dare to disobey.

"Mother," she said, turning abruptly to the figure in the thronelike chair, "this is Miss Trafford—Miss Paula Trafford. She has come to see Roger; I'm going to look for him."

She sped away, leaving Paula alone, and face to face with Mrs. Winship.

There was a moment's silence, during which the blind woman's fingers trembled violently over the raised letters of the open page. The lips quivered as if unable to frame a word.

"Trafford!" she murmured at last. "Did my daughter say Trafford?"

"I'm Paul Trafford's daughter," Paula answered, firmly. She would have no misunderstanding or mistake.

"I know the name," Mrs. Winship said, making an effort towards self-control, "but I haven't heard it for many years."

"I'm afraid it may be painful to you," Paula felt impelled to say; "but—"

"It used to be; it used to be. But oh! my dear, when the race is as nearly run as mine is, and the kingdom of heaven is opening before your eyes, nothing is very painful any more."

Paula was not expecting this. She moved uneasily. The sound caught Mrs. Winship's ear.

"Come nearer to me, dear," she quavered, holding out a delicate white hand, on which a diamond or two still twinkled. "Come here; sit down; let me see you."

There was a tall, straight-backed chair beside her. Paula drew it nearer to the blind woman and sat down.

"I was almost afraid to come," she began to murmur, but Mrs. Winship interrupted her.

"You needn't be. No one can live to my age without learning that in this world we can't afford to cherish enmities—not against any one—not against any one. Give me your hand, my dear," she added, groping in the darkness.

Paula stretched out both her hands. She could not speak for fear of crying.

"You're young, I see," Mrs. Winship went on, letting her touch wander lightly over Paula's gloves. "I begin to be able to distinguish the young from the old by little signs. But of course you're young. I remember that Mr. Trafford had a little girl at the time I used to—to see him."

"I knew nothing till a short time ago—"

"About all our troubles," Mrs. Winship finished as Paula hesitated. "Of course you didn't, dear. How should you? As I look back, I can see that we knew very little ourselves. We were like children, wrestling in the darkness, on the edge of

a precipice. And it wasn't worth while—it wasn't worth while."

She sighed, and Paula felt again the desire to cry.

"My husband is gone," Mrs. Winship quavered on. "He sees life—this life—already from another point of view. And I begin to see it, too. That's because I'm blind, perhaps. The spiritual vision becomes wonderfully clear when the earthly eyes are closed. There are times when I feel as if I could look up with Stephen and see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing on the right hand of God. How should I keep hard feelings when I'm so blest? I used to have them; but not now, not now. I'm glad to see you, dear."

"If there's anything I can do for you—" Paula tried to say, conscious of her own awkwardness.

"No, dear, no," Mrs. Winship broke in, gently, pressing the girl's hand. "The Lord is good to us, and we've never wanted for anything. My son and daughter have had great success in their callings, so that as soon as one door was closed another was opened to us. Looking back, I can't but see that all has been for the best—even the things against which, at the time, I rebelled the most. It's the Lord's favor to have shown me that in this life, when so many of His servants have to wait to learn it till they enter on the life to come. Now that I see it, I feel ready to sing my *Nunc dimittis Domine, in pace*. But you wanted to see my son, I think you said, dear?" she added, in another tone.

"I hoped to have him paint my portrait," Paula tried to explain. "I've heard of his work—"

"Yes; he's made a great reputation," the mother said, complacently.

"So I understand; and I hoped—"

"He's coming now, dear. I hear his step. It's always firmer than anybody else's."

A door at the distant end of the long room was thrown open, and as Paula looked up she saw the young man she had met at Monte Carlo stride in.

CHAPTER VIII

As Winship came down the long room, Paula was able to give a definite outline to the vague portrait of him she had carried away from Monte Carlo. She saw him now, tall, spare, muscular, and, as it were, loosely hung together. He swung himself along with an easy gait in which there was something both careless and sure. "Careless and sure" seemed stamped on his whole person, from his roughly brushed brown hair to the old, russet-colored suit which, as Paula said to herself, he wore "so distinctly like a gentleman." In his ill-dressed, aristocratic gauntness, he seemed to her to recall the race of noble, legendary outlaws—just as a hollow-flanked, gleaming-eyed dog will remind one of a wolf.

"This is Miss Trafford, Roger," Mrs. Winship said, in a voice shaking with emotion. "She has come to ask you to paint her portrait."

"Miss Trafford and I have met already," Winship returned, as he took the hand Paula stretched out to him without rising from her chair.

"For an instant," Paula assented. "I'm glad you haven't forgotten. You see," she added, turning to Marah, who had followed her brother into the room—"you see, we're all friends of Lady Alice Holroyd's."

Marah Winship made no response. Her face had settled into an expression of stony repose. As Winship drew up a small chair beside his mother and opposite their visitor, Marah remained standing at a distance, just where Paula could not see her without turning round.

"Lady Alice is such an enthusiast over your work, Mr. Winship—" Paula hurried on.

"And so generous in singing other people's praises," Winship laughed, not without a flush of conscious pleasure.

"—That I couldn't help hoping you would do a portrait of me, if you're not too busy."

"You *are* very busy, Roger," Marah warned him, before he had time to reply. "If you're going to have anything ready for the Salon—"

"Perhaps Miss Trafford wouldn't mind my sending this?"

"Not at all," Paula smiled. "I've figured there already. It isn't so very disagreeable. One is hardly ever recognized."

"What sort of portrait were you thinking of?" Winship inquired.

Paula confessed that her own ideas were vague; she would have to appeal to him for advice. Carolus Duran had painted the bust only; Chartran had done a three-quarters length, standing; she would accept Mr. Winship's judgment as to how she should be represented now. She did not say that the picture had little or no interest for her in itself. While he made his suggestions she listened inattentively. He would paint her, he thought, at full length, almost as she sat before him in the high Gothic chair. She should be in some sort of evening dress, black for preference, or diaphanous black over color. She should have a small tiara in her hair, and wear a few fine jewels, possibly emeralds. If she chose emeralds, he would carry out the idea of green by a glimpse—just a glimpse—of a malachite table in the background. There would be green tints, too, in the bit of sky—the sky of a long, late summer twilight—that would be visible through an open window. It would be quite simple—Miss Trafford need not fear the contrary—but it would be the princely simplicity with which she ought to be surrounded.

Paula maintained her air of listening as he grew enthusiastic over his conceptions, but in reality she was watching his play of countenance. She thought she had never seen—not even in her father—a face in which there was greater strength of will. In the eyes, soft and hazel as they were, there was a penetration not less keen than in Paul Trafford's own; while the mouth under the brown mustache seemed to her both sensitive and inexorable. She was not sure that she liked it. It was too much like the mouth of a man whom neither pity nor passion would turn from what he had set his mind on. While he was talking of colors and poses, she caught herself wondering if he could possibly be as unyielding as his expression seemed to say.

Having decided on the general character the portrait was to take, they discussed the question of sittings. Paula admitted the difficulty of giving them in her own house, and her willingness to come to his.

"That will suit me admirably," Winship agreed, "if it isn't giving you too much trouble. This is my only studio, I regret to say; but it has the advantage that my mother is always here, and generally my sister."

Paula turned round towards Marah with a conciliatory smile.

"That will be charming. I know Miss Winship is an artist, too. Perhaps we shall have the benefit of her criticism and advice."

But Marah stood unresponsive, gazing blankly at the opposite wall. After waiting a second for some recognition of her words, Paula turned again towards Winship. If she felt hurt, she was too sure of her own good intentions to be otherwise than self-possessed.

"And now, Mr. Winship," she said, gently, "there's one other question. I'm business woman enough to know that there must be no misunderstanding about terms."

Winship bowed.

"Certainly. I will tell you frankly how the matter stands with me. I've just finished a portrait for which I've had four thousand francs; for the next one I painted I meant to ask five."

"I will give you fifty thousand," Paula said, quietly.

There was a moment's hush, as if the hearers were endeavoring to comprehend.

"I don't think you understand me, Miss Trafford," Winship said at last, speaking deliberately. "I said five thousand—"

"And I said fifty," Paula interrupted.

"You're very kind," Winship said, flashing one of his careless smiles at her, "but I'm afraid I must stand by my price."

"There's no question of standing by anything," Paula returned. "A portrait hasn't a fixed and unchanging value like—like a postage-stamp."

"The money value of any work of art, a book, a picture, a statue, or whatever it be," Winship explained, "can be measured only by the reputation of its author. A poor bit of work by a well-known man is worth more, from a financial point of view, than a good bit of work by a man who makes only a small appeal to the public; and so—"

"I don't care anything about that," Paula interrupted again.

"No; but I do," Winship rejoined. "I'm obliged to look at things just as they are. My portrait of you might be as good as Carolus Duran's, and yet you couldn't hang it with the same pride on your walls, or take the same glory in it among your friends."

"But that isn't what I want to do," Paula said, unguardedly.

"Then what *do* you want to do?" he asked, leaning forward and looking at her straight in the eyes.

Paula was not blind to the directness of the question, and she thought it rather tactless. It would have been so much more delicate on his part to have let her fix the price without discussion! His smile, too, annoyed her—that is, it would have annoyed her if it had not fascinated her by its suggestion of ease and power. He looked at her entirely without awe, as if he caught no glimmer of the throne of gold on which other people seated her. It was not exactly disagreeable, she thought; it was only disconcerting.

"What do I want to do?" she repeated, trying to gain time to formulate her reply. "I want to have a good portrait of myself, and to pay for it what I am sure it will be worth."

"You're more than generous," Winship acknowledged; "but I must protect you from the injustice you would do yourself."

"But I don't want to be protected. No woman does nowadays. And as for injustice—"

She stopped in some confusion. It seemed to her that in Winship's continual smile there was a play of satirical amusement. She felt that he saw through her, that he was riddling her poor plan for his benefit with the silent shots of his

scorn.

"As for injustice—what, Miss Trafford? You were going to say something."

It was Marah Winship who spoke, in a sharp tone of challenge. Feeling the attack, Paula faced about to meet it. It was the sort of situation that called out her courage, and made her spring to her own defence.

"I was going to say, Miss Winship," she replied, looking calmly into Marah's snapping eyes, "that as for injustice, all of us have to bear it—all of us. There are no exceptions. If it hurts you in one way, it hurts me in another—but none of us escapes."

"Just as none of us escapes the winter's storm," Marah returned, hardly. "Only it's one thing to watch it from the window, and another thing to shiver in its blast."

Paula did not reply, but she did not immediately turn her eyes away. She met Marah's scintillating gaze without flinching, but she grew aware of the hostility behind it.

"There's only one prayer for us, dears, when we feel we're unjustly treated," Mrs. Winship said, in her high, trembling voice. "It's, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.' If we did know, we'd be gentler with one another."

"I'm sure Mr. Winship doesn't know how he wounds me in not accepting my conditions," Paula said, with a faint smile, turning again towards the mother and the son.

"Nor Miss Trafford how she offends me by contesting mine," Winship laughed.

"I do contest them," Paula insisted; "I not only contest them, but I reject them."

"Then," said Winship, speaking with sudden gravity, "there's nothing more to be said. If we can't agree, we can only cry our bargain off."

Paula was not expecting so abrupt a termination to the discussion. Her blue eyes clouded and the deepening of the furrow between her brows betrayed her distress.

"Do you mean that you won't paint my portrait at all?"

"Only at my own price."

"But since I can't accept it?"

"That's entirely for you to decide. I, at least, must abide by it."

"My son *shall* paint your portrait," Mrs. Winship said, in a tone of authority. "I shall act as arbitrator between you, for I understand you both. He shall paint it for a price that I shall fix. It shall be higher than his and lower than yours."

So, after further talk, it was settled, and presently Paula rose to go away. She felt less assurance than when she arrived, but she said her good-byes without visible embarrassment. As Winship held the door open for her to pass out, she turned to him on the threshold.

"Our discussion strikes me as a little odd," she observed, her brows contracting with her characteristic expression of perplexity. "I've always understood that men wanted to make money."

"So they do—when they have time."

"And you?"

"I shall make money some day."

"Why some day? Why not now?"

"Because now I'm too busy with my art. When I've mastered that a little more, the money will come of its own accord."

"But if it doesn't?"

"I should have only one reason for regretting it."

He nodded backward towards his mother's chair, over which Marah was leaning tenderly.

"But if you refuse to seize your opportunities?"

"I shall not refuse; but there are opportunities and opportunities. There are some of which one avails one's self, and there are others which no honorable man could take without losing his self-respect."

"And you think my offer of to-day—"

"Was meant kindly," he finished, before she could end her sentence. "I'm sure of that. And I'm equally sure that when you've reflected well you'll see that my refusal to accept it is not incompatible with the fullest appreciation."

She dared not question him further. She understood that he had read her scheme in all its blundering benevolent futility. She read it so herself, now that it had been put into words and subjected to scrutiny, but she read it with a curious misapprehension of characters and hearts.

"No wonder he refused it!" she said to herself, as she drove homeward. "Fifty thousand francs! Five hundred thousand would be but a trifle of what we owe them. If it was five million—well, perhaps that might have been enough."

Five million francs! The sum appealed alike to her imagination and to her sense of justice. That would be a million dollars—two hundred thousand pounds. She knew nothing about the matter, but it seemed to her as if it might represent approximately the value of the Devlin Mines. At least, it was a sum with which one might offer restitution without being laughed at. Winship *had* laughed at her. She was sure of that now. The very thought made her cheeks burn, in the semiobscurity of the carriage. She did not blame him. She did not resent his derision. She accepted even Marah's hostility with a confused feeling of making some atonement. But there was an atonement more practical and adequate than that of sentiment; and with the unreasoning tenacity of her nature she grew more firmly convinced that her family ought to offer it.

She spoke of it in the evening, at home, during that last hour before parting, when the string of the tongue is often loosed and the mind expresses itself boldly. She flung her opinion like a bomb into the family circle, and waited to be blown up herself by the explosion.

At first there was neither expostulation nor direct reply.

"Aunt Julia," George Trafford remarked, from the depths of his arm-chair, "I think we ought to send for Dr. Marier, the specialist for mental diseases."

"What *does* she mean?" Mrs. Trafford demanded, turning with an air of distress towards Mrs. George. Laura arched her fine eyebrows and looked at Paula wonderingly.

"It isn't a question of what *she* means, but of what *we* mean," Trafford exclaimed. "We ought to invent some mild form of strait-jacket for her. It isn't safe to have her going around loose."

"Cheap witticism isn't argument, George," Paula reminded him.

"Cheap?" he retorted. "No witticism that turns on throwing away a million dollars can be cheap."

"A million dollars isn't much," Paula declared, warmly.

"Try to earn it and you'll see," Trafford threw back at her.

"I mean it isn't much for us—especially if it were divided up among us all. We should never miss it."

"We shall never try," he laughed, gruffly.

"Paula, dear, do keep your senses, at any rate while your father is away," Mrs. Trafford pleaded. "If you go on like this you'll get nervous prostration—or you'll give it to me."

"Mother, if you'd seen those people as I saw them to-day—"

"I don't want to. I don't want to know about them. When I remember what they did to your father—"

"Well, they're punished for it now. They live in such a poor place!—a sort of old, half-ruined convent. And everything about them is so comfortless, so bare, so lacking in all that we call essential! When I looked at that poor lady, it was as if I saw you, mother, dear, old and blind and feeble and sweet and saintlike—"

"Oh, for mercy's sake, stop," Mrs. Trafford cried. "You're enough to give any one the creeps."

"And a million dollars would mean so much to them," Paula ended, pleadingly.

"That's the first point on which I agree with you," Trafford said, dryly. "A million dollars means a good deal to most people. But look here! I'll tell you what I'll do. You're a good girl and I'll humor you. I'll give you fifty francs for them—"

"George, you're crazy," Paula exclaimed, indignantly. "You're insulting. He refused fifty thousand francs from me this very afternoon."

"He—what?" Trafford asked, with the low, slow emphasis of incredulity.

Then Paula told the story of the day's experiences. She told it brokenly, interrupted by George's and Mrs. Trafford's questions. Laura stitched in silence, her eyes fixed on her work. Trafford drew up his arm-chair close to where Paula sat by a small table, merging her hot blushes in the red glow of a shaded electric lamp. Mrs. Trafford fanned herself with a lace handkerchief, as though in danger of suffocation.

"And so he stood out for more," Trafford commented, as Paula brought her narrative to a close. "Well, I don't blame him. No doubt he could see that if he left you alone you'd bring him back the whole Devlin property."

"Why shouldn't we?" Paula demanded, with cheeks flaming. "It was theirs. We took it from them. You said yourself, the night we talked of it, that papa had laid out his plan to ruin them five or six years ahead. Why shouldn't we do justice to them now, late as it is?"

"I never said your father had laid out his plan to ruin them; I said he had laid out his plan of campaign."

"It's the same thing."

"Pardon me, but it isn't the same thing. Your father's operations were in the way of business, not of spoliation."

"That's the mere jargon of the market," Paula cried, springing to her feet and beginning to move restlessly about. "I've heard it till I'm sick of its sound. Business! business! It's the only password of our world. It's our only motto, our only standard of right. So long as we can say that any action, however base, is in the way of business, we think the trickery, the meanness, the dishonor is excused. We make our plea of business cover a greater multitude of sins than charity. What's the good of our philanthropies and our libraries and our fine plans for the elevation of mankind, when we get the very money that keeps our schemes alive by clubbing other people down? I use your own expression, George. It's what you said papa did to this poor, blind Mrs. Winship—"

"Your father can't be made responsible for my expressions, any more than he can be argued guilty by your eloquence."

"I'm not trying to argue him guilty. I know he wasn't guilty. I'm trying only to protect him from being thought so. And when we could do that with an insignificant million dollars—"

"But could you?" Laura asked, looking up from her work, and speaking for the first time. "If you constitute yourself a judge of your father's doings—"

"A kind of Holy Office of the Inquisition, consisting of one infallible member," Trafford threw in.

"You couldn't stop at one isolated case," Mrs. George went on. "You'd find yourself led further than you expected."

"Do you mean that everything was wrong?" Paula demanded, stopping in her walk and looking haughtily down at Laura.

"Everything could be made to seem wrong, I've no doubt," Laura replied, quietly, "if we went by the tests you seem determined to apply. There'd be no end to the extent to which you'd become involved. One million wouldn't be enough,

nor two, nor three."

"I shouldn't care for that," Paula flung out, turning towards the door. "Rather than feel that we've become rich by grinding other people into poverty, I'd give away everything we have."

"It's lucky for us that you can't," Trafford laughed. "It's lucky for you, too. Paula!" he called after her, as she was leaving the room. "Come back. I've got something more to say to you."

She turned at the door and confronted him. Her blue eyes were shining with tears, and the color in her cheeks had contracted into two hectic spots of scarlet.

"As far as I can see," he went on, with smiling sarcasm, "the only way to help your painter man is to marry him."

"I would," she returned, holding her head high—"I would, if I couldn't do him justice in any other way."

Trafford laughed aloud.

"Ho! Ho! Well done, Paula!" he cried after her, as she went proudly and indignantly up the great stairway.

But Mrs. Trafford was vexed.

"Why on earth should you put that notion into her head, George?" she complained, fretfully. "You know, as well as I do, that she's quite capable of doing it."

CHAPTER IX

"He'll never be the same again, Alice," Marah Winship said, complainingly. "You've never seen any one more changed than he, since the first day he began to paint her."

"I shouldn't bother about that," Lady Alice returned, in her bluff, hearty way, "so long as the change is for the better."

"But is it?"

"Certainly, if you can judge from his work. That picture is a man's work, not a boy's. It's got the two things he's lacked hitherto—inspiration and authority. He's always had drawing and color. I give you my word. Marah, I'm astonished, perfectly astonished—I, who looked for big things from him. That woman is Paula Trafford as surely as Rembrandt's 'Old Lady' in Amsterdam is Elisabeth Bas."

"If it had only been any one else in the world, rather than a Trafford!"

"I call that stuff and nonsense, and flying in the face of Providence. The boy's business is to paint pretty women, and where could he have found a better subject? You'd feel the same about any one else who had good looks enough to give him pleasure in putting them on canvas. Oh yes, I know all about the past; but, good gracious, Marah, you're not a Corsican, to carry on a vendetta from generation to generation. I should say that, if they've fallen in love with each other, it would be uncommonly rare poetic justice for them to make a match of it."

"You didn't want your own brother to marry her."

"That's a different thing. Ludovic, poor lad, came into the world bound hand and foot with duties, and with a whole load of family traditions crushing him down. He can't marry the first pretty face he takes a fancy to. He's got to keep in the picture, so to speak. There's nothing more incongruous, in my opinion, than an English duke with a rich American duchess. It's out of drawing and off the background. It leaps at you from the frame. Of course, if Ludovic had done it, I could have lived through it and made the best of it, just as I should do if he were to dismantle the beautiful Louis Seize drawing-room at Edenbridge and refurnish it from Maple's; but I shouldn't like it."

"We have our family pride as well as you," Marah observed, with sharp eyes snapping. "Until we were driven out, our own family had lived on the same land in New Hampshire for nearly three hundred years."

"Oh, my dear, America wasn't discovered as long ago as that, and even if it had been, the two things are not the same at all. They're as different as a Teniers and a Raphael. Mind you, a Teniers is just as *good* as a Raphael; but it's quite another genre, and you mustn't mix them. As for your brother, I say again, that if they can make a match of it you ought to take it as the special intervention of Providence, and a happy way out of the coil."

They sat in the long studio before Winship's unfinished portrait. Lady Alice, in her black cloth gown, Tyrolese hat, and stout leather boots, was an excellent type of the Englishwoman who is so sure of her means and position that she can dress as she pleases. Above the two women, Paula Trafford sat as if enthroned. She had been painted much as Winship had suggested in the first moment of inspiration—in diaphanous black over something green, with a diamond ornament, like a tiara, shining in her hair. From a chiselled gold coffer, standing on a small malachite table beside her, she was drawing a string of pearls, though her eyes were turned towards the spectator. Through an opening between two columns the vaguely suggested sunset was fading out in tints of green and gold and black.

"She'll have the money," Lady Alice continued, unfolding the plan, "and he'll have the fame. The one will not be better dowered than the other. This bit of work means that he is going up to the gate of the Temple with a good, sharp rap. They'll let him in quickly enough this time. It's marvellous how he's managed so much detail with such simplicity. And yet," she went on, in her summary, "nothing takes your attention away from the girl herself. He's caught the meaning of her face with nothing short of power. I've seen her look just like that—in fact, it's her characteristic expression. Don't you notice it, Marah?"

"I can see it's very well painted."

"Then it's a pity you can't see more. That rather pathetic kind of loveliness is unusual in itself, but when you add her wondering, questioning expression you make it positively significant. It's tremendously modern, too. You could never

confound this girl with the soft-eyed, shameless beauties of the Lely school, or with the bedraped and befeathered ladies of Sir Joshua. Here you've got not only a pretty woman, but a human soul. Any one might think that, with her puzzled, ranging gaze, she was asking the eternal What? and Why? of earthly existence."

The grating of a latch-key in the lock of the door cut short Lady Alice's observations, and Winship himself entered. During the greetings that followed, Marah, murmuring something about see to her mother, slipped from the room. Winship asked Lady Alice many questions: When had she come? Where was she staying? How long was she to remain? He showed his surprise and pleasure at seeing her.

"I'm especially glad on account of that," he said, with a gesture towards the portrait, when they had finished the first preliminary topics of meeting. "How do you like it? Sit down there—just there—that's the best light. Now tell me what you think of it. There's no one whose opinion I'd rather have than yours. Is it she? That's the thing I care for most. You know her better than I do."

"And yet you seem to know her pretty well."

"I do. I divine her."

"It's a very pleasant form of speculation, isn't it? You've painted with a good deal of enthusiasm. I can see that."

"It takes enthusiasm to transfer a living personality to the canvas," he said, evasively. "You can paint clothes and features by mere skill; but it's only sympathy with your subject that will put the whole character into a single look."

"And you find that she inspires it?—the sympathy you speak of?"

"If she didn't her situation would."

"You mean—"

"I mean that for me she belongs to the group of women overwhelmed by the fatality of circumstances, the representative circumstances of their time. Each age has its own types, which often become its own victims. In one age it may be an Iphigenia, in another a Lady Jane Grey, and in another a Madame Royale. They are simple women—simple girls—without inborn greatness of any kind—but the cyclone of forces concentrates and bursts above them."

"My good man, do you mean to say that Paula Trafford is threatened by some overhanging doom?"

"No, I do not. I say only that she is one of the few who focus into themselves the results of a great industrial country and of a great industrial era. There she sits as I see her," he went on, pointing over Lady Alice's shoulder, "the type and the victim of a commercial age and a commercial people. All the rights and wrongs of industry and finance are forced into her hands—their honest gains, their pitiless competitions, their brutal robberies, their sordid trickeries, and their moral assassinations. She sums them up and represents them."

"Yes," Lady Alice assented, with her grim smile, "just about to the same extent as I sum up the history and privileges of the House of Lords."

"Oh, more than that. You're one of your class; she stands alone in hers. She can't be other than representative. Destiny has singled her out for the task."

"And she's such a sweet, gentle soul."

"That's where the curious irony of it comes in. Do you remember in the cathedral at Ghent the tomb of Mary of Burgundy? No? Well, it's worth looking at the next time you're there. She lies crowned and gorgeously robed, on a sepulchre covered with the shields of the duchies, counties, and baronies she inherited from Charles the Bold. She herself is a frail, pinched little body, who died at twenty-four. She lived just long enough to marry Maximilian, to have a son, to transfer the Low Countries to Spain and Austria, and so to begin the centuries of war and misery that never really ended till the revolt of Belgium from Holland, in 1830. She was nothing but a girl—little older than Miss Trafford there—but the storm-forces of her time centred around her, tossing her into a place in history utterly out of keeping with her personal importance. In the United States to-day, women don't inherit duchies, like Mary of Burgundy, they inherit money—"

"So much the better for the men who marry them," Lady Alice broke in, bluntly. "Some one has to marry them. Some one will have to marry Paula Trafford."

Winship picked up a brush and began to fleck touches on the soft black draperies.

"Well, won't they?" Lady Alice persisted.

"I suppose so," he agreed, without turning round.

"Then why shouldn't it be you?"

"I've so few ambitions of that kind."

"So few fiddlesticks!"

"And, besides, when I marry, I hope it will not be for money, but for love."

"Love!" Lady Alice sniffed. "Is love so out of the question? You couldn't have painted her as you've done if—"

"Shall I have to fall in love with all the beautiful women I hope to paint in order to do them justice?"

"Not now, because she will have taught you the secret once for all."

Winship was spared the necessity of answering this retort by the opening of a door near by, while his mother, aided by Marah, groped her way in.

Lady Alice sprang up and took the blind woman into her strong arms. When the first embraces had been exchanged, she aided Marah in leading her to a seat. While Marah busied herself in preparing tea, Lady Alice entertained Mrs. Winship with the account of her doings through the winter. It was inevitable that the talk should drift to Roger's work and Paula Trafford.

"She's a sweet girl," Mrs. Winship said, tremulously. "I've come to love her very dearly. So has my son, haven't you, Roger?"

"I can quite understand that," Lady Alice observed, dryly.

"Oh yes," he laughed. "It's quite intelligible. But all terms are relative, and mother's don't bear being torn away from the context."

"She's been a great comfort to me," Mrs. Winship pursued, gently. "I haven't been so well during the latter part of the winter, and her kindness has been very sweet to me. She comes and reads to me, when Marah and Roger are away, just as you used to do, dear. She took me to drive one day, but I'm afraid that was too much for me. I don't suppose I shall go out again now, till I go—home."

Winship and Lady Alice exchanged glances. It was evident to both that the aged woman had grown very frail. The voice was strong and the look eager, as though the spirit were straining itself to break away.

"If you'll excuse me a minute," Winship said, trying to speak cheerily, "I'll leave you ladies to your reminiscences. I've got an idea I should like to work out—"

"It would be a pity to lose it, then," Lady Alice replied. "Your company will keep, but an idea must be seized on the wing."

"The Lord is very good to me," Mrs. Winship continued, in a high, shaking voice, while Winship, with his back towards them, worked rapidly at the canvas. "I see that more and more plainly as the time draws near; and, oh, my dear, of all His mercies the last seems to me the best."

"Then you must be a happy woman, Mrs. Winship. Most of us see the Lord's mercies to us otherwise."

"I *am* a happy woman, dear. I have everything to make me so. And yet it would have been harder for me to enter into the joy of my Lord if I hadn't learned to love Paul Trafford's daughter. I had the memory of bitter feelings still, but even that has passed away since she came."

"I don't wonder you love her," Lady Alice murmured, sympathetically.

"And Roger loves her, too," the mother whispered, bending forward. "Haven't you noticed it?"

"Well, I haven't had much time."

"Yes, he does. He tries to hide it, but he couldn't do that from me. And she loves him. I've seen it. I'm sure of it. Oh, my dear, they were made for each other. My son and Paul Trafford's daughter! If we had only foreseen that, how much anguish we might have spared each other. But it's better that it should be late than not at all. I shall go home to tell my dear husband that all strife is at an end."

When she had finished her tea, Lady Alice crossed the room towards Winship.

"May one have a peep?" she asked, looking over his shoulder. "I wouldn't spoil anything by overzeal, you know. I should think you had almost got to the point where you might leave well enough alone. So this is the young lady a man couldn't marry for love!"

"I didn't say that," Winship returned, with a little warmth.

"Well, what *did* you say?"

"I said—really, Lady Alice, I don't remember."

"No, nor I either—exactly. You said *you* couldn't marry her for love; wasn't that it?"

"I don't suppose I could marry her at all," he replied, turning round and looking at her frankly. "Where there are so many extraneous circumstances to be taken into consideration—"

"But if there weren't?"

"If there weren't an atmosphere round the earth, we should see things in quite another light. But since there *is* an atmosphere, all our perceptions have to depend upon it."

"But even in the atmosphere there's a difference between cloud and sunshine. You wouldn't refuse to enjoy a bright spring morning because you'd suffered from last year's storm."

"You would if you'd been struck by lightning," he returned, with a sharpness of tone that surprised her. "You would if you'd been crippled and blinded and left all but dead. The bright spring morning would bring a rather belated cheerfulness then."

"I didn't mean that," she began, apologetically.

"No, Lady Alice; but I *have* to mean it. I can't shut my eyes to the fact that the two lives nearest mine are blasted beyond all hope. The curious thing is that the power that did it should have come right under my hand. Can't you see that when I look at that"—he nodded in the direction of his mother's chair—"when I look at Marah, the temptation to strike back should be almost irresistible?"

"I can understand that easily enough. The instinct is as primitive as mother's love. But in this sophisticated age of the world's history most people think that, after defeat, reconstruction is wiser than revenge."

"Ah, yes," he laughed, with a curious glitter in the eyes, "but in my case revenge would take the form of what you call reconstruction."

"I see."

"You see some of it—not all."

"The revenge of Romeo on the Capulets. I presume the motive would be Romeo's as well as—all the rest of it."

"One has a right to presume anything on a subject that is no more than 'the baseless fabric of a vision.'"

"As yet."

He made no response.

"As yet," she insisted.

"As yet, if you like," he smiled.

"Ah, well, I've no more time to talk of it," she sighed, picking up her gloves from a small table. "I must be off. I suppose you know," she continued, glancing up at him sidewise, "that there'd be a fight. The doors wouldn't be flung open to you as, for instance, to my brother Ludovic."

Winship shrugged his shoulders and said nothing.

"And so, in the end, you might fail."

"I couldn't fail," he answered, quickly, "not now. However it turned out, the victory would be mine—now. In the one case, Paul Trafford would carry a wound in his side; in the other he'd get it in the heart."

Lady Alice paused, with her glove half drawn on, and regarded him.

"Hmph!" she sniffed at last. "I believe you Winships are Corsicans, after all—you and Marah, too."

CHAPTER X

At the Pavillion d'Armenonville, in the Bois de Boulogne, it was the crowded hour of the afternoon—all the more crowded because the day was one of those in early spring when it seems a rare pleasure to sit out-of-doors, under the foliage still too tender to keep off the grateful warmth of the sun. In the long gallery, and beneath the trees, there was such a movement of going and coming, such a rustle of silks and satins, such a hum of talk and laughter, such a calling of greetings and farewells, such a tinkle of cups and glasses, that two ladies seated by themselves could be intimately alone. Lady Alice had foreseen this when she invited Paula to tea with her.

At the table nearest them, a young actress of the Comédie was entertaining a party of friends; beyond them, a couple of clean-shaven American lads were having a Scotch-and-soda; farther off, a group of English people, on their way from the Riviera, were taking tea; the Italians at another table, and the South Americans at still another, were regaling themselves with pink and pea-green drinks and ices. Up to the main door there was a long, double procession of carriages, motorcars, and cabs. Liveried chasseurs ran to and fro, to welcome the arriving, and speed the departing, guest. Swans were floating on the lake in the foreground, and a faint, sweet perfume came up from the beds of hyacinths on its banks. Overhead, birds were flitting and chirping, in the ardor of building their nests; while above and through and beneath all other sounds came the wild twanging, clanging, heart-breaking music of the Hungarian Tziganes.

Neither of the two women paid direct attention to these things; they only submitted unconsciously to the influence of what is a little out of the common. The glamour of the sunshine, the strains of the gypsy air, the subtle sense of the romantic that diffuses itself in any rich, leisured, cosmopolitan crowd, made it possible, for Paula at least, to speak as she could not have spoken without the stimulus and support of an accompaniment.

"Yes, Ludovic will be back again in a few weeks," Lady Alice sighed, as she put down her cup. "Poor boy, I hope the trip will have done him good."

"I'm sure I hope so," Paula murmured, politely.

"He sails from Cape Town to-morrow. That'll make it about three months altogether since he left Monte Carlo."

"About that, I think," Paula murmured again, trying to look anywhere but at her hostess.

"Of course," Lady Alice ventured, boldly, "I never asked him what took place between you. I wouldn't. I think one can never be too delicate about matters of that sort. But, naturally, one has one's surmisings, don't they?"

Paula admitted as much as that.

"I knew you'd say so," Lady Alice pursued, as though relieved by Paula's assent. "One has their surmisings, and they can't help it. But I never talk about such things. Whatever I think, I keep to myself. My dear mother used to say that one always had plenty of time to begin to talk, but it was never too soon to be silent."

"I'm sure that must be very true," Paula agreed, innocently.

"And so, as I say, I never say anything. I only thought—you'll excuse me, dear, won't you?—I only thought, that if it was anything in the nature of a misunderstanding—"

Paula shook her head.

"That I could help in—"

"It wasn't anything of that kind," Paula forced herself to say.

"Well, I'm glad of that—or, rather, I can't help being a little bit sorry, too; because, if it had been so, there might have been a ray of hope for Ludovic. But, of course, if you'd made up your mind that you couldn't marry him—"

"I offered to," Paula stammered, in the hope of putting the matter less ungraciously. "I wanted to, but the Duke thought I had better not."

"Oh!"

Lady Alice's dry tone indicated her astonishment.

"He seemed to think I didn't love him well enough."

"And didn't you?"

"He wouldn't let me try."

"Were you ready?"

"Yes—to try."

"Well, it's never too late, you know."

The swift rose-color came into Paula's cheek, while she fixed her troubled eyes on the farthest point they could see—a swan at the distant end of the lake.

"Look here, my dear," Lady Alice said, assuming a kindly, elderly tone, "let me warn you of one thing: don't trifle with love. I'm an old maid, and you may think I don't know anything about it, but I do. I've had my experiences, like other people; and once, when I'd seen the man I could have given my heart to, I wouldn't. I wouldn't because he was only a barrister, and I was Lady Alice Holroyd, and I thought I couldn't come down. I've been bitterly punished, I assure you, for I've thought of him ever since, and he's been lord chancellor, too. Don't trifle with love, dear. It's the most precious gift of life. It comes to us once, and if we refuse to take it, it passes us by, never to return again."

The ending was so impressive, and the Hungarian music sobbed so despairingly, that Paula's lip trembled.

"And so, dear," Lady Alice went on, pursuing her advantage, "you mustn't let Ludovic think you don't love him enough, if you do."

"Oh, but I don't," Paula said, hurriedly.

"You said you could try."

"I could have tried then; I can't now."

"Excuse me, dear," Lady Alice exclaimed, twisting her mouth into a sympathetic smile. "I'm talking about what I have no business to. There! I shall say no more about it. I'm sorry I began. I shouldn't have done it, only that I know so well what love means, when it has once come to us—and—gone on. Being Ludovic's sister, I thought—but no. Let's talk of something else. By-the-way, I went over to call on the Winships yesterday, and I saw your portrait. It's superb."

"I'm glad you like it."

The new, bright color in Paula's face might have sprung from mere pleasure in the success of the work.

"Like it isn't the word. It's a splendid work of art, that's what it is, my dear, and you know that I don't speak on the subject without knowledge. That man has something in him that none of our other young painters have got, and he'll go far—you mark my words. I can't think how you ever came to happen on him."

"It was my cousin, Mrs. George Trafford, who suggested my having it done."

"She's very philanthropic, isn't she? Oh yes, I see. She got you to sit to him out of a spirit of benevolence."

"Not that exactly."

"Well, you've done a very good thing, in any case. He tells me it's to go to the Salon, and if so his reputation is made. How do you like him?" she ended, abruptly.

"Like him? How?"

"As a man. You see, I've mothered the whole family, so to speak, in times past, and so I have an interest in him. How do you think he seems?"

"Oh, very well."

"Only that?"

"No—I wouldn't say only that."

"He struck me as very good-looking."

"He seemed so to me."

"And I thought him very determined and manly, and so on. Of course, I knew he was; he's always been so. They've had such a hard time, you know, or perhaps you don't know; but he had a man's pluck even when he was a boy. Now the worst of that will be over for them, since you've given him such a lift."

"I'm very glad," Paula said, just audibly.

"And you've done him another good turn. I don't know whether I ought to tell you or not."

She laughed lightly, and Paula lifted her eyes, full of inquiry.

"I don't see why I shouldn't tell you," Lady Alice went on, as if with inward amusement. "It can't matter to you, after all the admiration you've had."

"Please don't," Paula begged.

"Why not? It isn't anything to you, and to him it's like electricity to the wire. You know what artists are. They never seem able to do their best work until they've found some one who appeals to their imagination as an ideal. Dante wasn't anything until he saw Beatrice, even though he lived to marry Gemma Donati."

"Please don't go on, Lady Alice. It makes me feel—ridiculous."

"Oh, you know what I was going to say? Then I might as well stop. I thought I might be telling you something new; but of course you must have seen it long before I did. You needn't pity him; it's the sort of thing that does any young man good. Love isn't for men what I said just now it was for women. If they have to let the best slip by, they've a greater faculty than we for putting up with second-best. But—what? What's the matter, dear? You look as if you were going to cry. For mercy's sake don't do it here, where you'll attract so much attention."

"I'm not going to," the girl managed to say.

"That's good; but have I offended you? No? What can it be, then? Is it—? Oh no, it can't be. It's too impossible. It's too absurd. It can't be. Upon my word, I believe I'm like the farmer's wife who went out to look for hen's eggs and found a pot of gold. Paula, my dear, when you said, just now, that you couldn't try again to love Ludovic, was it because—?"

"Yes." The word slipped from Paula's lips, though she would have given anything to keep it back.

The sobbing, gypsy air rose higher and higher, till it ended in a clang like the breaking of the strings of a thousand harps.

Lady Alice leaned back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Ludovic is safe, thank God," she thought, "and so is Roger. I've done a good day's work."

CHAPTER XI

During the spring the first golden laurel-leaves of popular attention began dropping into Winship's studio. Before his work was finished he knew it was receiving that measure of respect which comes from being talked about. Up to the present his reputation had been confined to friends, critics, and connoisseurs. Now his name was to pass from mouth to mouth, out from the narrow circle of those who know a good thing, to the broader world which must be told where to look for it. In the prophetic hints with which the great journals herald the approaching Salon, there were frequent hints of a new, young artist of extraordinary ability, and the portrait he was painting of Mademoiselle Trafford, *la richissime Américaine*.

It was the first puff of the trumpet of celebrity, and in it Paula's name counted for much. The fact caused her an uneasiness which increased as her father remained longer away. For the first time in her life she had taken an important step without his knowledge. For the first time in her life she had concealed anything from him, and hesitated still to make it known. The project undertaken as one of private benevolence had become a matter of almost public interest. As the girl saw her name in print, side by side with Winship's, she dreaded lest some stray paragraph should fall under her father's eye. It was chiefly with a view to avowal that she secured the privilege of going alone to meet him at the station, on the day following her talk with Lady Alice at Armenonville.

"Papa, I've something to confess to you," she began, as the victoria descended one of the long, populous thoroughfares leading from the Gare du Nord. The crowd, the street cries, and the rumble of traffic gave her courage. She felt less likely to fall into the emotional.

"Fire away," he said, good-naturedly.

"I've been having my portrait painted."

"What! Again? Well, that *is* a crime. There will be no pardon for it, unless the guilty object is forfeited to the state—and, *l'état, c'est moi*."

"You mayn't want it when I've told you all. It has turned out to be a very remarkable work."

"That's against it, of course."

"I didn't think anything about it—as a portrait—when I began; but Lady Alice Holroyd says it's very striking, and sure to make the artist's reputation. The newspapers have said so, too."

"Ah, well! That's a pity. But one can't always keep one's name out of the papers, worse luck."

"And I've promised him to let it go to the Salon."

"You might have hesitated a little there. You were in the Salon last year, and the year before. You don't want to be taken as an annual, dear."

"No. I thought of that. I shouldn't have done it for my own sake. But I was anxious that he should have whatever advantage he could get from showing it."

"Who's—he?"

"He's a friend of Lady Alice's. The Duke introduced him to me the first evening you took me to the Casino at Monte Carlo. After we came home George told me who he was, and what connection his family had had with ours."

"What's his name?"

"That's what you mayn't like, papa."

"Well, it's his name, dear, I suppose, whether I like it or not, I didn't baptize him, so I'm not responsible."

"It's Winship."

"Surely not old Rog—?"

"Yes, papa. The very same."

"The devil it is! Why didn't you tell me that before, dear?"

"I suppose I should have done it, if you hadn't been away."

"But I wasn't beyond the reach of letters, dear—and you wrote nearly every day."

"The truth is, papa, darling, that I was afraid you mightn't approve of it."

"All the more reason, then, why you should have told me."

"We did talk it over—mamma, George, Laura, and I—and we came to the conclusion that it was just what you would like. You're always so good, papa, to people who've been your opponents, and—"

"I thought you said you were afraid I wouldn't approve of it."

"I had that feeling, too. You see, I was so anxious to do something for them. You've no idea how poor they are—and the mother is blind, and—"

"Oh, she's living yet, is she?"

"Yes, papa, and such a saint!"

"Then she must have changed for the better. Well, we'll let it be. If there's any harm done—"

"Oh, but there isn't, papa."

"So much the better, then. I'm sorry, dear, that you've been brought into contact with these people—"

"But they're not a bit like what you think them."

"I'm sorry, all the same; and now that the business is over, as I suppose it is, you can let the acquaintance drop."

"It isn't quite over—the business, I mean."

"Well, when it is, then," he said, shortly. "Now tell me how your mother is," he went on, in another tone, as they turned into the Champs-Élysées. "Does she suffer less?"

"She's very brave about it. Sometimes I can't tell whether she suffers much or not."

"And sometimes you can. Is that it?"

"Of course, when she has a paroxysm she can't hide it. But I don't think they come quite so often now."

"What with one thing and another," he said, moodily, "I'm afraid I've stayed away too long. But I couldn't help it; such great interests were at stake."

"I'm sorry if I've added to your cares," she murmured, laying her hand on his arm. "You know that, don't you, papa, dear?"

"Yes, dear, I know it," he answered, briefly, and sank into silence until they reached home.

It was only in the evening that he spoke again of the subject Paula had so much at heart.

"Come up to my room," he said, as they rose from the table after dinner. They had dined alone. Mrs. Trafford had not left her room, and George and Laura were out. During the meal he had been unusually silent, Paula would have almost said dejected. His anxiety about her mother, she thought, would have been enough to account for that. She was not expecting his first words, as he closed the door of the large, book-lined room, half library, half office, into which they entered.

"Did I understand you to say," he asked, "that Lady Alice Holroyd suggested your being painted by this man Winship?"

"Oh no. I said only that she knew them. In fact, she and the Duke have looked after them, more or less, for years past."

They've often been over to stay with them at Edenbridge."

"Then whose idea was it? I mean the portrait."

He lighted a cigar, and Paula seated herself on a sofa.

"It was Laura who spoke of it first, but it was I who wanted to help them. If there's any blame to be attached anywhere, it's mine. Laura only suggested it, because she knew I wanted to do something for them."

"Why?"

"Because I'd heard they were so poor. The Duke told me that."

"Was that the only reason?"

She raised her eyes to him frankly. He paced up and down the room, and only glanced at her in passing.

"No, papa."

"Then what other reason had you?"

"George told me that all the property the Winships used to have had come to us."

"And then?"

"Then I was sorry for them. I was more than sorry. I felt as if I were responsible—"

"Responsible?" he exclaimed, stopping before her with a sharp jerk of his person. "Responsible for what?"

"Perhaps I used the wrong word," she returned, softly. "What I felt was that if any one should help them, it should be one of us."

"Why should we?"

"For the reason that we had what used to be their property, if there were no other."

"And was there any other? That's what I want to know. Speak out, dear."

"I had no other, papa."

"Are you sure of that?"

"Quite sure. What other should I have?"

He took two or three turns up and down the room, and again paused before her.

"Did it occur to you that I might have been hard to the Winships?"

"Yes, papa."

"Did the thought come to you that I might even have been unjust to them?"

"Yes, papa."

"And what then?"

"I knew you couldn't have been. I knew it wasn't possible."

"How did you know?"

"I knew by myself, first of all. I knew you wouldn't be. Then I talked it over with Laura, and she told me that no one could go behind the law, and that if the law is on your side you must be right. And then, besides," she added, looking up at him with a smile, "I was quite sure of it. No one would make me believe otherwise, no matter what they said, no matter what I saw."

Trafford's brow cleared suddenly. He slipped to her side on the sofa, and drew her to him.

"You were quite right to have done it, darling," he murmured. "I'm glad you thought of it. It's just like your goodness. I know I can always trust to that. I do like to help those whom, in the way of business, I've had to hit hard. But you'll never think that I hit hard without reason, will you? You see, that's what I was afraid of; and it would be a dark day for me if my little girl went over, even in thought, to my enemies. You never will, will you, dear?"

In the very act of giving the assurance he asked, a sudden determination came to her. It was the woman in her unconsciously taking advantage of the man's moment of softness.

"Papa," she asked, leaning back in his arms, "have I as much as a million dollars of my very own?"

"You've more. I invested a million dollars in your name five years ago. And since then you've had three hundred thousand from your uncle Andrew, and another two hundred thousand from your aunt Jane. Why do you ask?"

"Couldn't I give a million of that to the Winships?"

He drew his arms slowly away from her.

"Couldn't you—?" he began, as if trying to understand her question. "Say that again, dear, will you?"

She repeated her words with some hesitation. For a minute he made no response.

"I thought you believed in me," he said at last, reproachfully.

"So I do, papa. And yet—and yet—"

"And yet—what?"

"And yet something seems wrong to me somewhere. Oh, papa, don't be angry with me. I can't bear it, if you are. I'm so unhappy about it. I don't want all that money. I don't want any of it. I'd much rather they had it. Even if I'm wrong, I'd rather purchase a little peace of mind in that way. It wouldn't be very much for me to give."

"But don't you see," he pointed out, with cold gentleness, "that if you did that it would be saying to all the world that, in your opinion at least, I had robbed them?"

"Oh!" she gasped. "I see. I see. Then, of course, I couldn't do it in that way."

"Neither in that way nor in any other way," he commented, still coldly, as he rose.

"You're wrong, papa," she said to herself, while an expression of mingled radiance and fear came over her. "There still remains—the way you haven't thought of."

And she sat still, dreaming.

CHAPTER XII

"You'll leave me alone with her," Mrs. Winship said to Merah, who was propping her with pillows in an arm-chair. "It will be for the last time."

"You mean that she won't come again when that thing has gone to the Salon. I hope not."

"I mean, dear, that I shall not be here. You mustn't expect me to stay long now, nor grieve that I am leaving you. Of course she will come again, if she marries Roger."

"Oh, mother, don't say that. I know you've been thinking of it, but it would kill me. I'd rather see Roger ruined, as father was, than married to a Trafford. She comes here with her money, thinking to buy us—"

"She means well, dear. Some day you'll see that, and judge her more justly. Kiss me, dear child," she added, as a ring came to the door. "Now, leave us together till Roger comes."

It was the last visit before the removal of the portrait to the Salon. Finished and framed, it stood now at the end of the long studio, making a spot of incongruous splendor amid the poverty of its surroundings.

"I've written a check for twenty thousand francs," Paula whispered, hurriedly, when the first greetings were over. "Dear Mrs. Winship, do take it. I daren't give it to your son himself. When you said eight thousand, you didn't know it would turn out such a work as this."

"Yes, I did, dear. I knew Roger couldn't do anything but what would be very great. I mustn't take the money, dear. I know what is in your heart, but it would give Roger great pain to be offered more than the sum agreed upon."

"But it isn't worthy of what he's done—"

"You see, dear," she interrupted, "he doesn't value his work by money."

"But he ought."

"You think so because you're young. I would have said so, too—once. But, oh, my dear, I've lived long enough to see how little money can do towards buying us the things most worth having. Roger is wiser than I was at his age. He's beginning where I leave off, and I bless God for it. He's found already the secret I had to learn through so much struggle and sorrow."

She lay back on her pillow, with closed eyes, as if so many words had exhausted her. Paula was wondering whether she ought not to ring for some one, when the blind woman raised herself and spoke again.

"I take your own case as an example, dear. You're rich, and you want to help us. You'd like to give us money; you don't see that you've given us more than money in giving us yourself."

"But there's the money, too," Paula urged.

"Forgive me if I speak too plainly," Mrs. Winship quavered on. "I haven't long to stay here, now—a few days—a few hours—perhaps not that. I feel the heavenly gates opening to let me in; and before I go I'd like to tell you that I've read your heart aright. You've seen that we've had to suffer for the conflicts of the past, and you've wanted to give us back something of what we've lost. Isn't that it?"

"I hoped—" Paula began.

"And you've succeeded, dear. The Lord is letting me depart in a peace I should never have known if you hadn't come. You've done more for me and mine—"

"I've done nothing at all for Roger," Paula interrupted, quickly, calling him, for the first time, by his Christian name.

"It will be shown you," the mother sighed, gently. "Where there are young hearts, like yours and his, they'll not go far astray."

She sank back on the pillows again, and lay still, with closed eyes. As Paula watched, a bright pallor, like an

illumination, stole over the waxen face. Presently there came a light breathing, though the blind eyes remained closed. Paula sat still, wondering if this might not be the distant approach of death, till, with a wide swing of the door and long, vigorous tread, Winship came in. She motioned him to step lightly, and pointed to his mother.

"Marah, come here," he called, in a loud whisper, through the still open doorway.

"You've tired her, Miss Trafford," Marah said, bluntly, when she appeared.

"I'm very sorry."

Mrs. Winship stirred.

"No, dear, no," she murmured, faintly. "It isn't your fault. It's only that I'm going—going—home."

She dropped away again into what seemed like sleep. Marah sat down by the arm-chair, fanning her.

"She'll be better now," Winship whispered to Paula. "Come and give me your final judgment on the portrait."

They slipped away silently to the end of the long room, where the woman in black and green regarded them, with her eternal What? and Why? For a few minutes they stood side by side without speaking. The feeling was in both their hearts that they were turning their backs on death and the past, to look out towards life and the future.

"You've changed it in some way," Paula observed at last.

"I thought you might like it better so."

"This seems to me Paula Trafford more as she looks every day, and less as an abstract conception."

"That's it. Lady Alice said I was wrong. She said the abstract conceptions, rather than the mere portraits, survive best as works of art—that 'Mona Lisa' and the 'Sistine Madonna' will always be greater than any of Vandyck's cavaliers, or Vigée-Lebrun's 'Marie Antoinettes.' Perhaps she's right, but in your case I prefer the more absolute likeness. You see, I was thinking of you too much as a type and too little as a lady."

"Everybody thinks of me as a type," she complained, wistfully. "I have to stand for Money, like the female figure on a stock-exchange."

"I didn't mean that. If I thought of you as representing Wealth, it was that great, strange, new spirit of American wealth that is unlike everything else."

"Do you mean in the way in which it's acquired?"

"Yes, and in the way in which it's dispensed. The world has never seen money made with so little mercy, spent with so much generosity. The spectacle is quite novel, and must be extremely puzzling to moralists."

Paula colored, and looked away. They spoke in low tones so as not to disturb Mrs. Winship.

"I suppose," she ventured, after a minute's reflection, "that that's better than if it were ill-spent and ill-gotten, too. If the money is in your possession, it's something, at least to do good with it."

"Good," Winship observed, turning on her one of his gleaming looks—"good is an essentially spiritual quality that is not to be commanded by any sum in the market. You can't do good with money; you can only do good by—yourself."

"Money must, at least, enlarge one's opportunities."

"There's no question about that. And yet the man who robs Peter and expects to benefit mankind by paying Paul can't do what you call good to any one."

"Still," she argued, "if Paul has been fed and clothed and educated, you've added something to the total of human happiness."

"Not when you've left Peter hungry and naked and brutalized, and tricked of the means that were honestly his. That's the spectacle to which some of our great philanthropic financiers are treating us—and the angels who look on must often be

in doubt as to whether to laugh or to weep."

"It seems to me cruel to say that," she said, flushing still more deeply.

"So it is. But it's only the cruelty inherent in the situation when Paul reflects on the charity offered him through the robbery of Peter."

"Does he often do that?"

"Perhaps not often, but he'll learn."

"When?"

"When the American people have begun to judge by standards of right and wrong, rather than by those of material success.

"Then we shall have a long time to wait."

"If it's too long, there may be a short way taken—that is, if we may judge by analogous situations in history. When moral progress is too slow to right intolerable wrongs, the human race has a way of appealing to the fire and the sword."

"Do they gain anything by that?"

"You've only to look about you and see. The France you're living in may be bad enough, but it's heaven itself compared to what it was before the Revolution."

"I presume you are not foretelling a similar revolution for us?"

"Not if our moral forces develop themselves, as they should; not if we can supplant our love of mere brutal bigness by an appreciation of the simpler, holier elements in life; not if the rich man would be content with his own flock and herd, without snatching the poor man's one ewe-lamb. Then, Miss Trafford, there'd be no new American revolution. But if—"

"But if these signs and wonders don't come to pass?"

"I'm neither a pessimist nor a prophet," he smiled. "I see only that when Louis XIV. laid the first stone of his château at Versailles he started the train of events which drove the French people into setting up the guillotine. I read the same moral among every people on earth, where there has been a heaping-up of wealth and privilege for a few, while the many find it harder and harder to exist."

"And it is that heaping-up of wealth that you take me to stand for?"

There was no indignation in her tone. In her expression there was only the look of pathetic interrogation he had caught in her portrait. Winship met her gaze calmly and frankly. Whatever he felt inwardly, the appeal of her helplessness did not make him flinch. He meant that she should understand his view of her position.

"The daughter of a great house," he said, "stands for that house, in its good and its evil. Iphigenia couldn't be other than an Atrides, though she herself was innocent enough. Madame Elisabeth couldn't be other than a Bourbon, though she herself could never have done wilful wrong to any one. And Miss Paula Trafford—no, no," he broke off, "I won't say it."

"Please!" she begged. "Please! I insist."

"Miss Paula Trafford," he went on again, "comes of a race that has had a giant's strength, and has used it like—a giant! There! I've offended you, and we've been such good friends till now! To-morrow this will have gone to the Salon, and our association together will be over. You will have your portrait, and I shall have—"

"What?" she questioned. "You will have—what?"

"I shall have the joy of having painted it. It will go where I shall probably never see it; but it will remain my work. As long as it exists, it will present you as I've seen and known and understood you. That's a part of the artist's recompense that he can never lose. Nothing could take away from Pygmalion the glory of having created Galatea."

"But Galatea came to life for him."

She stopped abruptly, biting her lip. She had spoken without weighing the significance of her words. The color that came and went in her cheek called forth a dark flush in Winship's as, for the first time, they stood looking at each other in emotion they made no effort to conceal. The silence that followed seemed to throb with what could not be spoken.

"She will always live for me," he said, with a slight gesture towards the portrait.

"Yes—as the woman who could never dissociate herself from the wrongs inflicted by one class upon another."

"Couldn't she?"

Winship's tone was lower, and he drew near her, looking down into her clear eyes.

"That's for you to judge," she murmured, faintly.

"How?"

"I was wrong," she said, summoning all her strength to speak boldly; "I was wrong when I said that Galatea came to life. Pygmalion prayed the gods to bestow life on her. It was his prayer that wrought the miracle."

"Which means," he said, slowly, drawing nearer still, "that if I prayed—"

"The gods might hear you," she finished, softly, turning her eyes away.

"But if the call into life meant for Galatea the coming-down from her golden pedestal?—if it meant sacrifice?—renunciation?—the sharing of a poor man's life—?"

"Roger! Quick! Come here!"

Marah's voice had the sharp ring that belongs to intense moments of existence. Winship rushed to his mother's side. Paula followed slowly.

Mrs. Winship had lifted herself in her chair and was sitting upright. Her arms were out-stretched and her hands raised, as though in supplication. The sightless eyes seemed to be looking straight into heaven.

"Roger!" she called, in a loud, clear voice.

"Yes, mother, I'm here." He seized her hand in both of his.

"Paula!"

The voice was weaker now, but the left hand seemed to beat the air, feeling for a response. Paula clasped the trembling fingers to her breast.

Slowly, feebly, and with the last act of earthly strength, the dying woman drew the two hands together.

"Pardon!" she murmured.

Neither Paula nor Winship glanced at each other. They lost thought for what was happening to themselves, in the sight of the passage of a soul. When their hands met, it was with a firm, instinctive clasp.

"Love!" the mother sighed again, and fell back among the pillows.

There was a long minute's waiting, till the silence was broken by Marah's wail.

"Oh, mother, mother! have you no word for me? I've loved you so! I've loved you so!"

The little old maid flung herself upon her knees. It seemed to her now as if she had been deprived of the last poor bit of human rights; for the blind woman never spoke again.

CHAPTER XIII

The blind woman never spoke again. She lingered a few days still, but before the Salon was opened, and the crowds had begun to gather about her son's great work, she was lying beneath a tiny, flower-decked chapel up on Montparnasse.

Winship found himself in the first degrees of fame without paying any attention to the fact. Rather he accepted the fact as one of two or three new conditions that would bring momentous changes into his life. After a youth of hard work, pinched means, and the narrowest path of duty, he had come face to face with a future full of possibility. He was neither elated by his success nor confused by his power of choice. He had known for years what lay before him to do, if ever he had the chance—and the chance had come.

He had had no communication with Paula since the day when his mother had joined their hands, in an act of which neither knew the significance—if it had significance at all. She had written an affectionate note of sympathy to Marah, and had left with her father for a few weeks in the Touraine. But Winship knew there was no coquetry in this withdrawal; it was only flight from a situation of which neither he nor she was sure.

Paula's thoughts were not with Marie de Medici at Blois, nor with Anne de Bretagne at Langeais, nor with Jeanne d'Arc at Chinon, nor with Diane de Poitiers at Chenonceau. They were back in the long, red studio, piecing together the events of the past winter, and tracing the progress through which her mind had come to submit itself to Roger Winship's.

"You seem to be in a dream, dear," her father had said to her once or twice, and the statement fitted her. It was not a waking life, these days on the banks of the Loire. The primal emotions of love, ambition, and hate found there that setting of stately castle and broad champaign which softens crime into adventure and passion into romance. The spell of the long past mingled with the glamour of the strange, new life into which she felt herself entering. The memories of splendid, ardent generations fell round her like rich tapestries, shutting in the mysterious chamber of her heart. She made no effort to confront her problems or to smooth her way. She was content, for the moment, to move in her dream—the dream in which love is still able to keep to its defenceless paradise.

With the return to town, the thought of the practical became more insistent. What was to happen? How was it to happen? The old life seemed to close in so tenaciously about her that she wondered how it would ever be possible to get out of it. Even her dream lost some of its reality in the stress of giving and receiving invitations to dinner. With all that she could not avoid doing, it was the third day after her return before she could find time to steal into the Salon, and see the effect of her portrait as it hung. So much had been said of it at social gatherings, and in the press, that even her family were roused to some degree of interest. When they began planning a party to go and see it together, Paula seized the first occasion to slip off alone. It was a wild, wet afternoon; there would be few visitors; she was fairly sure of having the gallery to herself.

It was as she expected. The great rooms of the Grand Palais, deserted except for the uniformed guardians, and a solitary wanderer here and there, succeeded each other in long, empty vistas of color. Her own portrait held a conspicuous place of honor, and of the rare visitors two or three were generally stationed before it. She sat on a divan in the centre of the room, but too far off to challenge comparison with the object of interest on the wall.

As she gazed about her she thought with compassion of the amount of ambition and toil that had gone to make up such a collection—toil that would never reap an adequate reward, ambition that would never have any fulfilment. Who would buy the hundreds upon hundreds of landscapes and sea-views, of domestic scenes and studies of still life, that hung about her? They might have been those of last year, or of the year before, or of the year before that, or of any year since the Salon was founded. What became of all the pictures that were painted? What became of the men and women who painted them? The feeling of pity which rose now was new to her—new since she had watched Marah working away, day after day, at her little wooden miniatures—new especially since the question touched the man she loved.

He, too, had sent his offspring here for the last five years. She herself had passed them by and never noticed them. The dumb things had appealed to her for a glance, and she had ignored them. Hundreds of thousands had moved on in the same neglect and indifference. It seemed now like a wound to her own pride. True, he had done some of them as commissions, and some of them he had sold; but she knew that some, too, were still roaming from one exhibition to another in the hope of finding a purchaser. So much effort and little or no recompense! Her father or George would scoff

at all that Winship could earn in a year. Even for this thing, which was counted a success, he had received but eight thousand francs, and, for a man of his standing, was to be considered well paid. Eight thousand francs! She had often spent as much for a trinket. The very fact that women of fashion, women of her own world, were already coming to be painted by him, scorched her with a sense of humiliation that he should be dependent on their patronage. That, at least, need never be, she reflected, with some exultation. She had no high-flown theories of the beauty of art or of the nobility of toil. It was enough to know that the man she loved would be free from all sordid cares of that kind—when she married him.

She had reached this point in her meditations when a footstep startled her, and Winship himself glided on to the divan beside her.

There were many reasons why it should be a moment when all guards were down. They had lived through months of repressed emotion—months in which each had been a problem in the other's life. The thought of love had been beaten back by large, persistent questions of mutual rights and wrongs. Now it leaped to the front and claimed the field.

Before he realized what he was saying, Winship had done that which, for weeks, he had been planning not to do. He had declared his love, as any man to any woman, and he had implored her to be his wife. He had done it with a few quick, passionate words, in which there were none of the conditions and contingencies with which he had meant to speak. He had foreseen this moment, but he had foreseen it as one of complicated explanations. He had prepared his points, as an ambassador prepares a treaty, and lo! they had gone for naught. The unexpected sight of her, sitting on the red divan, simply dressed in black, as though in mourning for his mother, had swept away all his theories, and left him nothing but his passion as a man. The minute she lifted her surprised, appealing eyes to his there had been only one thing to say.

There was no formal greeting between them. He slipped on to the divan without touching her hand.

"I didn't know you were back," he whispered. "Don't go away and leave me like that again."

"Did you miss me?" she asked, with childlike directness.

"It wasn't like missing—it was as if my own soul were gone. Every kind of experience has come to me all at once, and yet, in your absence, I seem to have been benumbed. It was as if I couldn't feel joy in my bit of triumph, nor sorrow when we laid my mother in her grave. When you went, all went; and I didn't know that you'd come back again."

"I didn't know you wanted me."

His response came in the tones that ring forever in a woman's heart, and which she carries with her into paradise. The mere words Paula had heard before, but they had not, as now, been set to a music with which her own being sang. They were only the well-used formulas, which are all that language provides, and to which the living voice alone lends the significance. But to Winship they seemed new. He uttered them as though they were sounds never before heard on earth, and Paula bowed her head, as though listening to words too sacred for the human ear.

It was a lyric moment, and it was soon over. A few eager questions, a few straightforward replies, and they were sitting with clasped hands, pledged to become man and wife.

The dull-eyed, uniformed guardians paid them no attention; the visitors who entered the room walked briskly up to the much-discussed portrait without giving them a glance. Only the woman in black and green looked down on them from her gilded frame, with her ever-unanswered What? and Why?

Perhaps it was the sight of that which recalled Winship to himself. All at once he seemed to fall from the blue ether, where he and Paula had floated alone, to find himself again part of an intricate society. He came down with a swift realization of the change which a few minutes had produced. There was no dash upon his happiness; he had only the sudden fear of owing his happiness to a trick.

He had not explained himself to Paula as he had intended. He had not made clear to her the distinction he drew between Paula, the woman made in the image of God, and Miss Trafford, the heiress of the man who had ruined his father, Roger Winship, in order to insure his own success. In their mutual situation love alone could not be the determining element, and she had given her promise without understanding a point which to him was essential. With what skill he could master he must weave the warning in, as a skilful composer will make the death-motive heard in the very strains of the love-chant.

"Paula, dear Paula," he whispered, "I've been afraid of you. I've been afraid you wouldn't come with me on the road I must travel."

"I'd go anywhere with you, Roger—anywhere on earth."

"It won't be an easy way—especially for you."

"Nothing will be hard with you to help me. I've plenty of courage to face whatever must be encountered. I've some skill, too," she added, with a smile.

"You'll need it, darling. Above all, you'll need faith in me."

"You couldn't overtax that, Roger."

"Our love can't take the common course. You and I can't be like a knight and a lady in a troubadour's romance. We have other things between us than just the fact that we love each other."

She looked at him with a puzzled expression and an air of listening only half attentively. A far-off clatter of footsteps caught her ear, with a hum of voices.

"Even before we met, we were united by a past—" Winship pursued.

"Oh, don't let us talk of that now," she entreated.

"On the contrary, we must. Don't let us have any reserves between us. It's been in your thoughts all winter, as it's been in mine—"

The sound of footsteps drew nearer, and she hastened to speak.

"But it's all over now, Roger. All I have is yours—all I shall ever have—"

She stopped abruptly. The quick, incisive ring of one of the approaching voices frightened her.

"You yourself will be enough, dear," Winship said, with a significant inflection.

But she was no longer listening. She sat erect, alert and pale. The voice was surely Laura's. The party were advancing, not directly behind them, but through a series of rooms at the side. Even Winship's attention was diverted to them now.

"If you'd only listen to me, George," Laura was protesting, "we shouldn't have had this endless tramp. I knew from the beginning that it was down this way. No wonder poor Aunt Trafford is tired out."

Winship and Paula sprang to their feet. Instinctively they moved apart. Winship retreated a few paces from the divan, while Paula turned to confront the members of her family, as they came in, in irregular procession, from the adjoining room. Mrs. George was in the forefront.

"Why, here's Paula, Uncle Trafford," she called back, from the threshold. "After all the hunt we've had for her, we find her on the spot."

"There's no help for it," the girl reflected, feeling less brave than a minute or two ago. "I must tell them—and do it now."

"For goodness' sake, Paula," Mrs. Trafford panted, as she marched in fanning herself, "I wish you wouldn't spirit yourself away, where no one knows where to look for you. Your father's been turning the house upside-down. He's been as crazy as if you'd been kidnapped."

"It's all right now, since we've found her," Paul Trafford laughed, striding up to his daughter and pinching her cheek. "So this is the famous portrait. Well, it's you, sure enough."

"Portrait de Mademoiselle T——," George Trafford read from the inscription. "I should label it 'A Note of Interrogation.' He's made you look as new-born into the mysteries of this terraqueous globe as Eve when she first wakes in the garden. No one could possibly live to your age and be as innocent as that."

"That's the black-and-green thing Paquin made for you," Mrs. Trafford commented, sinking on the divan. "Why on earth

did you select that? I suppose it was to bring out your complexion. It does do that, I must say."

"That's a beautiful malachite table," Laura observed. "George, dear, I'm simply dying to have one. It would go so well in the tapestry-room at Tuxedo. I believe he's copied the gilded legs of this one from the malachite table in the Grand Trianon."

All eyes were bent on the portrait. To Winship, standing remote and in the background, no one had given a glance. Paula kept herself rigid and erect, waiting for her moment. It was not till her father turned again towards her, after a few more comments from the family, all in the same strain, that she knew the hour had come.

"Papa," she said, huskily, "this is Mr. Roger Winship, who painted my portrait. I've promised to marry him."

Trafford stood still, as if turned to stone. Mrs. Trafford glanced backward from her seat on the divan. George and Laura wheeled round from their contemplation of the portrait. It was the sort of shock that translates itself slowly to the thought, more slowly still into action.

Winship remained motionless, his gleaming eyes fixed on the man who had struck his father down. His trained observation watched, while dull, ashen hues stole into Paul Trafford's face, and the determined lips settled themselves, shade by shade, into the lines of pain.

The silence was long. It was only by degrees that the full meaning of the situation made itself clear. The eyes of the family, that had been fixed in amazed contemplation on Winship, now turned towards Trafford, waiting for a sign.

"Paula, go home," he commanded at last. "Take her," he added to his wife. There was a quiver in his voice as if he could say no more.

Paula advanced towards Winship and held out her hand. He took it and held it long, but no word was spoken between them.

"Go!" Trafford cried, with the brief threat of anger, and Paula turned.

She went out first, with bowed head, through the door by which they had all come in. Her mother followed, pressing her handkerchief to her lips. Trafford nodded to George and Laura to precede him. George went out obediently, very pale. On the threshold of the room Laura turned and looked back at Winship. It was the only glance of recognition, if recognition it was, that had been vouchsafed him. Trafford himself left last.

Winship stood still, listening to the tramp, tramp of their footsteps through the long defile of rooms. He listened while the sound grew fainter, and till at last it died away. Then he flung himself on the divan and covered his face with his hands.

"Paul Trafford has got it in the heart," he muttered to himself. "My God, I've done it!—after the long years. Even if I lose her now—the victory is mine."

CHAPTER XIV

Little was said between Paula and her mother on the homeward drive. With her head thrown back into the corner of the carriage, Mrs. Trafford sobbed gently.

"Oh, mother, don't," Paula pleaded, from time to time; but Mrs. Trafford only sobbed the more.

"It's my fault," she moaned. "I never should have allowed you to think of that absurd portrait. I might have known that some evil would happen when you began to take up with your father's enemies. It's my fault, and I never shall forgive myself."

"No, mother, dear, it's not your fault. The painting of the portrait didn't make me love him. I loved him before that. I can see it now."

"Don't say such a thing. It's shameful."

"But I did, mother. I did, even if it were shameful. I loved him before the Duke introduced him to me. I've never ceased to think of him, from the first moment I saw him."

"Oh, the poor Duke! I wonder you have the heart to mention him. If you'd only married him, as you should have done, this dreadful scandal wouldn't have come upon us. The newspapers are sure to get hold of it. They always do. I can't begin to think what your father will say, after the way he's spoiled you."

Paula sat erect and silent. Her mother had touched the one point that was vital. What would Paul Trafford say and do? There was no question to be asked beyond that. Beside that nothing counted.

They reached home at almost the same moment as George and Laura. The father was following alone.

"It's my fault," Mrs. Trafford broke out anew, as they all met in the great entrance-hall. "I should never have allowed her to think of it. I should have insisted on her marrying the Duke of Wiltshire. Better that she should have taken that Comte de Presles, though I never could endure him. But anybody—anybody—rather than such disgrace as this! No! I shall never forgive myself. Never! Never!"

"If it's any one's fault, Aunt Julia," Trafford spoke up, trying to be consoling, "it's mine. I shouldn't have told her anything about the Winships, to begin with. I should have known the kind of ardent, crazy way in which she'd take it."

Laura said nothing, but, if possible, her face was clearer and more business-like than ever. From the glance of her gray eye to the brisk movements of her person, everything bespoke resolution and restraint. Paula remained apart and behind them, just within the door, like a child in disgrace.

"Come up to my room and talk about it," Mrs. Trafford begged. "I must have something to say to your uncle when he comes in."

Moving heavily and moaning as she went, Mrs. Trafford mounted the splendid stairway. George and Laura followed. Excluded from the approaching conference, Paula, nevertheless, went forward timidly behind them. At the foot of the stairs she paused. The sounds of wheels had caught her ear. Her father was returning. She would see him and make one plea, even if it were a silent one. She stepped aside, standing inconspicuously by the pedestal of a statue.

Flinging his hat and rain-coat to the footman in the antechamber, Paul Trafford entered, with set lips and rapid stride. In his eyes was the look with which boards of directors were familiar, but which Paula had never seen. It was the look that quenched inquiry before it could rise, and bore down opposition as if in sheer insolence of strength. It was the look that turned weaker men into enemies, and drew hatred from those who were made rich by his co-operation. To Paula it was new and frightening. She crept out of the shadow of the statue and stretched out her arms towards him.

"Oh, papa, don't look at me like that."

She would have caught him, touched him at the least; but he put up his hand to keep her back. She grasped it, but he tore it from her, and pushed her away.

She staggered, regained her footing on the polished floor, staggered again, and, recoiling towards the pedestal of the

statue, fell. It was an accident, the mere miscalculation of his iron strength, but as she reeled and went down, Trafford thrilled with a sense of satisfaction. The very brutality of the act was an assuagement to the pain of his outraged adoration. At the turning of the stairway he glanced down at her as she lay. Let her lie! She was the one being in the world against whose blow he had no power of defence, and she had struck him.

He passed on to his room, and rang for his secretary. Two minutes later he was dictating letters on business. It was partly the instinct for work, partly the impulse to seek refuge in the commonplace from this upheaval in his affections. He had not reached the point of considering the situation in its practical light, practical man though he was. All he could think of now, all there was room for in his big intelligence, was the fact that his little girl, the one creature on earth whom he loved with an idolatrous tenderness, had taken a step which, as she must have known beforehand, would create a cruel breach between them. No matter how it turned out now, the fact that she had done it would be there.

She, too, in her room, was thinking in the same strain of him. When he had thrust her from him the action had taken her by surprise. Not even when she fell did she seize its full significance. It was only when she caught his merciless glance, as he passed up the stairway, that she understood the extent of the indignity he had put upon her.

For a second or two she lay quite still. She pressed her cheek on the cold, polished wood, drinking in her humiliation. When she dragged herself up, two hectic spots were blazing on her cheeks, while in her soft eyes there was a light that made them curiously like her father's. As she marched up-stairs her head was high, and her step firm, with a determination altogether new to her. It came over her then that she could never be again the clinging, dependent Paula Trafford of the past. Whatever she did in the end, she knew that, outside herself, there would be no stay sure enough to lean on. She must be, in future, her own guide, her own judge, the arbitrator of her own destiny. She felt like a child, putting forth into the night alone. Between leaving her father's door and reaching Roger Winship's there was a dark, unknown road to travel, but she must face it. It was difficult to believe that her father's protecting love would not be there. She was so used to it that to be without it was like being without shelter. Instinctively she yearned to stretch out her hands to him again, but the impulse died in the recollection that he had struck her down.

It was late in the afternoon when Trafford dismissed his secretary and summoned his wife, George, and Laura. They filed into his book-lined office, as children before a master. Mrs. Trafford sat near him, by the desk; George and Laura farther off. Through all the business of the afternoon, Trafford's thoughts had been working subconsciously towards the definite step to be taken.

"Now, tell me about this affair," he said, briefly. "Tell me everything."

Mrs. Trafford, trembling and gasping, recounted what she knew of the first meeting of Paula and Winship at Monte Carlo, and of the progress of their acquaintance.

"I shall never forgive myself, Paul," she sobbed, as she brought her statement to an end.

"You never ought to," he said, with the shortness habitual to him in moments of excitement. "You knew, as no one else did, what those people brought on me. You knew how I had to fight them, and how, because I beat them, public opinion has hounded me as if I were a criminal. They take me for a heart of brass, indifferent to attack of that sort; but you knew better. And yet you've permitted this!"

"Paul, I'm very ill," she pleaded. "Spare me!"

"I do spare you. If I didn't spare you, I should say much more."

"Aunt Julia is less to blame than I," George broke out, with a touch of indignation in his voice. "It was I who told Paula all about the Winships."

"There was no harm in her knowing that," Trafford said, quickly. "There was nothing I wanted to hide. You didn't thrust her into their arms."

"No; but I let her go. I knew she felt that in some way we had wronged them—"

"Then, by God! she'll learn to the contrary," Trafford cried, bringing his fist down on the desk.

"I knew she felt that," George went on, "but I laughed at her. I didn't take her seriously. When she talked of giving them a

million dollars in restitution, I joked about it, and told her the easiest way for her to do it was by marrying the fellow."

"Then you were a damn fool."

"I know it," George agreed, humbly. "I'm only showing that I was more to blame than Aunt Julia."

"I don't see anything to be gained, George," Laura said, in her most mildly reasonable tone, "by trying to apportion out degrees of blame, where, perhaps, there is no blame at all. Paula is of age and independent. She's her own mistress in every sense. Neither you nor I had any control over her, and Aunt Julia very little. It was Uncle Trafford's wish. That's the way he's brought her up."

"I trusted her," Trafford broke in, savagely.

"Naturally," Laura agreed. "So did we. I should trust her again. I must tell you, Uncle Trafford, dear, that it was I who sent Paula to have that portrait done."

"Oh, you did, did you! Yes, I remember her telling me so. Then all I can say of you is that—"

"You see," Laura pursued, calmly, "after the conversation at Monte Carlo, when George told her about the Winships, and how they had lost their money, and so on, I could see that she was very much distressed. It was the first time she had ever come face to face with the idea that if one man grows rich it often happens that another must grow poor. It rather pained her. I tried to show her that, with just so much money in the world, if wealth flows very much into one pocket, it has to ebb a good deal from another."

"What's that got to do with it?" Trafford demanded.

"It gave her a more reasonable idea of business. It helped her to see that the Winships might lose their property, and that you might get it, and yet that the fault might be none of yours. What she felt was pity—nothing more, and nothing less. You see, Uncle Trafford," she continued, edging her chair a little nearer the desk, "Paula is more a child than a woman. It wouldn't be possible for any one to live here on earth and keep a soul more spotless from the things that the rest of us have to know and understand. She isn't a man of business, like you and George. She isn't even a woman of business, like Aunt Trafford and me. She doesn't reason like the rest of us. She can't. The fact is, her nature is limited; any one can see it who's ever lived with her. There are just three things of which she's capable: love for what's good, pity for what's suffering, and pardon for what's wrong."

"That's so," George corroborated, strongly.

"Yes, it is," Mrs. Trafford added, with a heavy sigh. "It's true, every word of it, even if I *am* her mother."

"Look here, Laura," Trafford said, coldly, "if your game is to work on my sympathies—"

"Oh, but it isn't. I'm only trying to point out to you the way she reasoned—the way that, with her limitations, she *had* to reason. She saw that the Winships were poor and that we were rich. She knew they had suffered. She had a confused idea as to how it had come about. It wasn't possible for her to think it out, as we should. She saw only that we could come to their rescue, and put them back into something like the position they had held before. The impulse to do it was as natural with her as to want to heal them if they'd been sick. We talked it over together, and I—"

"Sent her to marry him," Trafford interrupted, with a grim laugh.

"I advised her to help them," Laura went on, imperturbably, "but to do it on some such lines as you would approve of, Uncle Trafford."

"God!" Trafford ejaculated, with an impatient flinging out of the hands.

"I remembered how good you were to those old Miss Marshalls in Turtonville, Wisconsin—"

"Stop!" Trafford thundered.

"I can't stop, Uncle Trafford. I've got to justify myself. I've got to justify Paula. As far as I can, I've got to justify you. So, when you spoke to me about the Miss Marshalls, I did all I could to carry out your wish. That is to say, I kept them regularly supplied with work, and saw that they were able to earn a comfortable income. I told you about it, and you

were pleased. When it came to the similar case of the Winships, what more natural than that I should follow the line that you yourself had commended?"

"The situation was different. You should have foreseen the catastrophe."

"How could I, Uncle Trafford? It was no more possible than for you to foresee that old Mr. Marshall would shoot himself."

"How *can* you!" Mrs. Trafford protested, while George tried to silence his wife with significant looks.

"Go on," Trafford said, quietly. He was not the man to let any one see that Laura's shot had carried.

"I suggested the portrait," Laura continued, in the same calm tones, "not only as a means of helping the Winships as a matter of generosity, but also to divert Paula's mind from any larger or wilder projects. In that I didn't succeed. I saw all winter that I wasn't succeeding, but I hoped her ideas would die out with time. They haven't. That's perfectly plain. And since that's the case, I, for one, dear Uncle Trafford, cannot see what good will ever come of fighting her. You can't fight Paula's instinct, not any more than you could fight the Spirit of Spring. Our worldly weapons have no force against it. You'll excuse me, dear Uncle Trafford, won't you—but if I might advise—"

"You'd give in?" he asked, hoarsely.

"I'd humor her. If we'd done that at first this thing might never have happened. It mayn't be too late now."

"When you say humor her," Trafford demanded, slowly, leaning on the desk and fixing Laura with his penetrating stare, "do I understand you to suggest giving a large sum of money to the Winships, in what might be called restitution?"

"I mean the large sum of money; I shouldn't care what they called it. It's only the strong who can dare to eat humble-pie, and I suggest that we should do it. The money, of course, is nothing; and for people in our position, I should think the interpretation given to the act need count for very little."

"Hmph!" Trafford snorted, springing to his feet; "just as it counts for very little to a general whether the world looks on him as victorious or defeated."

"There are different kinds of victory, Uncle Trafford. You who've gained so many on one field could easily afford to win them on another."

He took two or three paces up and down the room. It was evident to them all that he was in a state of great agitation. In the many years of their married life, Mrs. Trafford had never seen him so. The poor lady pressed alternately her handkerchief to her eyes and her vinaigrette to her nostrils. George stared at Laura, in mingled surprise and admiration at her audacity. It was not the first time he had seen advice proffered to Paul Trafford, but he had never seen it endured so long, or carried so far.

"You don't know what you're saying," Trafford flung out at last. "In the eyes of the whole world, I should seem to be climbing down. It couldn't be kept quiet. The press would ring with it."

"I shouldn't care for that," Laura responded, in her gentlest way, "if it was to save my child."

He stopped abruptly before her, his feet planted apart, and his hands thrust deep into his pockets.

"Would it?" he demanded, fiercely.

Laura looked up at him with frank eyes.

"I don't know," she replied. "It would depend on how far it's gone. It might. I should even think it probable. At any rate, I should try."

Turning on his heel, he walked to the mantel-piece, and stood with his back towards them. When he remained silent, they made signs to each other, and slipped away.

CHAPTER XV

At dinner Paula wore the black-and-green dress in which Winship had painted her. The detail was lost on Trafford and George, but Mrs. Trafford and Laura exchanged comprehending glances. Laura managed to call her husband's attention to the fact, but the father saw only that the dark setting brought out the rose tints of the girl's complexion, and increased the blueness of her eyes. She had even hung round her neck the string of pearls which, in the portrait, she was drawing from the small gold coffer at her side.

The meal passed in some constraint. Trafford ate with his eyes on his plate, or crumbled his bread with a nervous movement of the fingers. Mrs. Trafford was too ill to eat at all. She had only appeared at table in the hope, as she said, of "carrying things off." The three others made feeble efforts to talk, Paula avoiding her father's eyes. When her mother rose, she escaped again to her room.

"Don't wait for me, if you want to join the ladies," Trafford said to his nephew, when they had smoked awhile in silence.

George understood the hint, and withdrew to the small salon the family were in the habit of using when they spent the evening alone. His aunt and Laura were already there, sitting as if in expectation.

Left to himself, Trafford sat staring vacantly at the flowers and crystal on the table. His cigar went out, as his arm fell limply over the back of his chair. He was not thinking actively, nor trying to make plans. His inward sight was fixed on a little black heap, fallen on the floor, while two blue eyes were lifted appealingly to his. They haunted him. Their expression became confused in his mind with the unspeakable look of a fallen Christ, in a picture of Vandyck's he had seen in a church in Antwerp. His lips twitched, his eyelids quivered.

"My little girl," he muttered to himself. "I struck her down. It's come to that!"

Again he stared, as if without sight and without thought. It was late in the evening when he rose, and passed into the salon, where the two ladies and George were sitting in silence. He went straight to the bell and rang it.

"Ask Miss Paula to come here," he said to the servant who appeared.

He took a seat and waited. In a few minutes she came. She stood on the threshold, without advancing into the room. He had again the impression that her color was very radiant and her eyes strangely blue. He had another impression, impossible to define—the feeling that his little girl was no longer near him, but gazing at him across some mysterious flood. He waited for her to come into the room, but as she did not, he spoke.

"Paula, my child," he began, as gently as he could, "since this afternoon I've reflected. You can't be unaware that what you told us in the gallery has been a great blow to me, a great shock."

"I thought it might be a shock, papa, at first; I didn't know it would ever prove a blow."

"It has done so, already. I can say, without melodramatic exaggeration, that it's one which neither your mother nor I can ever get over."

"Oh, mamma, darling, I didn't think that possible."

Her voice trembled, but she took no step to advance into the room. Mrs. Trafford pressed her handkerchief to her eyes, and said nothing.

"I want to do you justice, dear," Trafford went on, "and I want you to be just to me. We must be sympathetic with each other—"

"More than that," she interposed.

"Yes, more than that. It isn't possible for you and me to have any wish more sacred than to insure each other's happiness, is it?"

"Not for me, papa."

"I thought so. And you must know that it's equally impossible for me. I don't have to tell you that you're all I have. Other

fathers love their daughters; I know that, of course. But I don't think many of them do as I love mine. Come into the room, dear. Don't stand away from me. Come and kiss me."

Moving forward very slowly, she bent and kissed him. He drew her to him, and she sank on the floor beside his chair.

"Oh, papa! Oh, papa!" she murmured, throwing her arms about his neck.

"There, there," he whispered, soothingly. "I'm sure we shall understand each other."

She rose again, and took a seat. She sat directly facing him, the three others ranged behind his chair.

"I've been trying to comprehend," he began again, "just how it was you felt called upon to take the step you announced to us to-day. I think I see it. I needn't explain, for I'm sure you follow me. I don't say that you're wholly right. That's something we should both find difficult to discuss. But since you feel as you do, I'm ready to go as far as I can to meet you."

She clasped her hands tightly in her lap, looking at him with parted lips and eyes glowing.

"To the young man we saw to-day," he continued, speaking very deliberately, "I'm ready to give a large sum of money. It shall be as large as you like. I understand there's been some mention made of a million dollars. I should be willing to make it that."

"Oh, papa, how good you are!"

"I should settle it on his sister and him, in equal proportions, as I believe the mother is dead. It could be called restoration or restitution, or anything else they chose. By the press and the public and the pulpit, it would be called conscience-money. I should be looked upon as a penitent thief."

She started from her chair with a protesting exclamation; but he waved her back.

"Let me go on, dear. Let me show you how much I'm willing to do for you—I will even say, to suffer for you. You've known something, in a vague way, of the fight I've had to make, but you've only seen the favorable side of it. You've known me as victorious, but you've never known how often I've been wounded. Nobody has. I've kept that as much as possible to myself. I'm looked upon as a man too hard to be hurt by the cannonade of popular hatred and abuse; but it isn't so. I've borne it in silence, and I've lived through it. To a certain extent I've lived it down. The men who couldn't beat me don't hate me less, but I've got beyond reach of their powder. That's all. Now, in what I'm ready to do at your request, I should be putting myself again within their range. I should be doing more than that: I should be offering myself as a target. I shouldn't be spared their shots—nor you, nor any of us. I told you once that I wanted my little girl to be protected from that; but, of course, we should have to let such considerations go."

"But, dear papa, why should any one ever know?"

He smiled faintly, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"You must go to the press to find that out, dear. I'm not in their confidence half as much as they're in mine, and I know something of their secrets, too. How did the New York papers announce the probability of your marriage to the Duke of Wiltshire, with day and date for our movements and his, just a week after the first mention of the subject privately among ourselves? I don't know, any more than you. But this I do know—that within ten days of the transference of property of which we've been speaking, the news will be in every paper in the United States. I know, too, just how it will be interpreted. I can't express it better than I have done—that I shall be looked upon as a penitent thief. I shall be abused for the theft and ridiculed for the penitence. I shall be considered as a man whose mind has become enfeebled in his declining years. It will be the end of my career, but—"

"Then, papa, darling, I don't want you to do it. I didn't see it in that light."

"No, dear, of course not. How should you? But I want to do it. I've considered it well, and I'd rather do it. For, when I've made this sacrifice for you, you won't be unwilling to make one for me, will you darling?"

"What sacrifice?" she faltered.

"You'd give this man up."

"Oh, but I love him!"

There was no mistaking the accent of the cry. It came from her because she could not help it. It fell on the stillness with the strangeness of a sacred avowal flung out on the common air. It was followed by a hush. A long minute passed before Trafford spoke again.

"But you don't love him better than me?" he asked, softly, leaning forward, with his strong eyes bent upon her.

"Not better, papa—differently," she managed to stammer, her cheeks flaming now, as if with sudden shame.

"You wouldn't give me up for him?"

"I couldn't give you up at all."

"But if the choice lay between him and me?"

She sat with eyes downcast, and made no answer.

"What then?" Trafford persisted, softly.

Again she made no answer. Laura leaned forward, and whispered in his ear.

"Dear Uncle Trafford, do you think it wise to ask her these questions now?"

He waved her back, and kept on.

"If the choice lay between him and me, Paula, dear? What then? After the way we've loved you, after all we've done for you, after the happy years together, would you go away with this stranger—my enemy—and leave your mother and me alone?"

"He isn't your enemy, papa," she declared, seizing the one point on which she was able to reply.

"I must judge of that. But would you go with him? That's what I'm asking. Your mother is ill, and I'm growing old. You're all we have—all God has left with us. Would you desert us for a man you didn't even know a year ago?"

She raised her burning face to him again.

"Oh, papa, how can I answer you? How can you bear to torture me like this? Surely you know what love is!—not such love as yours and mine, but the love of man and woman. If you don't know it, the others must. Mamma, I appeal to you. Laura, I appeal to you. You know what a woman's heart is when it's given to the one man to whom it can ever go out. You know that I can't say anything. You know that I can't answer him. Help me. Protect me. You're women like myself. Mamma! Mamma!"

She ended with a little cry.

"Yes, dear. I'm here."

Mrs. Trafford hustled forward with a sob. Paula sprang to meet her, and mother and daughter were clasped in each other's arms.

"That spoils it," Trafford commented, turning wearily to Laura. "There's no dealing with argument like that."

A half-hour later, as he was lighting a cigar in his office, Mrs. Trafford stole in. She was pale and trembling.

"I've got her to bed," she said, with some hesitation. "She'll be quieter now. She's been terribly unnerved, poor lamb."

He stood with his foot on the fender, and neither answered nor turned round.

"It's my fault, Paul," she began, weakly.

"So we understood," he flung over his shoulder. "Why return to the point again?"

"Because I want you to forgive me, Paul."

"What's forgiveness got to do with it? Forgiveness won't give me my daughter back."

"She's my daughter, too, Paul. You seem to forget that."

"Oh no, I don't. The fact that she is your daughter is my only possible excuse for leaving her in your incompetent care."

"Oh, Paul! After all the years that we've been married you say that to me!"

"Good-night," he returned, still over his shoulder.

"I'm very ill, Paul—" she began, once more.

"You won't get any better by standing in this cold room."

"You don't know how ill I am. I've never told you, Paul. I beseech you—" she went on, brokenly.

"I'm tired," he said, leaning heavily on the mantel-piece. "I really think we'd better say good-night."

She turned, slowly, and left him. He heard her go half-way up the stairs, and come down to his door again. She stood a minute, but, as he made no sign, she turned heavily away once more.

He listened without moving till her door closed behind her. Then he flung himself into an arm-chair and smoked. He smoked on and on, while the clock on the mantel-piece chimed off the hours. His mind worked back to the past and forward to the future. He lived through again the old days of strife, and drew comfort from the thought of his huge successes and his many victories. By degrees his pain and anger died down together. The longing for the love and tenderness of his own home came back to him.

"After all, she's been a good wife to me," he muttered to himself, reproachfully. "I'm a brute to treat her so—and I'm a brute to my little girl."

The early June dawn was breaking when he rose to go up-stairs. The house was very quiet, and he went on tiptoe past his wife's door, for fear of waking her.

"Suppose I do wake her," he thought, suddenly, "wake her with a kiss. It will please her."

He turned the handle and entered softly. A faint light was stealing in. He went to the bedside and bent over. But when his lips touched hers, he knew that she would never wake again.

CHAPTER XVI

It was natural that during the fortnight following upon Mrs. Trafford's death Paula's more personal affairs should recede to the background. Trafford's grief for his wife was deep and sincere—all the more so from the circumstances in which she had died. The mere mention of Winship's name would have been an intrusion upon sorrow.

But as the days went by, and life seemed to resume its normal routine, it became impossible to ignore the fact that such a subject could not be forgotten. There was an uneasy sense of it in the minds of all. The very reticence with which some themes were avoided, the very skill by which others were touched upon with tact, heightened the perception that it was among them, like an invisible presence, at all times when they came together. If Paula and her father were alone they kept silence—a guarded, conscious silence, in which the only spontaneous element was the dread of what might follow upon speech. Their affection for each other was not diminished; it was only changed by the loss of the old, clear strain of confidence. They were falling into that painful mutual attitude in which each looks for the other's move. Trafford's lack of action was diplomatic; he had lived through many occasions in which he had learned the advantage of just this kind of waiting. Paula was dumb only because she did not know what to say.

When Trafford spoke at last, it was for the reason that he thought he had found his way. He had entered Paula's boudoir one morning on some unimportant errand connected with the day's domestic affairs.

"And, by-the-way," he said, casually, as he turned to leave her, "how long will it take you to close up this house? I have important business that will require our going to America."

For a few seconds she made no response, but it seemed to Trafford as if her slight, black-robed figure became more erect against the tints of white and rose and gold which formed the background.

"Then we shouldn't go to Versailles," she said, when she had found voice. "We should be away all summer."

"Oh yes; longer, in all probability."

"All winter, too?"

"Well, I meant indefinitely."

"And not live in this house any more?"

"It isn't necessary to say as much as that. We can close it, and leave it with the caretakers. If ever we want to come back to it, we can. It was your poor mother's idea more than mine, from the very first. Now that she's no longer with us—"

"Are you doing this with the object of separating me from Mr. Winship, papa?"

Trafford was not expecting a question so direct. He turned fully round and confronted her.

"I thought it might have that effect," he said, quietly.

"It wouldn't," she replied, in a tone like his own.

"Do you mean that you wouldn't come with me?"

"Oh no, papa. Of course I should go with you. But it wouldn't separate me from him. Nothing would. Nothing ever will."

"I suppose you know it's painful to me to hear you talk like that?"

"But you make me do it, papa. You force me to say the things on which any other girl is able to keep silent. I only do it to make you understand."

"Understand what?"

"That I love him—that I shall always love him—even if I were never to see him again—even if I were to marry some one else. I should belong to him. I belong to him already. I've given him not only my heart, but my word. I've given it and repeated it. I ought to tell you, papa, that I've seen him again, since—that day."

"Where?"

"In the same place—for a few minutes only."

"Clandestinely?"

"That isn't a word that should be applied to me, papa. It was an accident. I didn't stay, even though he had something to explain to me. I wouldn't even let him write to me without your knowledge. And yet I feel free to see him, if I choose."

"Even though it be against my command?"

"I don't think I ought to be subjected to command on such a point."

"You'll allow, perhaps, that I have some claim."

"And that I have some right."

"What right?"

"The right of the human being to love, where there is no impediment. I don't ask for anything strange or astonishing. I'm only begging for the use of an inalienable privilege."

"You mean the privilege to marry when and where and how you choose, without regard to those who've loved you and cared for you, and who are as much concerned in the act as you are. I never expected you, dear, to blind yourself with that sort of sophistry."

"You put me in a very hard position, papa. You give me the choice between two courses. I may marry him, and displease you; or I may give him up, and break my heart. Which would you do if you were in my place?"

"There's one thing I shouldn't do. I shouldn't ally myself with a man who could never stand towards my own father otherwise than with a drawn sword in his hand."

"I'm sure he doesn't, papa."

"And I know he does. I take it for granted that the man is neither a coward nor a fool. You'll allow, perhaps, that I have some acquaintance with human nature. I know his type and I know his breed. He can't have inherited any other feeling towards me than one of revenge. Mind you, I don't say that I blame him much, not any more than I should blame the serpent who bites with poison."

"Oh, please, don't say things like that."

"I'm warning you, Paula, dear. I'm no novice at this life. I've foreseen so much that has come true that I can trust my own guess against another man's experience. You don't know what you're doing, but I can show you. You're only a little girl, innocent and good, and yet you're rousing the passions that sleep but never die—just as a princess may press a button and start up a system of machinery of which she has neither knowledge nor control. I warn you. Have anything more to do with this man, and the struggle ceases to be between you and me; it passes to me and him; and it will last till one or other of us is alone on the field with the victory."

"But is there no such thing as forgiveness, papa?"

"No—not among men—not in business. There, it isn't even the eye for the eye and the tooth for the tooth; it's the trick in the dark, or the stab in the back, or any other means that commends itself. Forgiveness has no more place in that world than nectar and ambrosia have in this. You can't fight with balms on the field of battle, and your lover and I shouldn't choose the weapons that hurt least—"

"Ah, but why fight at all?"

"Do you think that if I stayed my hand he would stay his? Not a bit. I might have my arms bound to my side, and he'd have at me none the less. If you married him, that would be my position. You may be sure I shouldn't strike at your husband, I should stand still and let him strike at me. He'd do it, mind you, if he's a Winship; he'd do it, and he'd keep it up, till I was riddled like St. Sebastian. I'm not at the beginning of my experience of the Winship relentlessness. I told you, on the

very night your dear mother died, how many wounds I had carried out of the big war I've had to wage. None were so deadly as those which came from just that quarter, and their shots have never ceased. If they don't fire them still, there are others who do. There are others who make use of the Winship defeat to beg for public sympathy in their own; and they get it. You've only to look through the newspapers and magazines to see it. I could afford to laugh them to scorn, if it were not for one simple fact. The chain can't be stronger than its weakest link; so I'm weak, dear Paula, in everything that touches you."

"Papa, you wrong him. Do believe me. I know him so well. All that is as much blotted out for him as if it had never been. It isn't as though he had had any actual share in the trouble. He hadn't—not any more than I. And he's so good—so noble! If you'd only be willing to see him, to get to know him, to let him know you, then you'd be as sure of that as I am. He doesn't care anything for money, or for the strife about money. I thought that strange, at first, until I began to see that the things he lives for are higher than—"

"Than those I've lived for. Be it so. You're arguing beside the mark, dear. The great fact remains that one of us, you or I, must yield—and," he added, fixing her with one of his strong looks, "I've never yielded."

Turning slowly away, she walked to a window and gazed down for a minute on the trees and traffic of the Avenue du Bois. When she confronted him again her own look was as strong as his.

"I'd yield, papa, if I thought it was right."

"And don't you?"

"You make it so hard for me to see."

"Surely I put it plainly enough."

"It isn't that I don't see what you mean; it's that you give me such a terrible alternative. I must sacrifice either him or you —"

"Or yourself."

"I don't count myself. If I could only satisfy both your claims and his I should be willing to suffer anything."

Trafford winced at the words, but maintained his ground.

"He has no claims."

"Oh yes, he has, papa. He loves me."

"Wiltshire loved you, too. That didn't give him a right."

"But I didn't love the Duke, and I do love Roger Winship. I know it's wrong on my part, but I could see the one suffer with only a passing pang, while, if I withdraw my word from the other, it will be like plunging a sword not only into his heart but into my own."

"Then it's possible that you *should* withdraw your word?"

"Anything would be possible that was right."

"And you'd have the strength to do it?"

"I should have to have the strength if I had the conviction. I couldn't go on in a course I thought wrong, whatever happiness it might bring."

"That's a brave girl."

"But, oh, papa, I can't see it yet. I can't promise."

"Not yet, dear, perhaps," he said, coaxingly, "but you could take it into consideration, couldn't you? You could think about it as a probability—"

"No—not a probability."

"Well, then, a possibility. In any case, we could go to America, and stay there awhile, and then we'd—see."

"If you mean that I might come, in time, to think less about him, and give him up more easily—that couldn't be."

"But you could give him up—that's the main thing. Mind you, I don't say you would have to, but if it came to the point—"

"I might have the courage, papa. I don't know. It's like asking me if I should have the strength to die. One can, if one has to do it. And, after all, I don't care what happens to me, so long as you're pleased—and are saved from being wounded again—and we can all see our way to doing what is right—and—"

But Trafford turned sharply away, leaving her with the words dying on her lips and the brave look still shining in her eyes.

CHAPTER XVII

"S he disarms me," Trafford said, when he recounted the interview to Mrs. George, later in the day.

Since his wife's death he had come to depend a good deal on Laura. Her little sitting-room offered him a refuge in times of loneliness, while the common-sense of her conversation was a relief from the strain that life had lately taken on.

"I can understand that," Laura returned, looking up from her stitching. "All her instincts are so right that one feels placed in the wrong, whether one is wrong or not. But there are two things of which I am more and more convinced as I grow older. The one is, that nothing is more precious in life than the love and peace of families. And the other is this, that to preserve them it must happen from time to time that some one has to yield, and, perhaps, to suffer."

"Exactly," Trafford agreed, warmly. "I can't save her from suffering, can I? God knows I would, if I could."

"I'm sure of that, dear Uncle Trafford. One can't have a child of one's own without knowing that in everything it has to bear one suffers twice one's self."

"Twice? I suffer twenty times. Since this thing has happened to my little girl there's nothing she feels that isn't multiplied in me, over and over again, like a reflection in double mirrors. I give you my word, Laura, that I rack my brains to explain why the one event in all the world that could have hurt me most should have come upon me. It almost carries me back to the belief in a God who occupies Himself with the details of our affairs and brings the moral consequences of our acts upon us; and I'd given up that idea long ago."

"I often think," Laura observed, in her musing tone, "that it's easier to suffer one's self than to see some one we love have to do it."

"Quite so. Quite so. You can see that in Paula. That's the way she feels. My God! she's a brick if ever there was one. She'd take everything on herself, if she could. But she can't."

"No, of course not," Laura said, quickly. "It's only the very strong who can do that. I don't suppose any woman is capable of vicarious suffering, and there must be very few men."

"What do you mean by that?" Trafford questioned, in the slightest tone of pique.

"Well, I don't know what I mean," Laura smiled, frankly. "If I mean anything, it is that there must be here and there a man strong enough to take the cause of suffering from others, by bearing all the pain himself."

"Hmph!" Trafford ejaculated.

He was not used to the suggestion that there were men in the world stronger than himself.

"Of course, I don't know anything about it," Laura admitted. "One only feels in that way about one's child."

"You can protect your child," Trafford argued, "as long as it will follow you. Then you keep it to the line of your own defences. The minute it goes outside, into a course of its own, you have no more power."

"Do you know, dear Uncle Trafford," Laura said, "I'm beginning to think that just as, at first, our children's happiness depends on following us, so, later, our happiness depends on following them?"

"What do you mean by following them?"

"I mean recognizing the fact that they become independent entities, with independent rights. I mean acknowledging their rights with frankness and sympathy, and keeping as close to them as possible, whatever they may do."

"And suppose they do what you don't approve of?"

"I admit that's the hard part. I have to take for granted that the parent is the wiser and the stronger and the more able to endure."

"That's all very fine! But, now, to take an extreme illustration: suppose your little Paul were to grow up and go to the bad? Then where would your theories be?"

"He couldn't go so far to the bad that I shouldn't be as near to him as I could, offering him at least the help that came from my love."

"Suppose he did worse? Suppose he were to marry—well, say a chorus-girl, or something of that sort? What then?"

"I don't mean to say that I shouldn't be sorry; but I should do my best to take her as my daughter, as he would remain my son."

"I don't believe you could do it."

"Very likely I couldn't, but I should try. You see, I feel so strongly on the question of personal independence."

"But you can't leave much personal independence if you're going to preserve the love and peace of families, of which you speak."

"Oh, don't you think so? It seems to me just the other way. I've often thought that most of the domestic misery I ever heard of came from the fact that the people who had to live together didn't know where to draw the line between what they could claim and what they couldn't claim from each other. A family isn't an autocracy, is it, uncle, dear? It's rather a federation of states, in which each member keeps its sovereign rights. There never can be love and peace unless those rights are freely recognized."

"It strikes me that you're arguing rather queerly," Trafford commented, after a short pause. "It almost seems to me as if you were telling me I oughtn't to interfere between Paula and this young man."

"Oh, Uncle Trafford!"

"Well, it does."

She let her sewing fall into her lap, and looked at him with those candid gray eyes, behind which no one could see the shrewdness.

"You mustn't attach any importance to what I say," she avowed, humbly. "You see, I'm only a woman. I couldn't judge like you, even if I had the penetration. I suppose every woman gives love and happiness a higher place in her scheme of things than she ever ought to. It takes a man to see that there are more important elements in life."

"Such as—what?"

"Well—let me see!—such as ambition—and success—and wealth—and pride—and—"

"If you put those things before love and happiness, my girl, you're very much mistaken."

"I shouldn't, because I'm a woman. But I thought men did."

"The young and the bumptious and the feeble sometimes do—not men who've done my work or lived to my age."

"Still, we women have a simpler idea of happiness than you. It's less complex, and goes more directly to its point. I don't suppose," she added, with a depreciatory smile, "that there's anything more serious to it than just the old, instinctive wish that those who love each other should—get married."

"Hmph!"

"Oh, I'm not arguing, dear Uncle Trafford. I'm only excusing myself. You see, we're not without certain successful examples right in our own household, are we? Dear Aunt Trafford has told me so often how opposed her family were when she married you."

"Pooh! They didn't keep that up very long. They know now where they would have been if—"

"Yes, and it's just that which gives me this foolish, feminine conviction that the heart is the surest of all guides. And then I have my own marriage. Oh, I know very well that you were all a little—perhaps only a little, but still a little—disappointed when George married me. Now that it's all over, and you've been so good to me, I don't mind confessing that I lived through several months of great unhappiness, for fear you'd take him from me. If you had, there's no use

denying that there would have been one more embittered old maid in the world, and George wouldn't have been so happy, either."

"Nor any of us, my girl—I can tell you that. If we were a little staggered before we knew you, we recovered ourselves easily enough when we did."

"And so, when I think of Paula—" She hesitated.

"Well—what? Speak up."

"I can't keep myself from wishing that she might be as happy as Aunt Trafford was with the man she loved, and as I've been with George."

"The cases are different," Trafford jerked out, dryly.

"Oh yes, I know that. It seems a pity, too; because they say he's such a fine fellow, and sure to make a great name for himself."

"How do we know that?"

"Well, I suppose we don't, except from such people as Lady Alice and the Duke, who've been his friends nearly all his life. As for his ability—the newspapers have witnessed to it abundantly. Then, too," she mused on, "it would create a great revolution of feeling at home, though you wouldn't care anything about that. Just as you've been indifferent to slander, you'd be equally so to applause."

"Applause—how?"

"Don't you see that it would be looked upon as so splendid and superior and American, that your daughter, who's had dukes and princes at her feet, should choose to marry a poor man—not only one of our own countrymen, but the son of one of your defeated enemies? Of course, it would mean nothing to you, but we weak women of the family couldn't but rejoice that the world should see you in your true light—in your simplicity and generosity, and in your great sense of the true responsibility of wealth. Your traducers would be obliged to stop their attacks, for there'd be no more powder in their magazine. I don't know anything about it, Uncle Trafford. That's only the way I feel."

"Ah, well!" he sighed. "Ah, well!"

He rose and took two or three strides up and down the room.

"Ah, well!" he sighed again. "I don't mind admitting to you, Laura, that I'm miserable about the whole business. When I think of that dear child crying her brave eyes out, perhaps at this very minute—"

"Yes, I know," Laura interrupted "Then you'd make any sacrifice to save her."

She felt she had said enough, for she, too, rose and folded her work.

"Won't you come and see Paul have his supper?" she suggested. She knew he liked to see the boy kick and crow and splutter, and beat with his spoon on the table.

"No, I don't believe I will," he replied, wearily. "I seem to have had enough of children. I begin to wish the Lord had never made them."

"If He hadn't, you'd be the first to pray Him to begin," she smiled, as she turned at the door to leave him. "You know better than I do, that for Paula's sake you'd throw everything you've ever won to the winds."

"I suppose that's true," he muttered to himself, as he went along the corridor to his office. "I suppose that's true. That wife of George's is a damned clear-headed little woman, and she doesn't know it."

Only a skilful psychologist could have followed the evolution of Paul Trafford's thought during the next forty-eight hours.

Only a sympathetic insight could have disentangled the strands of love and self-love, of egoism and devotion, of passionate affection for his child and of impulse to make one more appeal to the great, easily hoodwinked public to indorse him as a high-minded, honorable man.

"Life is only compromise, after all," was one text on which he mused. "She'd go wild with joy; she'd love me more than ever," was another. "Laura was right: they would see me as I am—simple, generous, patriotic, caring nothing for honors or a big name, but only for sterling worth. They'd come to understand me at last." That was a fruitful theme of meditation. "Brave little brick! She doesn't care what happens to herself, so long as I'm pleased, and saved from being wounded again. God! I'd let myself be stabbed all over my body rather than that she should shed another tear." That was a subject on which he could dwell only with eyes blinking. "After all, I may be wrong to distrust the man. He may be less of a Winship than the rest of the lot. The old lust for vengeance may have died down, by this time, and the reign of common-sense begun. Other people seem to speak well of him. Wiltshire and Lady Alice ought to know. Who can tell? I shouldn't be the first father who has had to make the best of his daughter's choice, and I might even come to like him. I'm not a monster, in spite of all they say of me." From these reflections he took what comfort he could.

It was the third day before he felt convinced that, of all the chances against him, he was accepting the least dangerous. It was the fourth before he felt sure enough to speak. He waited till evening, till the moment when Paula came to kiss him and say good-night. He drew her to him, and laughed with an air that was almost boyish in its embarrassment.

"I've given in," he stammered. "My little girl is to do as she likes."

She slipped from his embrace and fell back a pace or two.

"I—I don't understand, papa."

"Don't you? Then I'll make it clearer. I'm a weak and beaten and foolish old man. You'll see it," he went on, unconsciously quoting Laura—"you'll see it when I tell you that just as you're my daughter, so Roger Winship shall be my son."

The little sob with which she threw herself into his arms again was one of natural relief in the thought that the long strain was over.

CHAPTER XVIII

Winship had finished his coffee, in the long, red studio, before Marah brought hers and sat down beside him. Though money had been coming in as it had never come before, they had made no change in the simple habits of the days of poverty. Going to and fro in the room, Marah observed that her brother had received a letter which he read and reread with unusual absorption.

"Is it another commission?" she asked, as she took her place.

"No," he answered, absently, still pondering the page before him.

When some minutes had gone by, she spoke again.

"It isn't any thing that worries you, I hope?"

"Read," he said, briefly, pushing the paper towards her. She took it and read:

"DEAR MR. WINSHIP,—A great bereavement has recently come into both our families. Perhaps nothing so much as sorrow teaches us the true value of the things of this life. Since God has taken my dear wife from me, I, at least, have come to see many things from a different point of view. I am sure you will understand what I mean when I say that it would give great pleasure both to my family and myself to meet Miss Winship and you, and to talk over matters of importance, which must be discussed between us. May I ask, then, if to-morrow afternoon at three would suit your convenience to come to my house in the Avenue du Bois de Boulogne?—where, as I have already said, we shall all be glad to see you. Believe me, dear sir,

"Yours very truly,

"PAUL TRAFFORD.

"P.S.—I beg to add that we lay particular stress on the presence of Miss Winship, as some of our topics of conversation will be of as much interest to her as to the rest of us."

The brother and sister looked at each other blankly.

"What does this mean?" Marah demanded at last.

"It means first of all that I have asked Paula Trafford to marry me."

"And then?"

"That she's consented."

"And then?"

"That they've all consented."

"And then?"

"And then," he cried, springing up, with a harsh laugh—"then it means that the day has come to which we've looked forward so long—when we can say to each other, as Deborah said to Barak, 'Up! for the Lord hath delivered him into your hands.'"

"I don't understand you. How has He delivered him?"

"Come and see."

"Very well. I'll go."

No more was said: the subject was difficult to speak of; but at three o'clock they presented themselves at the door of the

great house.

Trafford himself met them at the foot of the grand stairway. Now that this step was definitely decided on, he felt the satisfaction by which he was always thrilled in playing the benefactor or god from the machine. With a large share of the sentiment characteristic of the American man of business in his softer moods, he had a distinct enjoyment of generosity—especially his own. He came forward with dignified cordiality, and held out his hand. Winship took it with a certain gravity. Marah stood in the background, her eyes sparkling like two electric lamps.

"You're very good to have come," Trafford said, in his kind tone. "I'm sure we shall all be glad to know one another better. And you, too, Miss Winship."

He advanced towards Marah, and again held out his hand. She allowed hers to rest limply within his grasp, but left to her brother the task of finding a reply.

"The kindness of your letter made our coming imperative," Winship murmured, politely.

It was all that could be said before the two tall footmen, and Trafford turned to lead the way up-stairs. As they followed, both brother and sister were impressed by the magnificence of their surroundings. It was beyond what they expected, and recalled to the imagination a bit of the château of Versailles in the days of its greatness. Marah felt herself dwarfed by so much splendor, and it required a mental effort even on Winship's part to lift his personality above it.

"I want you to know my nephew and niece, George and Laura," Trafford said, when they had reached the top of the stairs. "I think we shall have our little talk, at first, without the presence of my daughter."

Winship bowed, and Trafford, with a wave of the hand, ushered the visitors into the great salon, whose door was standing open.

It was an awkward moment, especially for Marah, who entered first. Her little figure seemed to dwindle to nothing, in the vast apartment, where every object was a thing of art. The Louis Seize drawing-room at Edenbridge was the abode of gentry; but this was the dwelling-place of kings. Once inside the door, she stood timidly, waiting for the others to pass in and take the lead, when she became aware of a small lady, in a long, black train, advancing, with out-stretched hand, to meet her.

"I know this is Miss Winship," Laura said, cheerily. "Our friend, Lady Alice Holroyd, has spoken of you so often. And Mr. Winship," she continued, in the same easy strain. "This is my husband, George. Now we all know one another, don't we?"

George shook hands with the Winships in turn, saying, "How do you do?" to each. To this they found it a relief to be able to reply with the same non-committal formula.

"Oh, Mr. Winship," Laura rattled on, as the party moved a few paces towards the centre of the room, "I can't tell you how much I admire your portrait of Paula. I've been to see it twice. Everybody says that nothing equal to it has appeared in the Salon during the last ten years. Now, do tell me," she pursued, eager to cover up the first few trying minutes, "didn't you paint that malachite table from the one in the Grand Trianon?"

"No," Winship smiled, "it's one I had the chance to sketch in the Quirinal Palace in Rome. You see, I have a knack with marble surfaces, and so, when I get an opportunity—"

"Shall we sit down?" Trafford asked, offering a seat to Marah.

A Buhl table, with some gilded and tapestried arm-chairs about it, seemed to offer a rallying-point, and presently they were all seated. It was partly accident, partly instinctive grouping, that placed Winship and Marah together on one side, with the three Traffords facing them on the other. Laura felt that her power of taking the lead was now at an end. There were a few seconds of constraint before Trafford spoke. He looked directly at Winship and Marah, though his tone was that of a man musing aloud.

"Our meeting of this afternoon is of a kind that must make any thoughtful person believe in the directing finger of a higher Providence. The very strongest of us must be subject to His authority. In fact, I don't suppose that with Him there are such things as strong or weak at all. We are simply His children, fulfilling His designs."

This opening was so little what any one expected that there was nothing to do but to accept it in silence.

"I realize that the more fully as I see events shaping themselves better than I could have directed them. Yes, I confess that it is better. I admit that I have had my own plans—plans that have been very near my heart. But now, as I approach my threescore years and ten, I see them being gently taken from my hand, and others offered me in their place. Very well, I accept them. It doesn't take much reflection to see that an old man is better occupied in sowing the blessings of peace than in continuing the wars of his youth. Mr. Winship, I believe you have asked my daughter to marry you."

"I have."

"And that she's consented."

"I've understood her so."

"Then I, too, consent. I don't pretend that I can give her away easily to any man. She's more than precious in my sight. But I realize that a day must come, before many years are over, when she will need other guardianship than mine; and where can she find it better than in the man who loves her, and whom she loves, and of whom every one speaks well?"

"I can only say," Winship murmured, "that to me the trust will be a sacred one. Her very sacrifice in marrying me will make it all the more my duty to see that she is compassed about with—love."

"I like that," Trafford said, warmly. "Where there's love, care and sorrow take their proper and subordinate place in the scheme of things. Mr. Winship, we're simple people, and I'm a plain man. It will be better for us all if I speak quite frankly and without reserve."

"That's what I should like," Winship agreed.

"We're simple people, but I think you'll find us open-hearted people. We're a united family, and, with the necessary crosses such as fall to human lots, we've been a happy family. God has blessed me, even though He has seen fit to take from me all my children but my little youngest-born—and, now, her mother, too. Still, He has blessed me. I should be ungrateful to deny the fact, after all He has enabled me to do. And just as, in my dear niece here, He has given me, as it were, another daughter, so I am ready to see in you—an only son."

Winship bowed, and Trafford hurried on.

"You see, we want to take you in as one of ourselves. I want you to feel that in me you have a second father. I want Miss Winship to be one of us also; and," he continued, looking directly at Marah, with an encouraging smile, "I've taken certain steps which I hope will assure her of my unlimited good-will."

He drew a small memorandum-book from his pocket, and began turning its pages. Marah sat bolt upright, with the rigidity of steel. Her snapping eyes were fixed on Trafford, like those of a little animal watching its minute to spring.

"It would be idle to ignore the fact," Trafford went on, "that it isn't the first time our interests have lain in the same field, even though it's the first time we meet. And yet I need hardly go back to speak of the past. I consider it dead and buried. I want to erect over its ashes to-day a monument of affection and peace. I'm sure you will understand the sentiments by which I'm governed, without any further explanation on my part, when I say, my dear Miss Winship, that I beg to turn over to you, now, at once, securities to the amount of half a million of dollars."

"Why?"

The laconic directness of Marah's question had a slightly disconcerting effect on Trafford's benevolent placidity.

"Surely that's self-evident," he smiled, in gentle response. "Your brother is about to marry my daughter. It wouldn't be fitting—you'll excuse me if I speak quite plainly—it wouldn't be quite fitting that you should remain in your circumstances, while we are in ours."

"They've been my circumstances for over twenty years, Mr. Trafford. I've battled with them and borne them. I shouldn't be myself, now, in any others."

"But I want you to feel," Trafford persisted, "that there will no longer be any need for you to work—"

"I'm used to working," Marah broke in. "I've worked as few people have ever done. I've worked as I never expected to work in the days before—before you came into our lives, Mr. Trafford. I haven't only toiled and pinched and scraped—I've starved. I've seen my mother and my brother starving. I was only a girl not older than your daughter, and not less tenderly nourished, when you, with your merciless hand, drove me out, bewildered and penniless, into the world, with the care of a mother and a little lad upon me. Now you are willing to erect over my ruined life a monument of affection and peace. I thank you, but I don't want it."

"Dear Miss Winship," Trafford said, still more gently, "do you think that the heart of a general, whose duty it is to ravage some fair province, doesn't often bleed for those whom he is obliged to render homeless? Business and war are alike, in that neither conquered nor conqueror escapes without a wound."

"Men ruin in war for a country's sake; they rob in business for their own."

"You're using hard words, Miss Winship."

"I'm speaking of hard things. May I ask, Mr. Trafford, if my words aren't true?"

"Perhaps," Trafford said, with a patient smile, "we should be in danger of getting into an abstract discussion, when our attention should be fixed on a particular point. I repeat that I'm glad to place this money at your disposal, and should be still more glad to know that you accepted it."

"I couldn't do it. I should feel that I was buying prosperity at the cost of my father's life, and my mother's twenty years of want."

"Then," Trafford said, losing some of his forced air of patience, "I see that this part of our discussion is useless, unless," he added, turning to Winship—"unless your brother can persuade you."

"I think my sister is quite right," Winship said, quietly, and with a certain air of detachment.

The three Traffords gave a simultaneous start, as if from a slight electric shock.

"You'll pardon me if I don't understand," Trafford began, rubbing his hand across his brow "You come here to marry my daughter—"

"I do."

"And you uphold your sister in refusing money that you yourself are willing to share—"

"No! I never said so."

"But what? Upon my soul, I don't follow you."

It was clear that Trafford's courteous self-possession was breaking down.

"My position," Winship said, "needs some explanation."

"So it would seem," Trafford assented, dryly.

"I've tried to make Miss Trafford understand from the first, that in marrying me she would be sharing a poor man's life."

"Hmph! I doubt if she took that detail in."

"I think it quite possible. I've never had any real opportunity to place the matter in its true light before her. I've had almost no communication with her since the minute she promised to become my wife. Without your consent, she has refused to see me, or even to let me write to her."

"And what might that true light be?"

"Only that I wish to marry her for herself, and for herself alone. If she comes to me, it will have to be without—money."

Trafford drew his chair closer to the Buhl table, as though to diminish the distance between them, and fixed on Winship the look before which all other men had quailed. Winship, too, drew up his chair, and returned the gaze with quiet

steadiness.

"You wish me to understand, I presume," Trafford said, speaking slowly, "that your motives are quite disinterested. I'll do you the justice to say that I never questioned them."

"I should like you to understand a little more than that," Winship returned. "But, first, may I explain that the present situation is none of my seeking? Had I seen it coming, I should have gone out of my way to avoid it. There seems to have been no means of doing that. Some fatality, or some destiny, has forced it on us all. If I had been given my choice, the last woman in the world whom I should have wished to marry would have been—a child of yours."

"You're quite right to be frank," Trafford threw in, with a touch of irony.

"Thank you. I shall try to be so. May I go on with my explanation? It wasn't I who sought Miss Trafford out, neither was it she who sought me. She was impelled towards me by the knowledge that you had killed my father, impoverished my mother, and blasted my sister's life."

A sound came from George like the low growl of a dog. Trafford put out his hand to repress it.

"Let him go on," he muttered. "This is the most remarkable wooing I ever heard of."

"Yes; it has to be," Winship agreed. "But I want to put things in a way which will admit of no future doubt. I want to put them justly, too. So when I say that Miss Trafford knew these things I don't mean that she was able to formulate them to herself as facts. She was only convinced of them in her inner sense of rectitude. Her love and loyalty remain with you; her verdict and her sympathy have long ago gone out to me and mine. Do I make myself clear? I repeat that, if it hadn't been for the situation that you yourself created, your daughter and I would probably have passed each other by as strangers."

"And since you haven't done that," Trafford broke in, impatiently, "I'm here to say that I'm willing to make the best of it. You've fallen in love with each other, as I understand; and though I don't look upon it as the most brilliant match my daughter could make, I'm ready to swallow my own disappointment in order that she should be as happy as possible. I'm ready to make you rich. I'm ready to make your sister rich. What's the use of dragging up a lot of unfortunate rubbish at the very minute when we could put everything right again? If it's folly to kill the goose that lays the golden eggs, it's surely criminal to strangle the poor dove that comes with the olive-branch of peace."

"It isn't the peace I object to, but the terms of the treaty."

"My God! Don't I offer you enough?"

"Yes; too much. I ask only for your daughter's hand, empty of dower."

"Look here! Do you mean to tell me that you think of marrying my child and supporting her out of your miserable painter's pittance?"

"Since you choose to put it so—yes."

"Then you're mad, It's out of the question. It's preposterous. She's lived like a princess all her life. She'd spend in a day all that you could give her in a year."

"I think not. I think she'd be content with what I could offer her."

"But, for the love of Heaven, why should she? Here's money to squander, money to throw away, money to burn up—"

"It's money I couldn't touch. It's money I couldn't allow my wife to touch. It's the money for which too many widows and orphans are still clamoring. It's the money for which too many beggared men are still cursing the sound of your name. It's the money that came when old Marshall, of Turtonville, shot himself, and Rawson, of Fitchburg, hanged himself, and Brewer, of Albany, went mad, and Bennett, of Cleveland, became a forger, and Jackson, of Ohio, stabbed your agent and got penal servitude for life, and Lewis, of Philadelphia, died a drunkard, and Barnes—"

"That's enough!" Trafford cried, sternly, holding up his hand.

"I know it's enough," Winship threw back. "I could go on with the list and make it much longer without mentioning my

own father's name. But that's enough. You can finish it, no doubt, for yourself. Such names are not easily forgotten."

Trafford sprang to his feet and strode away from the group. With his hands behind his back and his head bent, he took two or three paces across the room. Marah had scarcely changed her position since the conversation began. Laura sat biting her lip and looking at the floor. George, grasping the arms of his chair, was like a bull-dog held in leash and straining to spring at the man opposite, who was, apparently, the least concerned among them all.

Trafford strode back to the group again.

"You're a clever man, Mr. Winship," he said, tapping with his fingers on the table. "You're an ingenious man. You've had a blow to strike at me, and you've chosen the weapon you knew to be the sharpest."

"I didn't choose it," Winship returned, quietly. "It came into my hand."

"But you know how it cuts."

"Yes, I do know that."

"And you have no scruple about thrusting the blade in."

"The whole world has learned from you, Mr. Trafford, that scruples belong only to the weak."

"I see what you've been working round to," Trafford went on, musingly. "I see it now. I see. I see. I see the whole game."

"It isn't a game," Winship corrected—"it's a situation."

"It's more adroit than I thought at first. The worst of which I could suspect you was the plan of marrying my daughter in order to get her money. That would have been bitter pill enough for me. That ought to have given you an ample revenge. But this is—what shall I say?—this is so clever as to be nearly devilish."

"I must call your attention again to the fact that the circumstances are not of my making, but your own. I didn't seek to love your daughter. I must say again and again that we were brought together in consequence of your own acts. Now that I do love her, I want to marry her. That's natural enough. But I can't touch your money. No honorable man could. It's blood-money. But, there again, if that knife cuts you, it's one of your own forging, not of mine. It isn't the first time the conquered have been avenged by the very cruelty of the conquest. *Io Victis* is a song the world has heard over and over again."

"Hmph! Blood-money! It's blood-money, is it? And you want my child to say so."

"I want her to be true to what I know are already her own high and holy convictions."

"You want her to choose between you and me, before the world. Then, by God! she shall," he cried, bringing his fist down upon the table.

He marched to the end of the long room, and threw open a door.

"Paula!" he called, loudly. "Paula, come here!"

When he rejoined the group he was very pale. Instinctively they all rose as Paula appeared in the doorway.

For an instant she seemed to hesitate, her dark figure framed in the arch of white and gold. Then she came forward a step or two, and paused, then a step or two more, and paused. She seemed doubtful of what they expected her to do. They could see that her eyes were aglow, her cheeks delicately flushed, and her lips parted in a half-smile. She was in black, with a row of black pearls in the frill around her throat.

The silence and immobility with which the group about the table regarded her approach soon began to bewilder her. She looked from one to another questioningly, and her smile faded.

"What is it?" she asked, pausing again before she had quite reached them.

"Paula, my child," Trafford said, "I've given my consent to your marriage with Mr. Winship, and I've not withdrawn it."

The half-smile came back. Her eyes sought Winship's; then the droop of the long, black lashes hid them again.

"But Mr. Winship," Trafford pursued, "is not satisfied with my consent. He asks for more."

"No, not for more," Winship corrected. "I ask for nothing."

"Mr. Winship asks for so little, dear, that it becomes significantly much."

"I don't understand at all, papa."

"Then I'll put it to you plainly. Mr. Winship is ready to marry you, but you must come to him empty-handed."

"I shouldn't care," she said, promptly. "I don't mind about the money—not at all. I know what Roger means. He wants every one to see that it's for myself—not for anything else."

"That isn't quite his motive, dear. But perhaps he could explain it better than I can. Will you be good enough," he added, turning to Winship, "to tell my daughter why it is that you'd shut her out from the provision I've worked so hard to save for her?"

"If Miss Trafford is willing to make the sacrifice, it seems to me the explanation becomes unnecessary."

"I don't want an explanation, papa—I really don't."

"I think you'd better have it, none the less," Trafford insisted, "If he won't give it, I will. Mr. Winship will not touch my money, nor allow you to touch it, because it's blood-money."

"Oh, don't, papa," the girl pleaded. "Don't tell me."

"I must tell you, dear. The time has come when you've got to make a choice—when you've got to decide between my enemies and me."

"But Roger isn't your enemy!"

"You'll see. He wants you to stand forth before the world and declare that, in your opinion, I am a robber, an assassin—"

"No, no," Winship cried. "That's not fair. That's not what I ask for. I ask only that she shall come to me as she is, without money, without dower. I'm not trying to force her into putting any construction on the act—"

"And I'm not splitting hairs." Trafford interrupted, scornfully. "I'm not drawing nice philosophical distinctions. If she doesn't put a construction on the act, you will, and the world will. Paula, darling, he wants you to refuse my money because it's blood-money. Those are his words. He wants you to marry him without a penny. Then every one will be able to say that Paul Trafford must be what his enemies and traducers have called him, because his own daughter thinks him so."

"Oh no, Roger, you don't mean that!"

"He means more, dearest. He means that, as you are all I have, so even that shall be taken from me."

"But I couldn't be!"

"That's for you to decide, dear—and to decide now. He knows that I could bear up against the world, whatever it might say, whatever it might be led to believe. But he knows, too, that what I couldn't bear up against is that you should say, 'Papa, I can't touch your money, I can't touch your hand, because they're full of blood.'"

"Roger, I wish you'd speak!" she pleaded. "I wish you'd tell me yourself what it all means."

"How can I tell you?" he asked, moving towards her with hands out-stretched, as if in petition. "Can't you guess? Can't you see? Don't you know how this stupendous fortune has been brought together? Don't you know that it's been by every form of financial jugglery the mind has been able to invent? Don't you know that it's been by ways as crooked as they were cruel? Don't you know that it's been by a system of depredation so gigantic that even the common opinion of the common world has risen in revolt against it?"

"You lie!" George Trafford shouted. It was as if the bull-dog had torn away from its leash and sprang at Winship's throat.

"Be quiet, George," Laura begged.

"Stand back," Winship said, in a tone of authority. "I'm here to explain to Miss Trafford, the woman I love, and who loves me. I lie, do I? Then why have you Traffords, and your monopolies, been hunted from court to court, throughout the whole land of America? Why is the press ringing daily with your name, and calling for justice against you? Why have you been driven to every legal shift in order to dodge, or twist, or circumvent the law? Why have you spent millions to buy up clever men, to corrupt politicians, to bribe a press, and to purchase a little public that might stand by you? You have no friends but paid friends, and no standing except among those who are overawed by the brutality of your power. Even so, no one knows better than yourselves that that power will not stand a day when once the moral wits of the people are awakened; no one knows better than yourselves that the very sycophants of your success will be the first to rejoice in your downfall. And yet you—a Trafford!—dare to tell me that I lie! Dear Paula," he went on, in another tone, turning again to the girl, who stood listening with white face and terrified eyes—"dear Paula, I'm saying nothing new. It's only what's notorious to the world. You're the only person, perhaps, on earth who doesn't know it all. If it had been possible to keep it from you, I should have done it. But it isn't possible. Sooner or later you must have learned it. Don't you understand, then, that when I see you in the midst of all this"—he threw out his arms with a wide gesture—"it's as if I saw you living in, clothed in, the ruin of beggared men and hungry women and children? When I see you in your splendor, your pearls are to me like their tears, your rubies like their sweat of blood. I can't bear it. I can't bear it. It's like desecration. It's like sacrilege. I must take you out of it. Oh, come away—come away!"

"And leave my father?"

"You needn't leave him. You need only leave—all this."

"Is there no way by which love could make some—some reconciliation?"

"None."

"Then, papa," she said, in a dull tone, "I'm your daughter. If I have to make the choice, it must be you."

She moved across the room to his side, slipping her arm into his.

Winship raised his hands again, with their petitioning gesture, but, before the look of pathetic reproach in her eyes, he let them fall again.

"Paula," Trafford said, in a voice that shook a little, "I've let this man speak. You've heard him to the end. Now tell him that you believe in me. Tell him that his charges have failed."

"Oh, papa," she returned, wearily, "how can it matter what I say? I'm so tired of it all. I give him up; I'm going to stay with you. Isn't that enough?"

Winship could see, as he had seen once before, the ashen hue steal over Trafford's face.

"Yes, dear," he murmured, dropping his daughter's hand. "I suppose it is enough. It will have to be."

There was a minute's pause, and then a simultaneous movement. The Winships were going away. Paula gave a little start, as of one awakening.

"Couldn't we be alone together?" she begged, looking round among them all—"just for a minute?"

It was Laura who, somehow, got them from the room. Winship and Paula stood, confronting each other. He remained at a distance, looking at her with burning eyes.

"Roger!" she faltered—"Roger! Would it be useless to make one more appeal to you? Must our love end like this?"

"Our love doesn't end. Our love can't end."

"But all the rest of it—all our happiness? Is it to be flung away for this? How could you expect me to turn my back upon my father? It would kill him."

"Oh, Paula," he said, coming towards her, "I didn't ask for that. Don't turn your back on him. Love him always, as you've loved him, only come to me. Renounce all this, that's so unworthy of you, and come to me without—the money."

"I can't, Roger. Don't you see that I can't? Whatever the money is, even if it's all you say, I can't separate myself from it now. It's bound up with my father, and I'm bound up with him. I've got to carry the weight of it. It seems to me that if you loved me, you'd come and help me bear it."

"You've only to think of what that would mean, to see how impossible it would be. You and I living together in splendid luxury on—"

"No, don't," she cried. "Don't say it again. Once has seared the words right into my heart. I shall always feel them burning there. Then, Roger, if you can't," she added, hopelessly, "there's nothing for us but to part. I must go my way with my father, even though I fall in it. God will help me, perhaps, to stumble on. I must leave you now. I can't stay—it's killing me. Good-bye—good-bye."

She held out her hand. He dropped on his knee, and pressed it to his lips.

Almost before he had risen, he found himself alone.

It was a dreary little party that assembled in the small family salon that evening before dinner. Laura's eyes were red; George tried to hide himself behind his paper; Trafford turned his back on them, pretending to look down at the stream of carriages coming from the Bois. In the condition of nervous tension to which they were all wrought up, a little scream from Laura was enough to make them start.

"For pity's sake!" she cried. "Paula, are you crazy?"

Paula stood in the doorway. She was dressed in some shimmering stuff, like tissue of gold. On her head she wore the high, round, diamond crown her mother had bequeathed her; a collar of rubies was clasped about her throat; a girdle of diamonds and rubies encircled her waist; diamonds and rubies were on her arms; while round her neck she had the rows upon rows of the famous Trafford pearls. Her roselike color was bright, her eyes shone, and she smiled valiantly.

"My God, what a vision!" Trafford muttered, under his breath, as he watched her from the embrasure of the window.

"Well, you *have* rigged yourself up!" George commented, looking up at her, over his paper, with a sort of savage reproach. "What's the idea?"

"Really, Paula," Laura protested, "I don't think you ought to—"

"Let her alone," Trafford commanded, striding forward. "I know what she means; don't I, dear?"

"I hope so, papa," she smiled, as she let him take her into his arms, "because it's my profession of faith. I wear them because they're your gifts."

She came into the room, and the conversation turned on the degree to which the jewels suited her. The commonplace topic relieved the strain, and the evening passed in a sort of artificial cheerfulness. It was not till they were parting for the night that Laura found the moment for a private word with her.

"I wouldn't force myself, if I were you, dear," she advised.

"I have to," Paula replied, with arms uplifted in the act of taking off her crown. "I couldn't do it without forcing myself. But I shall be equal to it, Laura. I'm not afraid of breaking down. Only you must help me. You must laugh when I do, and we must both talk brightly. I want papa to think I've done it easily. If he doesn't, he'll be unhappy, and everything will be in vain."

"God bless you, dear," Laura murmured, as she kissed her. "God bless you; and bless you again."

CHAPTER XIX

Paul Trafford stood at a window of that house which no changes have been able to dissociate from the memory of La Païva. It was the middle of September, and he was thinking idly that the increased stir in the Champs-Élysées showed already that the dispersed forces of Paris were beginning to concentrate again. From mountains, sea-shore, and châteaux; from Asia, America, and the antipodes of the world, the great, beautiful city was drawing new resources for the endless tragic comedy that makes up her life. The curtain was rising on a season in which the events would be as different as the fashions from those of last year. What were they to be? In every nerve of Paris there was that sense of awakening curiosity which is simultaneous with the moment when the chestnuts put forth a few fresh, green leaves among the brown, and here and there a flower. The slanting autumn sunshine was rich with the desire that is more earthly, more passionate, and more essential to the heart than all the hope of spring. Youth, with its careless anticipations, had gone on its holidays in June; middle-age was coming back, with its desperate longings, in September. There was to be something new, something the eye had not seen before. Was it possible that there would be fulfilment for the demands which had had none as yet? When the Invisible Hand turned the kaleidoscope of events, what would the new combinations be?

Paul Trafford was wondering that on his own account. What kind of a season was preparing for him now? It was just a year ago, here in this very Travellers' Club, that Wiltshire had broached the subject of his love for Paula. Trafford had entered on the winter which he had thought to make the happiest of his victorious career. And yet, in those very months, he had lost his wife, and wrought some indefinable change between his daughter and himself.

Yes, there was a change. There could no longer be any doubt of that. But was it between them or in them? Trafford was not used to close analysis of character, and admitted he did not know. She puzzled him. She seemed happy; she was often lively, in her quiet way. She was tenderer and sweeter with him than she had ever been. She had borne the rupture with Winship so easily that he had been astonished. He could only think that the scene in June, with its brutal attack upon himself, her father, had killed what she had taken to be her love for the man. All that had passed off satisfactorily. And yet there was this subtle difference in her, this something which was just within range of his perception, though it was beyond his power to explain. In spite of her nearness, she seemed mysteriously apart from him. It was as if there was in the atmosphere about her some spiritual element that put him ill at ease. He wondered if he were not growing to be afraid of her, as though she were no longer the daughter of his blood, but some ethereal visitant from other spheres.

"If her sister Jennie were to come back to me from the Lord's own keeping," he sometimes said to himself, "I don't suppose I should have a stranger feeling of unearthliness."

There seemed to Trafford but one means of bridging over the gulf that had opened between the girl and common life: that she should marry and have children. It was impossible then for his mind not to go back to Wiltshire. There was the man for her! It was a million pities that she had not felt so herself. He would have watched over her and worshipped her. He would have been to her all that Hector was to Andromache. There were even times when Trafford imagined that Paula regretted having sent him away. He was afraid to hint at it, for fear of touching too rudely what might be the delicacy of an awakening sentiment. But the fact was there, that she spoke of him often, and always in a strain of tenderness. Then, too, she had never looked so favorably on any other man, with the exception of this young Winship, for whom, after all, apparently, she had not cared.

"Lord! if it could only be brought about," he said to himself now. "I believe I should be ready then to depart in peace."

He was turning away from the window to think of his lunch, when he was suddenly arrested by an incident which seemed to him like an answer to prayer. Wiltshire himself was entering the club. There was nothing remarkable in the fact, beyond what was passing in Trafford's mind. Wiltshire was a member of the Travellers', and it was natural that he should be in Paris at just that time of year. But Trafford could not see it so. Long ago he would have called it one of his lucky chances. Now he could only feel that Wiltshire had been "sent."

The two men shook hands with a sincere effusion which meant more than pleasure in each other's company. Each was an actor in the other's drama, and the interrupted play could begin again.

"This is luck," Wiltshire exclaimed. "I thought you were in America."

"I meant to go, but I didn't. I found that George could look after what was to be done just as well as I. He's there, with Laura and their youngster. Paula and I are at Versailles. You must come out and see us."

"I should like to. In the mean time, can't we have lunch together? Then we could talk a bit."

"All right; but not here. There'd be too many fellows interrupting us."

In Trafford's tone there was a hint of confidences to be exchanged to which the Duke was not insensible.

"Let's go to Henry's," he suggested. "That's where they feed you best just now."

It was in the minute of going out to take a cab that each found leisure to note the changes that seven months had produced in his companion.

"By George, he's improved!" Trafford said to himself. "I believe Paula would see it. He's better-looking, and he's smarter, and he's got an expression in his face that was never there before."

"I wonder what's aged him so?" Wiltshire was asking, silently. "He's grown old in half a year. He looks like a man who's had some great shock. I suppose it must have been Mrs. Trafford's death."

The scraps of conversation after they had ordered lunch were as the tuning of the fiddles to the playing of the piece. Wiltshire talked of his trip to the Cape, and gave his views on South Africa. He shifted to the Dolomites, where he had been in August, and passed on to tell of a few days' shooting he had just had in Hungary.

"Now I'm on my way home to slaughter birds at Edenbridge. I suppose Alice and I must have some people there."

"I expect you're very keen on it," Trafford hazarded.

"Not a bit. If there was anything better to do, I shouldn't go. Let me give you one of these eggs *à l'écoisaise*. You'll find 'em good. The fact is, Trafford, I can't stay anywhere. I'm on the jump. Wherever I am, I feel as if I should be more at peace somewhere else. When I went out to the Cape, I thought that if I could only get away from Europe I should be all right; and yet, bless you, I hadn't been there a day before I was mad to be back again in England. But, Lord! England is the last place I can stay in. If ever I do take a week at one of my places over there, Alice passes a procession of virgins before me, as if I were King Ahasuerus."

"Well, you'll marry one of them in time."

"No, that's done for. I'm one of those dull men with whom such things go hard. It's just a year ago, isn't it, since we first spoke of—of—something that never came off?"

"If you don't mind my saying so, Wiltshire, I always thought you gave up that fight rather easily."

"Do you mean—?" Wiltshire began, with a jerk.

"No, I don't. I don't mean anything more than I say. In business we generally keep at a thing till we do it. In love—"

"In love there are two sides to consider. In business you have only your own."

"But I've always understood that the business of love was to make the two sides one."

"When you can. I was under the impression that I couldn't. May I ask you if you are of another opinion?"

"My dear boy, I have no opinion at all. All I know is that since you left Monte Carlo last February my little girl has been a different creature. There's something the matter with her still. I don't know what it is, but it's clear she isn't the same."

"Do you mean that she's unhappy?"

"I shouldn't go so far as that; and yet if I did I don't know that I should be very wrong. To me it seems as if she were living in another world. She goes and sits for hours in the park of the Petit Trianon—my little place touches it, you know—and when she comes back the look in her eyes is like that of some sweet soul strayed out of paradise. I don't know what to say to her or how to talk to her—I'm damned if I do."

Trafford made fierce lunges at his slice of *pré-salé*, and ate savagely. Wiltshire did not eat at all. He sat reflecting for a few minutes before he spoke.

"I've been under the impression," he said at last, "that there was something between her and young Winship, the painter."

"Oh, pshaw! There was nothing in that," Trafford declared, gulping nervously at his Chablis. "What could there be?"

"Only what might not be unreasonable between a girl like Miss Trafford and a handsome, idealistic young chap—"

"Oh, come now! The fellow's a damned scoundrel. I know all his ins and outs, and of his people before him."

"I'm surprised to hear you say that. I've always thought rather highly of him. Alice has just got him a somewhat important commission. He's been over at Sandringham painting Queen Alexandra. She'd heard about his portrait of Miss Trafford, and got Alice to send her a photograph of it. She seems to have been quite struck with it, and sent Miss Trafford a message to that effect. She thought the likeness extraordinary, apart from the other merits of the work."

"Yes, I believe Lady Alice did write Paula something of the sort."

"We were rather pleased over the business, so that I'm sorry to hear your opinion of the young man—"

"Oh, my opinion is of no importance. The only thing that counts is that, as far as I can see, Paula thinks of him as I do. I shouldn't pay any attention to the matter, in one way or another, if it were not for the purpose of assuring you—"

"Thanks!"

The word came out in that dry, laconic tone which hints that the rest of the subject can be best pursued in silence. It was dropped then and there, with a significant abstention from further speech. It was only when they were shaking hands at the door, to go their different ways, that Trafford alluded to it again.

"I say, Wiltshire," he began, with a touch of embarrassment, "I hope you won't take anything I said about young Winship too seriously."

"Oh no; I assure you."

"I called him a scoundrel. I had no right to do that. It's a word I'm too quick to use of any one whose ideas are different from mine. From the little intercourse I've had with the man, I can't say that I like him, and yet I'm blowed it there isn't something in him I rather admire."

"Oh, I sha'n't think any more about it. Well, good-bye, old chap I'm ever so glad to have seen you."

"Good-bye," Trafford returned, as he got into his fiacre. "I'll tell Paula you're here, and I know she'll want you to come out and see us."

Wiltshire waited till Trafford was out of hearing before he turned round to the *chasseur* at the door of the restaurant.

"Find out for me," he said, "when there will be a train for Versailles, and call me a cab."

CHAPTER XX

An hour later Wiltshire stood before the little palace built for Jeanne du Barry, but stamped with the immortal charm of Marie Antoinette. It was so many years since he had been there that he had forgotten the simple elegance of its pale, pilastered facade, against which four pomegranate-trees made dark spots of verdure, with an occasional late scarlet flower. Cab-men hung about the gateway, children played in the court, and tourists waited at the door for their turn to enter. She would not be here, he said to himself, and passed onward to the park.

He avoided the road to the Hameau and the more frequented routes. If he found her at all, it would be in some secluded spot, where the tourist would be little likely to venture. From the terrace of the villa he surveyed the French garden, with its lines of purple, scarlet, and orange flowers making arabesque designs between the quaint, close-clipped limes planted by Louis XV. With the exception of some children sailing a boat on the basin in the centre, there was no one there. Down by the Octagon Pavilion a girl in white was sketching; he descended towards her, but it was not she whom he sought. He went on through a labyrinth of hedges, where princesses and court ladies had loved to wander in the cool of the *après-dînée*, and now the shy birds were startled by a foot-fall, taking flight with a sharp whirl of wings; but all was solitude and silence. The rose-red line of the Grand Trianon, skirted about by gardens, brilliant with the splendid hues of the end of summer, showed itself on his left; but he turned from it and sought the deeper recesses of the park. A majestic mournfulness spread about him as he went farther on. Pines shot up their bronze-colored shafts with the straightness of palms. Ancient pointed firs drooped with a melancholy sweep, dragging their lower branches on the ivy-tangled ground. Junipers, soft as mimosas and spreading like cedars, were as red with berries as pomegranates in flower. Dark walls of clipped yew led to stone basins, where the water was heavy with dead leaves, and the bronze water-babies seemed to have been arrested forever, in mid-play, by tidings of calamity. Pale buildings showed here and there their crumbling roofs through clusters of lilac or beneath yellowing elms. Here was a rustic village, there a temple of love, elsewhere a sculptured pavilion, and everywhere the ghost of a woman whose story is the most moving of earthly dramas since that of the Son of Man.

Wiltshire wandered on, seeing no one but an occasional workman or a party of tourists.

"Never mind," he said to himself. "If I don't find her to-day, I shall come every day till I do."

He strayed aimlessly, knowing that any deliberate search would be useless—and that only some happy chance would bring them together. There were many probabilities that, in the semi-obscurity of shaded allées and winding paths, they would pass each other by. There were many more that she had not come at all. Still he would keep on, he said, until twilight told him that further staying would be fruitless. He would rather meet her in some such spot as this than in the commonplace atmosphere of a drawing-room.

There was a moment when he found himself in a by-way dim with the enchanting gloom of laurel, privet, and box. The sunlight that filtered through the high trees above reached here only in faint flecks of gold on the sombre foliage. The pathway climbed a little knoll, and seemed to lead into some sacred grove. A murmur of falling water caught his ear, and he followed its music, seeking the source. There were no birds nor flowers—only a hush, a stillness, a solemnity, as if sound would be a profanation, since the songs and laughter of the proud men and light-hearted women, who had frequented here, had been frozen on the lips by the horror of the coming tragedy.

It was with surprise that Wiltshire emerged suddenly into a sunny grass-plot, with a view of green meadows and a meandering stream. Close beside him, on the brow of a little cliff, perched a small pavilion—an epitome of that beauty, simple, stately, and sure of itself, to which the eighteenth century worked up, through all the splendors of color and all the graces of form. The autumn sunlight, bathing the cream-colored walls, showed glimpses of the white-and-gold decoration within—the lyre, the harp, the flute, and whatever else is suggestive of lightness, gladness, and song. Wiltshire stood still. He was not an imaginative man—and yet he could almost persuade himself that he heard the tinkle of the spinet giving out some melody of Gluck's—he could almost fancy that he caught sight, through the high windows, of the Queen's white fichu or Madame Elisabeth's percale.

He was so lost in the memories of the spot that for a minute he nearly forgot the object of his quest. It was only when he began to look about him that he became aware of the presence of a girl in black. She stood in the centre of an arched rustic bridge, which, beyond the pavilion, spanned the tiny, artificial chasm beneath. Behind her a towering mass of rocks formed a sort of grotto, from whence came the sound of falling water which had lured him on. Her hands rested on

the rustic balustrade of the bridge, and she stood looking at him, as he at her.

For a minute it seemed as if there were some uncertainty in their mutual recognition. It was only when her lips quivered in a faint smile that Wiltshire had the courage to go forward.

"How strange!" she cried, turning to offer him her hand, but not moving from her place in the centre of the bridge. "I was just thinking of you."

"And I of you," Wiltshire responded, keeping her hand an instant longer than he need have done. "There must surely have been some unseen force at work between us."

"Did you think I should be here?" she questioned, in her direct way.

"I knew you lived somewhere near by," he replied, evasively. "I was really strolling about at haphazard. It's the most wonderful thing in the world that I should have found you like this."

"Yes, it is," she agreed. "I come out into the park nearly every day, and I don't think I've ever met any one I knew before. Over at Versailles one does, but so few people ever come to the Trianons, except to take a hurried run through the villas and a walk down to the Hameau. They don't know anything about the real beauties and associations of the place."

"I didn't myself till this afternoon."

"Oh, but you can't know anything yet."

"I could learn, though, if you'd teach me—and take me about."

"I should love to," she smiled, "but you wouldn't have the time. I doubt, too, if you'd have the patience or the interest or the imagination."

"Of the four conditions, I know I could take the time, and I could cultivate the others. All I should want would be a little steering."

She shook her head.

"I'm afraid you'd need more than that. I question whether you're one of the elect few who worship the shadows of other days. This is the enchanted garden of the past. It's one of the few spots on earth where the past isn't past. Almost everywhere else—in Rome or Athens or Egypt, for instance—the things that happened a long time ago are hopelessly out of one's mental reach. But it isn't so here. This is one of the rare places that later generations have been wise enough to let alone. This very spot where we're standing is exactly as it was when Marie Antoinette left it, on October 5, 1789. Did you know that she was right here in this grotto when the messenger came to tell her that the mob from Paris was advancing on Versailles? She hurried over to the Château, and never came back any more."

She spoke with a certain breathlessness, as though to gain time or to conceal embarrassment.

"I'm sure I could learn details of that sort if anybody would be willing to teach me."

"Ah, but would you come and sit here with Marie Antoinette herself? Would you put yourself back into her time, and live with her through all her follies and heartaches and sufferings?"

"I shouldn't ask for anything better, if you'd just show me how to do it."

"I can see already that you wouldn't have the spirit. I'll test you. Look over there, in that path beyond the lake. Tell me what you see."

"I see two elderly ladies in dark dresses. One has knitting in her hand, and one is carrying a parasol."

"And that's all?"

"That's all I can see with the naked eye. If I had a field-glass—"

"Now, that's Madame Adelaide and Madame Victoire, the King's aunts. They're neither so young nor so pretty as when Nattier painted the splendid portraits over at Versailles, but there's something sweet and touching in their faces, and I

love to watch them. They come over to Trianon every afternoon, between dinner and supper. If there's to be music in this little pavilion, you'll see them, presently, stroll up here. Now, listen. What do you hear here?"

"I hear some children—squabbling."

"No! How can you? They're not squabbling. That's the little Dauphin and Madame Royale singing. They've been up in the English garden, and they'll go by, in a minute, to drive their team of goats in the meadow. He, poor lamb, will look so wide-eyed and innocent; and she will have already in her young face the prophetic expression of sadness that Vigée-Lebrun gives her. But I know you won't see it. You'll think it's two school-children from Versailles. That's because you haven't the spirit. I feel certain already that you couldn't tell me who that is, over there beneath that line of trees."

"It looks to me like Madame Elisabeth or the Princess de Lamballe," Wiltshire said, with a laugh, "only that she's limping."

"It's the Queen," Paula affirmed, decidedly. "You can tell that by her walk. She isn't limping. It only seems so to you. No one else has that sort of gliding carriage, so graceful and, at the same time, so dignified. Besides, she's alone. That's significant in itself. It's only at Trianon that etiquette is suspended and she can walk without her suite. She's on her way to the Hameau to see the cows milked. There's nothing she enjoys so much, poor thing. She'll be here in a minute, so I think we'd better go away. If you'll come home with me, I'll give you a cup of tea, and perhaps you'll see papa. He's been in Paris all day, but he generally gets back about this time."

Wiltshire kept to himself the fact that he had seen papa already, and hoped that, if they met, Trafford would do the same. It was just as well that Paula should think the meeting had come about through the special intervention of Providence. He turned when she did, and followed her down, through dim and narrow paths, where they could not walk abreast, towards the open avenue. He found answers to the many questions she asked about himself, as she led the way. Where had he come from? Where was he going? How had he happened to drop down in the middle of the park of the Petit Trianon, of all the odd places in the world? But, as he spoke, he had Trafford's words at luncheon ringing in his heart: "Some sweet soul strayed out of paradise." That was what she was. He could see exactly what her father had meant. The change in her was difficult to define, but it was very visible. It would be a vulgarizing of its spiritual quality to say that it had made her thinner and paler, but that was the effect. "Her eyes are homes of silent prayer," was the quotation he had been making to himself all the time she had been chattering about the King's aunts. It was clear that her self-possession was but superficial, and that even the cheerfulness of her conversation had a forced note.

"No happy woman could look like that," he said to himself, when once she turned half round.

With a great leaping of the heart, he wondered if he could be the cause of her hidden grief. Trafford had hinted as much, and yet the idea was too grotesque. She must have known that a sign from her would have brought him back at any time. He would have scouted the very thought, had it not offered a straw for his drowning hope to cling to. Besides, it was not an unheard-of thing for a beautiful woman to love an ugly man. He could think of several instances among his own acquaintances. Was it possible, after all, that the miracle had been wrought for him?

CHAPTER XXI

When they reached an avenue of towering elms, touched already with the yellow brown of autumn, Wiltshire was able to take his place by her side.

"This is our way," she said. "We have a little gate farther down that leads into our own grounds. I'm glad you've come out, because I like showing my garden to people who haven't seen it. Lady Alice was good enough to compare it to the famous one at your Irish place, but I dare say she did that only to please me."

"By-the-way, you've heard from Alice lately, haven't you?"

"Yes; she wrote to give me the Queen's kind message about—about my portrait."

Wiltshire noticed the instant of hesitation, and observed her sharply. She continued to walk on, with head erect, in the resolute fashion he had already remarked as being new to her, but no touch of color came into her pale cheek.

"I suppose you know that the King was so much pleased with Winship's picture of the Queen that he has made him stay at Sandringham to paint the Princess Victoria."

"No; I didn't know it. I'm so glad."

She glanced towards him, but again he got nothing from his scrutiny. It seemed to him, however, that the old, appealing look was gone, and that in its place had come something detached, uplifted, which caused him a sudden sinking of the heart.

"I might as well hope to marry an angel," was the thought that passed through his mind. Aloud he said: "Yes; it's a fine thing for Winship. Alice writes me that owing to his being kept so long at Sandringham, he's had to cut short the visit he was going to make at Edenbridge. She hopes to have him for a night or two, but not more. I believe he has orders ahead that will keep him busy for the next two years."

"I'm so glad," she said again.

"I thought you would be," he went on, "especially after what you said of the family at Monte Carlo. Do you remember?"

"Yes, perfectly. I ought to say, perhaps, that I found you were right, and that it wasn't possible to do—what I thought of then."

"You've done a great deal better. He's a made man through—what shall I say?—through your co-operation."

"You mean the portrait. I was only an accident in that. He would have had the same success with anybody else. It was bound to come."

"Perhaps so; and yet the hand that lifts us up is the one to which we must be grateful. We can't say that another would have done as well."

If Paula betrayed herself at all, it was then. She stopped in her walk and confronted him. They had entered a dim, turf-carpeted avenue, where the solemn aisle of overhanging green stretched on, like that of some stupendous church, to a distant arch of sunlight. The swish of a hedge-trimmer's sickle cut sharply on the stillness, and far away they could hear the rumbling of a forester's wain. In a round opening in the wood stood a lonely, noseless, armless statue of Themistocles, the one poor, melancholy ghost of the joyous, by-gone centuries.

"I want to tell you something, Duke," Paula began, with the forced self-possession he had already remarked in her. "I should like you to know it before you see papa. I speak of it because—well, because of what we talked about that day at Monaco. If my father ever owed Mr. Winship anything, he doesn't now."

"No?"

"No. Mr. Winship found the means by which to repay himself. It wasn't in money; it was in something else. Mr. Winship wouldn't take the money."

"Do you mean that your father offered to—?"

"Yes; but Mr. Winship refused."

"And of course that hurt your father."

"You'll see. That's one reason why I'm telling you. Papa is very much changed; he's aged in every way. I want you to be prepared for it."

"Am I to understand that Winship had the power—?"

"He had the power to wound my father deeply, and he used it. I can't explain myself any further. I only want you to know that papa isn't what he used to be. Dear mamma's death was a great blow to him—and then this other thing—and everything—"

She broke off with a pathetic little gesture, and turned to walk on again.

"I understand," Wiltshire murmured, though he did not understand at all.

Paula said no more, and he felt it best to let the subject drop. They went on in silence to the end of the vista, emerging all of a sudden into the open country, with a wide prospect of fields, reaped and yellow, or lush and green. Dotted about in the hills all round, white châteaux stood in pleasant nooks, sheltered by overhanging woods.

"This is our place," Paula said, passing through a wicket-gate into a grove of firs. "It goes by the name of the Pavillion de la Reine, because, I believe, the first building on the ground was a sort of studio where Marie Leczinska used to paint. The present house is quite modern, though, as you'll see; it's in the style of Louis XIII. We thought at first of one or two more historic places that happened to be in the market, but dear mamma said she wouldn't live with anybody's ghosts, and so we took this."

In a minute or two they came out on the lowest of three wide terraces, with gardens designed in the style of Le Nôtre, leading up to the cheerful red-brick facade of a house at once dignified and homelike. Hedges of box and privet were broken by statues and sculptured urns, while rows of conically clipped yews made quaint and stately contrast to the majestic elms and chestnuts, where the gardens merged into the park. Down from the centre of the house came a broad walk, straight as a ribbon, descending from terrace to terrace by flights of marble steps. Each terrace had its pair of fountains, of which the two on the middle plane were playing. Not far behind the château the ground rose gently into a wooded hill.

"Charming!" Wiltshire commented, as they stood still for a minute to look up over the successive stages of blossom and verdure. "It does recall our garden at Kilmaurice, as Alice said. Only this is the real thing, and that's the imitation."

"I'm glad you like it," Paula returned. "I'm very fond of it. Papa bought the place only for week-ends, and for entertaining passing Americans, who like to see a bit of the country; but we've come to like it better than any of our houses. Ah, there's papa now. He's got back. Papa, dear," she called, "here's an old friend whom I'm sure you'll be glad to see."

When Trafford turned from the idle contemplation of a peacock spreading his tail, his face took on slowly the expression of admiring appreciation it had sometimes shown to his associates when they had carried through some unexpectedly successful "deal." When he laughed and clapped his hands, and called out "Gad!" in a big, jovial voice, Wiltshire knew that his own prompt action had met with approval, and that Paula would hear nothing of the lunch at Henry's in the morning.

"It's done him good to see you already," Paula murmured, as Trafford came down to meet them, shouting words of welcome. "And," she added, quietly, "it does me good, too, to see him look pleased again."

"If it only needs that—" Wiltshire began, but Trafford was upon them, and they could say no more.

At tea, in the English garden, on the other side of the house, Paula was conscious of the fact that they had not been so cheerful since long before her mother died. The sense of constraint which had become permanent between her father and herself seemed to drop away in the presence of this kindly man, with his unobtrusive sympathy. From her seat behind the tea-table, in the shade of a trellised wall, hung with honeysuckle, clematis, and roses, she watched the two men, out in the sunlight, on the grass. She half-listened, and half-followed her own thoughts, as Wiltshire explained to her father the

exact situation between the Church and the State in France. For the first time in months the ashen hue had disappeared from Trafford's face, while the old light of power stole back into his dulled eyes. Wiltshire, too, was changed. She had noticed that from the beginning, but now she had time to remark the fact more consciously. It was as if he had acquired the dignity that comes from mental or moral suffering. That reflection brought a pang with it, and the pity which had always entered into her regard for him took on a new degree of tenderness.

It required but little urging to induce Wiltshire to stay and dine. Again Paula had the sensation that life had come into their atmosphere once more. Her father told his favorite stories with the relish he would have had a year ago, and laughed with his old-time jollity as he made the familiar points. He absorbed Wiltshire's attention with the curious fascination he always had for men; and it both pleased and amused her to see that, when she left them at the end of dinner, neither of them noticed it, except to rise as she passed out.

It was then, however, that Trafford's manner changed. He told no more anecdotes, and presently, as they smoked, he went back to politics. From politics he passed to business, and from business to philanthropy. Then, for a few minutes, conversation flagged. Wiltshire felt that they had been working up to something, and waited for the cue.

"Speaking of philanthropy," Trafford said, with a sudden effort, "I've got a lot of money I should like to give away."

"That's easily done, as a rule," Wiltshire laughed.

"As a rule—yes," Trafford went on, slowly. "But my case is a little outside the rule. I wonder if I could make you understand it? I've often thought that, if ever I had the chance, I should like to talk it out with you—confidentially."

"Oh, confidentially, of course," Wiltshire said, politely.

"You see, I've given away a deuce of a lot of money, in one way or another. I've given to charities, I've given to churches, I've given to hospitals, I've given to orphanages and colleges and libraries and picture-galleries, and every other damned thing there is to give to. Now I should like to do something different from all that."

He paused to puff nervously at his cigar. Wiltshire waited for him to go on.

"I don't have to tell you," he resumed, "that I've been what is called a successful man. Well, to make my successes a good many poor devils have had to fail. I know that I'm under no obligation to consider them—none whatever. And yet, as I grow old, I'll be hanged if I don't think of them a good deal. Perhaps it's nerves, or perhaps it's nothing but the living every day with such a creature as that little girl of mine. Whatever the reason, there's the fact that I should be glad to shuffle back some of this useless money into the hands of those who used to—well, who need it more than I, at any rate."

"How would you propose to do it?" Wiltshire asked, puffing quietly.

"There you've got me. That's where I don't see my way. I suppose to you it seems easy."

"No; on the contrary, I can quite understand that it might be a ticklish job."

"It's infernally ticklish. It's one of the queer elements of the situation. Here I am, a well-meaning man, with no other longing than to do good, and I'll be hanged if I can. I could give you the names of a dozen people—old enemies, or old enemies' widows and orphans—whom I should be willing to set up for life, and yet I doubt if they'd let me. You'd hardly believe that."

"Oh yes," Wiltshire replied, dryly. "A little knowledge of human nature makes the thing clear enough."

"That's it. You've got that knowledge, and so I thought that you might help me."

"Oh!"

Wiltshire withdrew his cigar from his lips, and looked round with some astonishment.

"I mean," Trafford explained, half apologetically, "that if, in any particular instance, you had the chance to facilitate the thing—"

"Of course, of course. Were you thinking of any one especially?"

"No—no—that is—I know you've befriended the family of that—that young Winship—who—who—painted a portrait —"

"Quite so. We were speaking of him at lunch this morning, if you remember."

"You may not be aware that his father was an old opponent of mine."

"I know the circumstances vaguely."

"Then I won't go into them further than to say he was the kind of old fellow you couldn't spare. I did my best to save him and his family from ruin, but when they were bent on running into it, I had to let them. That's all over years ago. Now he has this son and an old-maid daughter. Don't you understand, Wiltshire, that with more money than I know what to do with—with money of which I could take three-fourths and bury it in a hole in the ground and still remain a rich man—don't you understand that I should be glad—?"

He stopped as if searching for a word.

"I quite understand," Wiltshire hastened to say. "But isn't it the case that Winship is getting beyond the need of generosity of that sort?"

"No one is beyond the need of what he can get. And whether he's so or not, I want the fellow to have the money. I want to know that he's taken it. What he does with it afterwards, or what his sister does with it, won't matter a twopenny damn as far as I'm concerned, but I want to know that they've had it. I'd leave it on his door-step, I'd stuff it down his throat, just for the satisfaction of getting rid of it."

He laughed grimly, and threw the stump of his cigar on the ash-tray.

"Why don't you tell him so?"

"I've done so," Trafford answered, after a moment's hesitation. "He wouldn't take it."

"Then what would you expect me to do?"

"Do? Do anything, so long as they take the money. I don't care a jot about their knowing it's from me. I'll give you a million dollars—two hundred thousand pounds—to juggle into their pockets by any tale you can invent. Gad! when I think how easy it's been to make money, it seems like the irony of the very Lord above to find it so difficult to throw it away."

There were several pertinent remarks in Wiltshire's mind, but he withheld them. As a matter of fact, he was slightly appalled by the lifting of this corner of the veil on the rich man's conscience. From the beginning of their acquaintance he had been interested in Trafford, as the type of American success, while he had been drawn to him by a certain bigness and generosity in Trafford's character, but he shrank from contact with the details of his business career, with the distaste of the hereditary grand seigneur. It was a relief to him when Trafford rose, and, assuming another tone, affected to take the matter lightly. He himself tried to do the same.

"Winship is as pig-headed a chap as was ever driven to market," he said, as they went towards the drawing-room, "but I know him pretty well, and, if it's any service to you, I'll try to influence him for his good."

CHAPTER XXII

The appearance in the *New York Magazine* of the famous series of articles, in which the history and methods of the Vermont Mining Company were exposed, had a clarifying effect on Paula's chaotic thought. Till then she had not been without the persistent hope that some way of reconciliation might be found between Winship and her father. "Roger loves me," she argued to herself, in the first days of the separation. "He'll come back, and take the money, for my sake." But when she had read to a close the first of the articles that fell under her notice, she had none of that hope left. "He'll not take it," she said to herself then. "No man who knew this could." As she made the reflection, there floated through her mind Lovelace's couplet:

*"I had not loved thee, dear, so much,
Loved I not honor more."*

The lines brought her a vague consolation. She repeated them often after that. They seemed to justify Winship for what had appeared to her like cruelty.

That was in July. She had picked up the current number of the *New York Magazine* quite casually at a news-stand, not suspecting that it could contain anything of special interest to herself. She learned from it that the articles had been appearing since the previous March, and ordered all the numbers to be sent to her.

The first instalment dealt, among other things, with the origin of the Trafford family, and contained many details of which Paula herself had little knowledge. It informed her that in the early eighteen hundreds William Trafford had been a laborer at Cannock Chase, in Staffordshire. He married a girl named Sarah Paul, by whom he had a large family, several of their descendants being miners at Cannock Chase to-day. John Trafford, their second son, emigrated to America about the year 1833. He settled as a farmer near Cumberland, Vermont, where he married Jennie O'Mara, a pretty Irish girl, servant in the house of Julius Murray, a coal merchant in the neighboring town.

John and Jennie Trafford were thrifty, industrious people, with that instinct to rise in the world which distinguished the earlier emigrants from the British Isles. Unable themselves to read or write, they were eager to give their children the best educational advantages the neighborhood afforded. These were exhausted, apparently, when Andrew was fourteen and Paul was twelve. Then both lads went to work, Andrew remaining with his father on the farm, while Paul found employment as office-boy, with Julius Murray, in the town.

From that point the biography dealt chiefly with the younger of the two. It recounted in detail Paul's first bit of business inspiration; in which the boy showed himself as father to the man. A letter from Peter O'Mara, his mother's brother, who worked in the Dundee Mines, in Pennsylvania, had hinted at one of those early difficulties between miner and employer which were afterwards organized into strikes. Julius Murray told, during all the rest of his life, how Paul had rushed into his office breathless with the news. He was fond of describing the lad, as he stood there, straight and erect, in all the dignity of his thirteen years, his hands behind his back, and his blue eyes flashing. "Wouldn't it be well, Mr. Murray, to buy up all the Dundee coal you can get between to-day and to-morrow? By the day after that everybody else will know the news as well as we." Julius Murray, unaccustomed to wisdom from the mouth of babes and sucklings, laughed at the boy's ardor and pooh-poohed his advice. When he awoke next day to the fact that he was letting a great opportunity slip by, he had only twenty-four hours in which to do the work of forty-eight. The money he made when, in the following winter, Dundee coal went up to the price, unheard of in those days, of eleven dollars a ton, was that which gave Miss Julia Murray the claim to be considered an heiress when she eloped with Paul Trafford in 1870.

In subsequent numbers Paula read the history of the Trafford rise, step by step, scheme by scheme, million by million, lawsuit by lawsuit, fight by fight—a great, sordid epic of finance, in which reputations were ruined, homes wrecked, lives blasted, and a whole country's commercial, legal, political, and moral honor brought painfully into question.

Paula read with no more than a vague comprehension. There were so many characters in the play—lawyers, bankers, merchants, capitalists, speculators, senators, governors, engineers, journalists, and politicians of every sort—that she grew confused among them. The scene shifted so often—now to San Francisco, now to Chicago, now to Washington, now to St. Louis, now to New York—that her mind could not keep pace with the action. There were so many questions involved—legal, legislative, geological, and economical—that her simple intelligence reeled in the effort to understand.

Where there were dramatic personal events, she grasped the subject more fully. She could follow the story of the ruin of the Winships from beginning to end. She could do the same with those of the Marshalls, of Turtonville, of the Brewers, of Albany, and of poor Jackson, of Ohio. But whether details were clear to her or not, one great fact surged up out of this weltering mass of testimony—that the father she adored had fought his way to success by means which made her shudder. Nothing she had guessed at, nothing she had feared, could equal this heaping up of testimony from every corner of the land. Nothing she had ever imagined of Russian tyranny or Turkish misrule could be more merciless than the despotism with which her father and his associates, in a country considered free, had been able to club and crush and gag and grind into helplessness whatever lifted itself against them. And he was her father! She was his child! She was bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh. She could no more dissociate herself from him and his work than she could from the line of laborers and servants from whom she sprang. However confused she might be about facts, she had no doubt as to her duty here: it was to stand by the man who depended upon her; to stand by him all the more now, when, in his old age, the storm of popular wrath was gathering and breaking about him.

All through July, August, and September she had been reading these articles secretly. That her father was reading them secretly, too, she knew from seeing in the *New York Herald* or the *Times* an occasional statement from his legal representatives, in which this or that accusation was denied. How deeply he resented this history of himself she could see from his increased depression as each new number of the series appeared. Now, on one of the last days of September, the October issue was in her hands.

She had just finished reading it, in her favorite corner of the English garden. It had been especially pitiless to her father in the piling up of charges against him. She closed the volume, and with hands clasped upon it gazed vaguely across the lawn, indifferent to its sunlit spaces, as well as to the masses of dahlia and canna, gorgeous with autumn bloom.

"No, no," she kept saying to herself, "Roger couldn't take that money. It's blood-money. And I must keep it. There's no way by which I could give it up. If I did, it would kill papa. I must go on, all my life clothed in the ruin of beggared men and of hungry women and children. Roger said that, and it's quite true. My pearls are their tears and my rubies are their sweat of blood. And yet I must wear them, for papa's sake, whatever the world may think, whatever Roger himself may believe of me. O Roger! O my love! How can I go on all through the years without you? Oh, God help me!" she prayed, with a sudden lifting of her eyes. "Oh, God, help me! I'm so weak. I'm so tired, I've so little strength left to keep the struggle up."

Her breath came in hard gasps, the tears blinded her. She had just time to control herself, and dash her hand across her eyes, as she saw Wiltshire coming towards her through the trees.

She was not surprised. She knew he would be looking for her somewhere in the grounds. During the week after their first meeting, he had come every second day to the Pavillion de la Reine. During the week after that, his visits had been daily. In the third week, Trafford had invited him to move out to Versailles and become their guest.

To this arrangement Paula had given the welcome of acquiescence. Though she was aware of what her father meant, she was sensible, too, of the relief which Wiltshire's presence brought into the tension of their daily life. Whenever he was with them there was a return to something like the old-time happiness. Her father seemed to grow younger in his society, and she herself drew comfort from the knowledge that this good man's support was near. She could not bear to check his gentle, tentative advances; still less could she bear to give back cold refusal to the silent pleading in her father's eyes.

Little by little she began to see all that this marriage would mean to him. It would be more now than anything he had said when he had first spoken of it, months ago. Then the advantages of protection and position were to be for her; now she could see that he was not without need of them himself. It gave her a feeling that the foundations of the earth were loosened to think that he, whom she had looked upon as almost omnipotent, should require aid. But there was no doubt that his position in the world was shaken—as much so as his moral courage or his bodily frame. The strong, resourceful, self-dependent man had reached the moment when he was beginning to hold out his hands for help.

It was help which she could give him only to the extent of her love and tenderness. These she could still offer to the father, when she had nothing for the financier. From the clamor of his countrymen against him she would gladly have transported him into another world, where all attack would be powerless. She remembered suddenly that it was what he had wanted to do for her, when he had been eager to see her become Wiltshire's wife. The reflection struck her like a blow, but she did her best to remain firm and calm beneath the weight of it. The other world for her, she argued, would be the other world for him. That was clear. With Wiltshire as a son to him, he would have an ally whose strength it

would be hard to overestimate. She had no skill in calculation, and little knowledge of the world; and yet she could not be unaware that an English duke, rich, powerful, highly placed, and full of good-will and sympathy, could not be other than an able friend to any man with needs and ambitions like her father's.

So the days at Versailles were slipping by, with courage growing in Wiltshire's heart and hope brightening in Trafford's, while in her own she was searching for strength to make the sacrifice.

As Wiltshire drew near, his increased confidence was expressed in his eyes, his smile, his attitude, and the very tones of his voice. It was not until he had drawn a wicker chair near to hers that he noticed the emotion she had been unable to conceal.

"You've been crying," he exclaimed.

"Not quite," she said, trying to smile at him through the mist of her tears. "I've been reading this."

She held up the magazine, at which Wiltshire looked with a certain air of embarrassment.

"You know what's in it," she went on, as he said nothing. "You've read it, too."

"I hope you don't let these things distress you," he said, after a minute's hesitation.

"If they were said of your father, wouldn't they distress you?"

He leaned forward and drew the magazine gently from her hands.

"It's always well to remember," he said, in a kindly voice, "that one story is true till another is told. It's perfectly astonishing how many different versions you can get of what seems like one plain, unvarnished tale."

"Oh yes; like the 'Ring and the Book,' for instance. But this," she continued, with a little break in the voice—"this doesn't seem to me the same sort of thing. There you have different points of view, and here it's a succession of facts."

"Facts are to the writer what objects are to the painter. He produces different impressions as he presents them in different lights. The writer of these articles has chosen the atmosphere which will be most unfavorable to your father. Some one else might treat the very same incidents in a way which would give you quite another effect."

"Could any one treat them in a way that would prove that—that everything was right?"

"Suppose they couldn't," he reasoned, gently; "even so, we've one important condition to remember, and that is the imperfect conception of honor that exists in the financial world."

"I don't see why that should make any difference," she declared, with a touch of honest indignation.

"It does in this way, that it's very hard for any but the highest moral natures to be superior to the surroundings in which they live. That is, it's a phase of the much-discussed question of environment. It's even more than that. It's a phase of the far larger question of the standard of rectitude by which the human race chooses to measure its public conduct. No one can deny the fact that it's far from an ideal one. While we accept in theory the principles of honor and honesty and fair dealing; and truth, we have recognized systems of not living up to them. Some of our most respected institutions would have to be made all over again, if we were to put forth any pretension to follow the Golden Rule of Christ."

The tiny furrow deepened between her brows, and she regarded him with the expression of perplexity he had not seen for so many months. She was trying to understand the strange method by which men regulated their affairs, and of which even Wiltshire spoke with tolerance.

"What institutions, for example?"

"Well—take the governments of the world as an illustration. They're fairly good governments, on the whole—most of them. And yet practically all are inspired by an insatiable greed, and the most ferocious determination to make one country's gain out of another country's loss. It's not much of an exaggeration to say that envy, hatred, and malice are the normal sentiments of every nation towards every other. You can't open a newspaper, even in the most piping times of peace, without seeing that the growling of cabinets at each other, in London, Paris, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Washington, Vienna, Tokio, and Rome, is as savage and incessant as that of a team of Esquimaux dogs. We have a whole honored

profession whose duties are in the field of hoodwinking, half-truths, and evasion. We dress it up in gold lace and a cocked hat, and give it a high place in our society. We have another profession, of which the work is to shed blood and wreck homes and spread ruin. We give it a sword and a uniform, and call it noble. Now, I cite these merely as examples of the way in which mankind contents itself with a defective moral standard. It's difficult to blame the soldier if he kills, or the diplomat if he equivocates, or the statesman if he crushes another people to aggrandize his own. It's what's expected. It's the way the world acts."

"I don't see that that makes it any better," she argued, with feminine dislike of compromise.

"It doesn't make the act any better, perhaps, but it helps us to understand the agent. Few people question, few people are able to question, the moral conditions they find around them. They accept them and live in them. And," he added, significantly, "most men engaged in financial affairs do like the others."

"You mean that they conform to a low standard."

"I'm afraid that's what I have to mean."

"And I always thought my father's standard was so high. That's what hurts me. Oh, Duke, don't think that I'm blaming him, or trying to argue against him. I oughtn't to talk of it at all, perhaps. But I'm so very unhappy, and I've no one in the world to speak to, as I can to you."

"I like you to speak to me about it. It's possible that I can help you. And in any case I know that you could never harbor a disloyal thought towards any one in the world—and least of all towards him."

"You see," she stammered, "it's all so—so ignoble."

"Doesn't it give it a somewhat different aspect when you consider that it's probably not more ignoble than what's going on in eight business houses out of ten, in London, Paris, New York, and every other great city in the world?"

"I don't see that a wrong thing becomes less wrong because a great many people do it."

"Perhaps not; and yet if we know that public opinion is wrong it helps us to make allowances for the individuals who are governed by it. And that's what I assert about the commercial and financial worlds—their moral tone is defective; their conception of honesty is imperfect. The so-called revelations made, let us say, by the Cronier tragedy in Paris, and the Insurance scandals in New York, are not revelations at all. Every one who has much to do with business knows that to make money by hook or by crook, but to make it somehow, is the one law of the game. The people who are shocked are chiefly the people who haven't made it. And that's the sort of virtuous indignation I find in these articles about your father. I've read them carefully, over the lines and between the lines, and for one word against his methods I find twenty against his success. You see, Paula—I may call you Paula, mayn't I?"

"If you like," she murmured, letting her eyes drop.

"You see—Paula—that you and I, whose ideas are different, ought not to be surprised if a man like your father, who has probably not studied the question of ethics to any great extent, conforms to the general standard around him. After all, he's only in the same case with thousands of other men, who, on every point but that of making money, are among the most high-minded in the world."

"I know you want to comfort me—"

"I should like to do more than comfort you," he said, with a sudden change of tone.

"It's the money," she hurried on, confusedly, giving him a frightened glance. "There's so much of it, and it will all come to me. I shall have to take it. It would kill papa if he thought I wouldn't. I don't want it. I hate it. If I could only find a way to give it back—"

"Paula, let me say something. Perhaps I'm daring too much, but I'm going to take the risk. Did you know I'd begun to hope again? No, don't speak. I'm not going to ask you the same question as at Monaco. I shall ask none at all. I've thought more than once since then that perhaps I was wrong not to accept just what you could give me. I feel it the more strongly now, when I think I have something better to offer you than anything I had then."

"Oh, but you couldn't have!"

"If it isn't something better, it's possibly something of which you have more need. I know your trouble, and I understand it. I don't believe that anybody in the world could feel with you more thoroughly than I. It's my trouble, too. It couldn't be more my own, if I was—your father's son."

Paula gave a little start. The words were so exactly the utterance of her own thought that they sounded to her like the summons of destiny. While she sat outwardly composed—pale, still, with hands clasped and eyes downcast, her heart was calling its last drowning farewells before going down into the sea of sacrifice.

"It's coming now," she was saying to herself. "I can't help it. I can't cling any longer. I must let go. Oh, Roger, good-bye!"

"And since the trouble is not only yours but mine," Wiltshire went on, tenderly, "why couldn't I bear it with you?"

"I don't think anybody could."

"Nobody could but I. I could. I could take you, and shelter you, and hedge you all round with so much protection, that this great question, so insistent in your life now, would pass into the second plane."

She lifted her eyes in interrogation.

"This is what I mean," he pursued, quietly. "To my wife even such a great acquisition of wealth as you might receive from your father could make no external difference. It would increase her actual possessions, but it would add nothing to her outward train of life. From the mere necessities of her position, that would already be as sumptuous and splendid as it's right for any one's life to be. Whatever came in addition would be a mere pouring of the Pacific into the Atlantic. You won't think that I'm speaking in vulgar boastfulness—"

"Oh no."

"I'm only stating the facts as they are. Don't you see, then, what I mean? If you were my wife, all this money could come to you, and you could use it as you chose. No one would know, not even your father, that you didn't spend it on yourself. You could give it away to the last farthing. You could do more than that. I know that your aim would be not merely to give the money away, but, as far as possible, to give it back to the people who used to own it. I would help you in that. We should make it our life's work. It would be a difficult task, and I don't know how far we should be successful, but at least we could try it. Here, in these pages," he went on, tapping the cover of the magazine, "there is mention made of hundreds of families. We could hunt them up and see what we could do. We should have to work discreetly, cautiously, secretly, perhaps, and safeguard in every way the honor of your father's name. But we could do our best; and even if we only succeeded once it would be worth the trying. Wouldn't it mean something to you just to be making the attempt?"

"How good you are! How well you understand!"

"I do understand, Paula, dear. That's my one justification for offering you a sort of bribe. And yet, God knows, I don't mean it as a bribe. It's only the eagerness of my love to protect you from everything that could hurt you or make you unhappy. When the gods of old saw those they loved in trouble or danger, they threw a cloud about them and snatched them away into a place of safety. And that's what I want to do for you, Paula. I can do it, if you'll let me. When I see you in the midst of this huge, unworthy battle, I'm in terror lest some of its arrows may wound you. But as my wife you'd be safe—that is, as safe as any earthly conditions can make you. I won't force the great question between us. I won't ask you again if you love me—"

"Oh, Duke," she broke in, impulsively, "I do love you—in a way."

"Then I won't ask you what that way is," he said, quickly. "If you can say as much as that, I shall be content."

When a minute or two had passed in silence, he took her hand and raised it to his lips. Leaning back, with eyes closed, she allowed him to repeat the caress. But she was thinking of the day when, beneath the questioning eyes of the woman in black and green, Winship had told her that he loved her.

CHAPTER XXIII

There were several reasons for keeping the fact of Paula's engagement to the Duke of Wiltshire a temporary secret from the outside world. Trafford himself was receiving only too much publicity at the time, and he shrank from seeing his daughter's name brought prominently into the American press, as it would be if the news were known even to a few. As the wedding was to take place in January, it was decided that it would be soon enough after Christmas to let the information get abroad.

These details were arranged between Wiltshire and Trafford alone. Paula acquiesced with a submission which barely concealed her listlessness. The two men gave themselves up to the enjoyment of their happiness with an odd unanimity. They made confidants of each other, and discussed their respective hopes far into every night. Paula was posed like a goddess in a shrine, while they found mutual delight in singing hymns and weaving garlands in her praise. They were, in fact, too busy with the service of the temple to observe that their divinity grew thinner and thinner and paler and paler, day by day. Because she smiled at them, and consented to all their arrangements, they failed to notice that, in the hours they spent together, the number of words she uttered could be counted.

It was not till they returned to Paris for Christmas and the wedding that Trafford and Wiltshire received the first shock of enlightenment.

"What have you been doing to her?" more than one old friend exclaimed. "If I had met her in the street, I don't believe I should have known her."

The impression made on the father and the lover was one of uneasiness rather than of alarm. Instead of their plans for London in February, with the opening of Parliament and the presentation of the new Duchess at an early Court, they began to talk of Egypt, Algiers, and Biskra. Trafford had no doubt that she would be better when she was married. Wiltshire was sure she would regain strength and color in the eagerness of putting into practice the great scheme of restitution they had planned.

It was for this reason that he began thinking over the matter of the million to be forced upon Winship. He had done nothing in that cause as yet, though Trafford had referred to it once or twice as a promise Wiltshire had made him. The business which had been repugnant at first began to have aspects that appealed to him when he thought of the pleasure his success would give Paula.

During the three months since they had become engaged, he had been slowly forming his own theory of the situation between her and Winship. That there was a situation was clear to him from the something guarded in her words and attitude, whenever his name was mentioned. The young man had fallen in love with her, he thought, and had asked her to be his wife. She had resented the liberty, while, woman-like, she had condoned the offence. The opportunity had been taken to offer him the money Trafford was so eager to get off his conscience, and Winship had refused the proposal, as an outrage to his dignity.

The more Wiltshire reflected, the more exactly did this version seem to fit the facts of the case. The elements it presented were not very difficult for a man of the world to deal with; and so, on a bright afternoon in January, he set out for the studio in the Passage de la Nativité. If he could come back with the news that the victory had been won, he knew that to Paula the tidings would be more precious as a gift than all the jewels he could offer her.

And yet, when face to face with the artist in the atelier, Wiltshire found the subject less easy to introduce than he had expected. Like the other actors in the drama. Winship, too, had changed much during the passage of a twelvemonth. With the exception of a few minutes on two occasions at Monte Carlo in the previous winter, the Duke had seen nothing of Winship for several years. He still thought of him as "Alice's protégé," a clever, hard-working, immature young man, to whom he could speak with a certain amount of authority. It disturbed his ideas at the outset to discover that time, assurance, and success had evolved a personage quite different from that which he had thought to find. He had the disagreeable sensation with which the patron always sees that his subordinate has sprung on to a level with himself. In theory, he would have been the last person in the world to object to it; but, in fact, it caused him something akin to irritation. The very ease with which Winship welcomed him seemed to lack respect. The matter-of-course hospitality with which he offered him an extremely good cigar seemed to savor of the man who has made money quickly. Winship's keen eyes and hard mouth and determined manner were so much at variance with the timid deference of the lad of eight

or ten years ago that Wiltshire found his sense of annoyance deepening as the conversation passed from one topic to another. He knew at last that, if the object of his errand were to be attained, it must be by diving into the subject brusquely; and so he tried to jerk himself back into the manner of speaking that would have been natural with "Alice's protégé" on one of his annual visits to Edenbridge, years ago.

"I say, Winship," he began, suddenly, "I've looked in on you to offer you some advice."

"That's very kind of you, Duke," Winship returned, easily. "I'm sure I must need it, when you put yourself to so much trouble."

"I rather think you do. We all require a friendly word at one time or another in our lives."

"I've wanted it many a time, when I didn't get it." Winship laughed, "and so I'm all the more grateful to you now."

There was a minute's hesitation, during which Wiltshire flicked the ashes from the end of his cigar with his little finger. He seemed to be quite absorbed in that operation, while Winship waited, in not unnatural curiosity.

"I believe," Wiltshire said at last, "that there's been some little misunderstanding between you and my friend, Mr. Paul Trafford."

Winship's manner changed at once. His hard mouth became harder, and he sat rigidly upright in his chair, fixing Wiltshire with the stare of his brilliant eyes.

"On the contrary," he said, quietly. "Your friend, Mr. Paul Trafford, and I understand each other very well."

The slightly ironical tone gave an additional prick to the Duke's mild temper.

"Now, don't be an ass, Winship," he laid, impatiently. "Mr. Trafford has been extremely magnanimous to you, and you've been behaving like an imbecile. Any man of the world would tell you that."

"Are you in his confidence, Duke?"

"I am to the extent of knowing what he would be willing to do for you."

"And his reasons for wishing to do it?"

"That, I understand, is one which does him credit. He has learned that in certain transactions with your family, some years ago, the loss entailed on you is greater than it should have been. He is eager now to make the loss good. That's all."

"I wonder if that's his way of putting it, or yours?"

"That has nothing to do with it."

"No, it hasn't. It's merely a matter of curiosity on my part, because it's rather neat. Your friend, Mr. Paul Trafford, has been a long time learning the fact of which you speak. His mind must have been recently opened to knowledge. Perhaps," Winship added, laying his hand on a pile of numbers of the *New York Magazine* that were within reach—"perhaps he got some of his information here."

"Rot!" Wiltshire exclaimed, contemptuously. "If you're going to be guided by stuff like that—"

"No, no, not at all. There's very little here that I didn't learn with my catechism. My sister, Marah, would be an excellent historian of that great man's life. She's followed his career, and treasured his sayings, and marked his doings down, as Boswell never did with Johnson. I grew up to the knowledge of it all as I did to the art of painting."

"That's very natural. Your sister is a woman who has suffered much. She has her own point of view, from which you couldn't move her. But I shouldn't think a man like you would go by any opinion but his own."

"I don't. In all that my sister feels towards your friend, Mr. Trafford. I entirely agree with her."

"But on slightly different grounds, I presume."

There was something so significant in the Duke's tone that Winship looked at him a minute before replying.

"Possibly," he admitted at last. "I'm not sure that I follow you, but—"

"Oh yes, you do, Winship. You follow me well enough. Don't let us have any beating about the bush. The matter is too serious for that. I may say that I'm here in the interests of all the parties concerned. Have I your permission to speak right out, as an old friend, and, perhaps, one of your best friends?"

"Certainly, Duke; but if your object is to get me to accept money—"

"That's my first object, but not the most important one. I must say that for a man like you to refuse a sum that would raise him to a position of affluence seems to me insane. As I understand, it's money to which you put forth a claim."

"No, no, Duke. May I correct you? The system by which your friend, Mr. Paul Trafford, ruined my family was a perfectly legal one, leaving us no claim at all. His plan of attack is always to dodge behind the law, whenever any one attempts to defend himself or to hit back. Where there are no laws to shelter him, he buys legislatures to pass them. It's a very safe method, and stops effectually anything like what you call a claim—unless it be a moral one."

"Then let's say a moral one. That's the second point I want to make. The whole matter is removing itself to moral grounds, to a greater degree than you may be likely to think probable. Trafford's not a bad sort, at heart. He's far from being the cold, calculating monster the fellows in that magazine would try to make him out. To my mind he's one of your characteristic American primitives, possessed by the fury of making money, as earlier primitives were possessed by the fury of battle. And, just as with them the zest lay not so much in the conquest as in the fight, so with him it's not so much in the money as in the game of getting it. Now that he's had enough of the sport, now that the money is piled up around him, other primitive impulses are beginning to awaken. I wonder if you can guess?"

"I needn't guess. I know. It was never an unusual thing for the robber-baron to be seized with remorse."

"That's it. You've hit it. It's a curious thing to watch, as I've had the opportunity of doing in the past few months, the slow dawning in the mind of this gigantic, materialistic, spiritually inorganic creature of the knowledge that he has a soul. It's like the first uneasy groping after higher things on the part of pre-historic man. There's something in it which is at once amusing and terrible. Simple conceptions of rectitude, that are matters of course to you and me, are strange, new discoveries to him. On Trafford's part it translates itself by the repetition of a certain phrase—'To make me successful a good many poor devils have had to fail. By George, I'd like to set them on their feet again!' Now, I say, Winship, why should you, from a mere sense of pride, block the path to a blind man, feeling his way to doing what's right?"

"And not make his repentance as easy for him as possible?" Winship added. "That's what you mean, isn't it?"

"Something of the sort," Wiltshire admitted.

"Then I may say at once, Duke, that I've no intention of making anything easy for your friend, Mr. Paul Trafford, that I can render hard. It's impossible for a man like you, whose life has been cushioned from his cradle, to enter into the feelings of people like ourselves, who, during long years, have been the victims of a great and wanton wrong."

Winship spoke quietly, and drew two or three puffs from his cigar before he went on again.

"I can recall the time when, as a boy of eight or ten, I first heard the name of Trafford whispered in our household. From the way in which it was spoken there came to be, in my imagination, something evil and ominous in the very sound. It grew to be the theme of all my parents' conversation, and never failed to inspire anxiety, anger, and fear. I don't suppose you know anything about the misery a young lad goes through as he watches his elders battling with some great trouble which he can't understand. The thing is all the more terrible from its impalpability and vagueness. I don't exaggerate in the least when I say that it robbed me of all the happy, careless ease of mind which means so much to any young thing's normal development. I had no boyhood. Paul Trafford crushed it out of me. He ground us all into powder, as you know very well. We all had to suffer, but in some respects I suffered most, though no one took note of it. I was the lad who had to weep behind the walls, while the women went forth to fight. That humiliation is unimaginable to you, who have probably never known an hour's indignity."

"That's all you know about it," Wiltshire threw in, with a touch of bitterness.

"Well, to cut it short," Winship pursued, "I vowed from my boyhood to hale Paul Trafford into some court where there would be a surer justice than any meted out by man. It's a curious fact that, while I never saw my way, I never lost the

conviction that some day I should find it. And I've done so. I've stumbled into it. Or, rather, I've been led into it by the one hand on earth that has power to inflict on him the very chastisement of Heaven."

"You must mean his daughter's."

"I do mean hers. I've found all the justice I wanted in the fact that she knows him as he is."

"Don't you think it was knowledge that might have been spared her?"

"There can be no way of sparing Paul Trafford's daughter, as long as the sins of the father continue to be visited on the child. That's a law which nature never relaxes. If there had been any way of escape for her, I, of all men, should have been bound to find it."

"Why you of all men?" Wiltshire asked, with an effort to maintain his calmness of tone.

"Because I love her," Winship cried, fiercely. "Because I'm the one man who can save her. Because her one chance of any kind of happiness lies in marrying me."

The Duke grew white. His hand trembled so that, after trying to raise his cigar to his lips, he threw it away. He knew that he must not lose his self-control.

"I dare say it isn't unnatural for you to feel like that, Winship," he said, with an attempt at speaking kindly. "And if you do care for Miss Trafford, the way is open for you to make her happy as it is. You could take the money her father offers you."

"Never! She knows as well as I that it's impossible. What the law has given him, he shall keep. If I touched a penny of it, I should feel as guilty as himself. She knows that. I've told her. She didn't understand it at the minute, but I'm convinced she does to-day. How could she expect me to take it when I've given up everything—given up my love—given up *her*—in order to keep my honor? But no! I haven't given her up. The time will come when her love will bring her back to me. She loves me, Duke, as I love her—with that kind of love which is for once and always. She gave me up to stay with him. I honor her for it, and love her the more. But we're young. We can afford to wait. There will be a day when she will be free to cast that cursed money from her, and come to me without it, as she would have come already if it hadn't been for him. She loves me, Duke," he repeated, speaking rapidly, and with gestures. "She loves me. I know she will never change or love another. You know her. You know how pure and holy and true she is. I can wait for her, for however long the time may be, she'll come to me. I tell you all this, Duke, because I want you to understand why I don't take the money. She herself would condemn me for it now. She'll come to me, one day, without it, and—"

"For God's sake, stop!" Wiltshire cried, hoarsely. "Paula is to marry me next week."

He sat rigid and white in his chair, his fingers twitching nervously. Winship, leaning from his own seat, gazed at him with blazing eyes.

"Paula is to—? Oh no, Duke, no."

"Yes," Wiltshire whispered, just above his breath, as though the admission had in it something of the terrible.

"Great God!" Winship muttered to himself, and sank back limply in his chair.

Minutes passed without sound or motion on either side. Dusk was gathering in the long studio. The high north light began to take on a faint tinge of red, caught from the winter sunset. The two men sat in such dead silence that the mild tinkle of the door-bell startled them. Each sprang to his feet and stood listening, as if in expectation.

"Excuse me," Winship said at last. "I'm alone here. I must answer it."

"In any case, I ought to go," the Duke returned. He followed Winship towards the door, with the intention of making his escape when the new-comer was admitted. But he stopped again at the sound of Winship's voice.

"Paula!"

Winship stood with the door open, as if unwilling to let her pass.

"I had to come, Roger," she answered, from the threshold. "Don't be angry. Don't blame me. I've something to tell you. I didn't want you to hear it from any one but myself. Oh, Roger, let me come in. I had to see you just this once more. It's only to say good-bye."

"Hush!" Winship whispered.

But it was too late. Paula was already in the room, and face to face with Wiltshire.

CHAPTER XXIV

There was no hesitation on Paula's part. She went directly to Wiltshire and held out her hand. "I didn't know you were here, Duke," she said, without embarrassment. "I came to tell Mr. Winship something I wanted him to learn from me, myself. Perhaps, if you're not in a hurry, you could come back for me."

"If your carriage is here," Wiltshire returned, as calmly as he could, "I think I won't come back. Alice is to arrive to-day, and I told her to expect me at the Hotel Bristol about five."

"Then you'll bring her to dinner, won't you? She wrote me she'd come if she wasn't too tired from the journey."

"That's it," Wiltshire muttered. "We shall meet this evening. Good-bye, Winship. Au revoir, Paula."

He shook hands with both, and departed with the dignified air of a man who sees nothing unusual in the situation. When the door closed behind him, Winship seized Paula's hands and almost dragged her to the light.

"Paula, you've been ill," he cried. "What have they been doing to you?"

She released herself and drew away from him.

"No, Roger, I haven't been ill. I only think that—perhaps—I'm—I'm—dying."

"My God!" he muttered to himself. "They'll pay for this."

He tried to take her in his arms, but again she stepped back from him.

"No, Roger, don't. We're all alone here, aren't we? Isn't Marah in?"

"Marah is out. We're all alone."

"Then I must only stay a minute," she hurried on. "I came to tell you—to tell you—Oh, Roger, I don't know how to say it. It seems like a blasphemy, now that I'm face to face with you again. It's like a crime. I who love you so that I can make no pretence at not doing it—I'm going to marry some one else."

"Then it's true, Paula?"

"Yes, it's true, Roger. Did he tell you?"

"Oh, it isn't true. It can't be true. You won't do it. Say you won't do it."

"I must Roger. I have to do it for papa's sake. There are other reasons, too. Everything is forcing me into it. I don't know what else to do. I'm like a lost person. And I love you, Roger. I shall always love you. No marriage will keep me from doing that."

"Then your marriage will be a crime, Paula, as you say. You must reflect. You must ask yourself if it's just towards him."

"Yes; I think it's quite just. He knows I don't love him—as I might do."

"But have you told him that you love some one else?"

"He never asked me. He said he wouldn't ask me anything."

"You must tell him, Paula. You must tell him that you love me. He must hear it from yourself."

"Oh, Roger, what's the use? It would only make new complications, and I'm so worn out with those that exist already. I've told you that I think I must be dying, and I believe it. I don't seem to have the force to live. There's nothing the matter with me, really, only it's all been so hard for me. You know I haven't much strength of character; and so, in the effort to stand alone, I've just—sunk down. I've come to the point where I'd rather they did just as they will with me than struggle any more."

"Oh, Paula, you mustn't feel like that when I love you. You'd be strong if you had my arms to uphold you."

"Yes," she smiled. "I'd be strong then. But, you see, it can't be."

"Why can't it be? Why should you be sacrificed? Why should we both be sacrificed? You're offering yourself up in an effort that will never bring happiness to any one. Leave it all behind you, and come to me. Come to me, as I asked you to come, that day in June. You could go to England with Lady Alice Holroyd. She knows our story, and we have her sympathy. I'd follow you, and we could be married there."

"No, no, Roger. I couldn't do anything like that. Don't hope for it. I couldn't do anything in flight or secrecy."

"You must be reasonable, Paula, my darling. This isn't a matter where one can follow the rules of a book of etiquette. It's a case of life and death—of your life and your death. There's no other question here than that of saving you."

"Nothing can save me, Roger. The situation is such as to leave me no way of escape. If I were to do what you suggest, it would kill my father."

"But you mustn't let him kill you."

"He doesn't mean to. He hasn't a thought but for my happiness. You remember how he yielded in everything last spring. If you could only have accepted his offer—"

"Suppose I did it now, Paula. Would that help you? Would it make you any happier?"

"I couldn't let you do it now. I know things now that I didn't know then. I see that you were right. I see that you couldn't take the money. I'm glad you didn't accept it, even for my sake. But I have to keep it. I can't separate myself from my father, to secure either your happiness or mine. It's especially my duty to be loyal to him now, when so many others are condemning him."

She moved away from the window and dropped into a chair.

"I'll sit down a minute," she murmured. "I'm not very strong, and I'm easily tired."

"Let me get you some tea," he begged. "I can do it quite quickly, even though I'm alone here."

"No, don't do that. I've only a minute to stay. Perhaps I shouldn't have come at all. But I couldn't face—what I have to do next week—without seeing you once again. I shall feel stronger now, and more resigned."

"It's monstrous, Paula," Winship broke out, bitterly. "You must not throw away your life—"

"Roger, dear," she said, softly, "don't let us talk any more about it. Take a chair and sit near me. There—not quite so near—there. Now let me look about this dear room. You know I haven't been in it since the day your mother joined our hands together. That's her chair," she continued, gazing around the darkening room. "There's Marah's table, with her paints and brushes. There's your easel, and the lay-figures, and the old piano. Ah, how familiar it all is! I was so happy during the weeks I used to come here. You didn't know what bliss it was to me to sit before you, to hear you talk, and watch you work. I didn't know it myself then. I was anxious and fearful, already, wondering how it was to end. But now, as I look back, I can see that that was the good time. Why couldn't I have been some girl-student, like those I see at the Art Club?—whom you might have loved, who might have loved you, with no great, vexed question between us. How happy I should have been if I'd been poor. That's what nature meant me for. I've often wondered why I could never feel as if wealth were a matter of course to me, like so many girls I know, who would think it strange if they didn't have all the money they want to spend. I suppose it's because I'm like the people I'm descended from. I've been reading about them in those dreadful articles every one is quoting. Jennie O'Mara, my grandmother, was a servant. They say I resemble her, that I have her eyes. You see, I'm nothing but a simple girl of the people, without either the instincts or the antecedents of greatness; and yet I'm to be the richest woman in the world. How strange it is!—and how wrong! That's one reason why I'm marrying the Duke, Roger, dear. As his wife I shall be able to slip out of all this, without attracting any notice to myself. Even papa needn't know it, so the Duke says."

"Paula, don't say that again," Winship pleaded. "You can't marry Wiltshire. It's out of all reason and possibility. I'll go to your father. I'll take anything—"

She rose quietly and slipped towards him through the dusk. She laid her hands on his shoulders and looked down into his eyes.

"I came, Roger, for help and strength. You've given them to me. Just to see you, to hear your voice, and to know that you love me still, has made me braver. But if I stay any longer you'll take your help away. So I must go."

"No, no," he protested. "Not yet—not yet."

He seized her hands and pressed them to his lips. When he released them she stooped and kissed him.

"Good-bye. Good-bye," she murmured, and glided towards the door.

Winship was wise enough to let her pass out, and go her way alone.

CHAPTER XXV

Lady Alice Holroyd, dressed still in her travelling-gown, sat drinking tea and munching toast in Wiltshire's sitting-room at the Hotel Bristol. Her air was abstracted, and, as she ate, her gaze was fixed absently on one spot in the carpet.

"I mustn't overdo it," she mused, "and, above all, I must be sympathetic. It would spoil everything if he thought I had objections on my own account."

So, when her brother entered, she rose and kissed him cordially.

"You see I've come," she exclaimed. "I couldn't wait another day, after getting such news as that."

Wiltshire threw his hat and overcoat on one arm-chair and sank wearily into another.

"So you've come to congratulate me," he said, in a tone of which the slightly suggested irony did not escape her.

"I've come to wish that you may be very happy, Ludovic."

"Ah! Why the distinction?"

"I'm not aware that I make any distinction. If I do, it's because your happiness is the first of all considerations to me."

"Give me some tea," he requested, with the air of a man who is very tired.

"Your happiness is my first and only consideration," she continued, as she prepared the tea. "It's very natural that it should be. Of course, you know as well as I do that I used to have other hopes for you; but that's neither here nor there when once you have made your choice. Your wife would be my sister, even if you picked her out of a music-hall."

"Well, I haven't gone as far as that."

"I'm only an old maid, Ludovic," she went on, passing him his cup. "I'm an Englishwoman, a countrywoman, and an aristocrat. I've got all the traditions, limitations, and prejudices of my class. I'm neither modern nor democratic nor cosmopolitan. But all that is nothing to me the minute you've found the woman you love—and who loves you."

She pronounced the last four words in a natural tone, and without the slightest emphasis; but Wiltshire gulped down all his tea at once, and passed her back the cup.

"No one would ever accuse me of being a sentimentalist," she pursued, as she filled the cup again, "but I've lived long enough, and seen enough of the world, to know that love—mutual love—is the only thing. Nothing else counts—neither wealth nor descent nor family pride nor anything. So I say again, Ludovic, that if you love her, and if she loves you, there's no question about it but that you've done the best thing possible. It's a pity that there should be all this publicity about her family history; but I give you my word, Ludovic, that nothing of the sort shall weigh against her with me—as long as she loves you."

"Thanks," Wiltshire murmured.

"And how is the dear thing?" Lady Alice inquired, in another tone.

"I think you may find her changed. She isn't very well."

"Ah!"

"You'll see for yourself. We are going to dine with them this evening."

"What do you mean by changed? You don't suppose she has anything on her mind, do you?"

"On her mind? What should she have?"

He glanced up at her sharply, but he turned his own eyes quickly away before the scrutiny in hers. He had the uncomfortable suspicion that she knew more of his affairs than he did himself. He remembered that Winship had stayed

with her at Edenbridge, not long ago, and might easily have taken her into his confidence.

"Oh, I don't know," Lady Alice responded, vaguely. "Girls often have ideas which they'll allow to consume them away before they'll speak of them—and especially nice girls like Paula."

"I'm afraid I don't understand you," Wiltshire said, affecting a tone of indifference. "I think I'll go and dress now. I hope they've given you comfortable rooms. We ought to leave here at eight."

But, having passed into his room, he did not dress. He sent his man away, and once more threw himself wearily into an arm-chair, where he sat pondering.

Yes, it was clear that Alice knew something that had been kept from him. Her repetition of the clause "if she loves you," "as long as she loves you," which had seemed to him a few minutes ago like a stab delivered unconsciously, now came to him like a note of intentional warning. Alice knew what Winship knew, what Paula knew, what Trafford knew, what every one knew but himself—that Paula did not love him. She was marrying him because she could not see what else to do. There had, indeed, never been any secret about that. It was the ground on which he had approached her. He had caught her in the snare of her troubles, and bribed her by the promise of deliverance. He had nothing to complain of. She had never owned to loving him otherwise than—in a way. He knew now what the way was. He should never have had any doubt about it. It was the way she had already acknowledged that day at Monaco. It was in another way than that that she loved Roger Winship.

As the name crossed Wiltshire's mind he buried his face in his hands, and groaned. The life-long humiliation, against which manhood and pride had enabled him to erect some kind of barrier, swept over him now with the whole force of its bitter flood. He was the man so cursed with physical insignificance that no woman could love him for himself. He had been wounded by the fact even when he had been half indifferent. He had noticed often enough that the proud beauties, who had let him see that they were willing to bear his name and wear his coronet, shrank from his personal contact. But this was the crowning instance of all. Paula did love him—in a way. That is, she honored and esteemed him. She trusted him with the secrets which, he believed, she would never confide to any one else on earth. She was ready to marry him, not out of ambition, nor from any worldly motive whatever. And yet, even she, as she came to him, held out despairing hands to a Roger Winship—a pauper—a nobody—a man who could give her no proud place in the world, nor, indeed, anything but himself.

In spite of his native simplicity, Wiltshire could not help feeling this last fact to add gall to his wormwood. It emphasized his condition of personal inferiority. No one could have greater advantages of position, wealth, and character; and yet, because he was short and ugly and dull-eyed, he could neither command love nor win it. The utmost he could hope for would be the sort of tempered affection which Paula gave—the affection of one who could look below the surface and honor him for what was hidden there.

Then as the first bitterness of his reflections passed away, there came the thought, Why not be content with what he could get? Since life offered him only half a loaf, was it not better to take it than to go hungry? It was out of the question for Paula to marry Roger Winship, in any circumstances in which she could be placed. Then why not make the best of the situation by marrying her himself? The conditions would not be ideal for any one concerned, but he would take care that they involved no actual misery. Of whatever suffering there might be to bear, he would accept the lion's share as his own. That would be better—anything would be better—than to give her up.

It was cold comfort, but he had no other. Such as it was, it gave him the courage to dress, and go with Lady Alice to dine with Paula and her father. It supported him through the ordeal of the evening, and helped him to conceal his pain, as he watched Paula's jaded efforts to infuse into her regard for him something which was not there.

It was when he was driving back to the hotel with his sister that the current of his thoughts changed again.

"Well, how did she seem to you?" he asked, with evident anxiety.

Lady Alice did not reply.

"Did she strike you as being—altered, since you saw her last?"

Lady Alice looked out of the carriage window, and still kept silence.

"Why don't you answer?" he persisted.

"Because I'm trying to think of what to say."

"You mean, of what will give me the least pain."

"Yes, Ludovic."

"I don't think you need mind about that—now. I appreciate your hesitation, but it's more or less needless. You know things that I don't, and yet I do know more than you may suppose."

"That's rather enigmatical."

"No, it isn't. It means only that I've learned so much that you needn't be afraid to tell me everything."

"What makes you think that I have anything to tell?"

"Roger Winship spent two nights with you at Edenbridge—"

"Well?"

"I don't imagine that you discussed pictures all the time."

"We didn't."

"No; he took you into his confidence, and told you about himself—and—and—Paula."

Lady Alice seemed lost in the contemplation of the lights and carriages as they crossed the Place de l'Etoile.

"Aren't you going to speak?" Wiltshire went on.

"What's the good of speaking, Ludovic? If Roger Winship said anything to me, it's best to bury it in silence. You and Paula are to be married next week, and so—"

"The good of speaking lies in the fact that I need to know. Circumstances that touch me most closely are familiar to you, to Winship, to Trafford, to Paula—in short, to every one but myself. There's no one to whom I can turn for the information so naturally as to you."

"But, Ludovic," she cried, in tones of astonishment, "I should think you'd see it."

"See what?"

Lady Alice had to brace herself before she replied. It was no easy thing to deal at her brother the blow which must inflict on him a lifelong pain. She had to remind herself again that he was the head of the house of Holroyd, and must, at all costs, be true to the history and traditions of his race. Paula Trafford might be charming in herself, but no Holroyd could look upon the marriage as other than a family disaster. "The daughter of a notorious, low-born Yankee freebooter," their uncle, Lord George, had called her, when the engagement was announced to him; and much as Lady Alice liked Paula for her own sake, she could not deny that the designation was just. It was a case in which Ludovic had to be saved from himself, but, even so, Lady Alice argued, she would have had the weakness to spare him if Paula had only loved him.

"See what?" she exclaimed, echoing her brother's words. "See that the girl is dying on her feet, because—"

"Because," he broke in, "she's going to marry me."

"Not quite that, Ludovic. But because she isn't going to marry Roger Winship."

"You don't know," he cried, desperately. "You've only his word for it."

"I haven't only his word, I've hers. I know what happened—and what's happening."

"What do you mean—what's happening?"

"I've told you. She's fading out of life. You must all be blind not to see it."

"And—what happened?"

"You make me say it, Ludovic, mind you. I would have kept it from you if I could. Last spring, about the time you came back from the Cape, Paula became engaged to Roger Winship. The father consented, and they might have been married, only that Roger wouldn't accept, nor let her accept, any of the Trafford money. Then it was all broken off, naturally enough. There! Now you know all there is to know. You'll hate me as long as you live for telling you, but, you see, you've made me."

"You've done quite rightly," he murmured, from the depths of his corner of the carriage. "It would have been better if I had known it before."

As they rolled on the rest of their way in silence, Lady Alice reflected sadly on the amount of heroism it sometimes takes to be loyal to one's membership in a great, historic family.

CHAPTER XXVI

Early in the next forenoon Wiltshire was ushered into Trafford's office. He entered with an apology for the untimely hour, but Trafford stopped him with the assertion that, had he not come, he himself would have gone forth to seek the Duke at his hotel.

"The fact is, Wiltshire, that I'm worried about her. This morning she's going around the house like a ghost. It's no use blinding ourselves to the fact that she's very ill."

Trafford leaned heavily on his desk, and fingered the paper-weights nervously.

"What do you suppose is the matter with her?" Wiltshire asked, with some slight hesitation.

"I've had Robin to see her. I didn't tell you that."

"Well, what does he say?"

"Oh, he made up some cock-and-bull story, as doctors always do when they're afraid to confess their ignorance. Said he thought she was suffering from some secret grief. I told him that wasn't possible."

"Are you sure it isn't, Trafford?"

"How could it be?"

"I think I could tell you."

"You?"

Trafford raised his head with sudden attention.

"Yes, I. Doesn't it strike you that, between us, you and I are—killing her?"

Trafford stared at Wiltshire a long half-minute before answering.

"How?" he asked, laconically.

"By urging her into a marriage in which she has no heart."

"Oh, but you must be mistaken, Wiltshire; I know she's fond of you—"

"Yes, as she would have been fond of an elder brother, if she had one. It's because she's fond of me in that way that she hasn't the heart to hurt me by refusing—"

He paused, half hoping to be contradicted again. But when Trafford spoke his tone implied little inclination to dispute the question.

"Do you think so?" was all he said.

"Aren't we obliged to think so? Haven't we the proof before us?"

"Where?"

"In herself. No woman who was going joyfully to her wedding-day would look as she does. Mind you, I don't say that what she's doing she's doing unwillingly. On the contrary, she's making a willing sacrifice—the sacrifice of all her own happiness for the sake of pleasing you and me. We're forcing her—"

"No, no; not that, Wiltshire. I've never put the slightest constraint upon her. She's always been as free as the wind. When it comes to sacrifice, I'm willing to anticipate hers by mine—in everything."

"Not more so than I, Trafford," the Duke said, quietly. "And yet I repeat what I said: we're forcing her by the very fact of letting her see how much it means to us. We don't realize that she's just the nature to break her own heart rather than wound yours or mine. The question for us to decide is whether or not we're going to let her."

"Of course we can't let her—if you're right."

Trafford spoke with difficulty, finishing his sentence with a sort of gulp. He bent his head again, and once more began pushing the paper-weights about.

"And you know I *am* right," Wiltshire persisted.

Again Trafford hesitated before answering.

"Then what do you propose to do?" he asked at last, with a certain huskiness.

"I've thought that over, and I see that here our united action ends. If her happiness is to be secured—and I suppose that is the dearest wish of both of us—then I have one task and you have another. I have the right to speak of mine, but I can't speak of yours, unless you give me leave."

"Say what you like. This is no time for too much punctiliousness. Whatever is necessary I shall have to do. I've long begun to recognize that I can't be stronger than she is, not any more than the chain can be stronger than its weakest link. Now, tell me what you mean."

"It's soon said," Wiltshire went on. "I can free her from the man she doesn't love; but it's for you to let her marry the man she does."

Trafford sprang to his feet.

"There's a man—she does—love?"

"You ought to know it," Wiltshire answered, quietly. "A girl like Paula hasn't forgotten in January the man she promised to marry in June. I don't reproach you, Trafford—"

"Oh, reproach me if you like," Trafford groaned, impatiently, as he strode up and down the room.

"I will say, however, that if you had only told me what I ought to have known, none of us would have been in the position in which we find ourselves to-day."

"I give you my word of honor, Wiltshire, I thought it was all over. Paula did promise to marry the man, but since the affair ended she seemed never to think of him again."

"And I can tell you that she thinks of nothing but him. If I were in your place—"

"You'd let her marry him. Yes, I know," Trafford broke in, impatiently, "but you'll be surprised, perhaps, when I tell you I'd consented to the match, only the man refused my money. But what's the use of discussing it. The whole thing is out of the question—unless—unless her life depended on it."

"Are you sure it doesn't?"

"Look here, Wiltshire," Trafford cried, wheeling round. "What are you trying to say? Speak right out, for Heaven's sake!"

"I mean that, for your sake and mine, Paula has undertaken a task beyond her strength. In the effort to carry it out she's being physically and mentally and spiritually exhausted. The question in her mind is a more complicated one than that of giving up the man she loves to marry the one she doesn't love. That's an experience many girls have had to face, and they've lived through it. Paula could do it as well as they. But in her case she has other troubles—"

"Other troubles?"

"And I think you ought to know it, Trafford."

"But, good God! what other troubles can she have?"

"Your own. She isn't ignorant of the campaign they're carrying on against you—over there."

"Well, what of it?"

"I've no more to say on the point. I mention it only to explain why the accumulation of her experiences during the past few months has been such a drain on her vitality."

"Do you mean to say that she attaches importance to the rot they've been writing about me in New York?"

"I think I can go as far as that."

"Importance—in what sense?"

The low tone of Trafford's voice, the stillness of his attitude, and the intensity of his deep eyes betrayed the fear with which he awaited Wiltshire's reply.

"That's a question I've no right to answer. Any discussion of it should be between you and her."

"That sounds as if you were afraid of breaking bad news. Well, I won't press you."

For a few minutes Trafford resumed his walk up and down the room, his hands clasped behind his back and his head bent. When he stopped at last in front of Wiltshire, he astonished him by saying:

"Let's go and talk it out with Paula."

Wiltshire objected, on the ground that he preferred to have his own interview with her in private.

"No, no," Trafford urged. "I must be there. I must know what you say to each other. I must know, above all, what she says. The question touches me too closely to have it decided in my absence. Come, Wiltshire," he insisted, taking the Duke by the arm and almost dragging him from his chair, "come along, and we'll reach an understanding together."

Reluctant as he was, Wiltshire suffered himself to be led away towards Paula's boudoir. As they approached the half-open doorway they heard women's voices within. Wiltshire held back, but Trafford pushed the door open and entered. Two women were on their knees, with pins in their hands and between their teeth. There was a third woman farther off, looking on with critical attention. Paula stood in the midst, tall, pale, grave, crowned with orange-blossom, veiled in lace, and shimmering in the white and silver of her wedding-dress.

She gave a little cry as her father entered.

"Don't be alarmed," he said, with a forced laugh "It's no one to be afraid of. Come here, Duke, and you'll see something."

"No, no! Please!" Paula implored.

But Trafford insisted on Wiltshire's entering. Since things had gone as far as this, he was not without a lingering hope that it might be too late for turning back.

CHAPTER XXVII

As they were actually in the room, there was nothing for Paula to do but receive them with the best grace she could command. She came forward to meet the Duke with hand out-stretched, but she held herself rigidly, as though on guard against any warmer greeting. The attitude did not escape him, and its significance confirmed him in the feeling that he was right in what he proposed to do.

While the three women withdrew at a nod from Trafford, Paula stood before Wiltshire trying to cover up her embarrassment with smiling cordiality.

"It had to be done, you know," she said, spreading her hands apart in a gesture of apology. "Even wedding-dresses have to fit."

"If you have to wear them," Wiltshire added, trying to smile in response.

"And as I'm going to do so—" Paula began.

"We've come in to talk about that," Wiltshire said, bluntly.

"Talk about—what?" She looked wonderingly, as she spoke, from the Duke to her father.

"Wiltshire thinks you'd rather not marry him," Trafford declared, with intentional directness of attack.

"Oh, how can he? You must both know that I'm doing it—willingly."

"It's precisely because I do know that that I'm wondering whether I should let you," Wiltshire said, gently.

"But I thought you—wanted to."

"It isn't a question of what I want, Paula. It's the far bigger question of what's right. And I've come to the conclusion that it isn't right for me to let you throw away your life for mine."

"Is it because you saw me at Mr. Winship's yesterday that you bring this up now? Papa, dear," she added, turning to Trafford, "I went to see Mr. Winship yesterday. I felt that I had a right to do it. I wanted to bid him good-bye. Is it," she continued, looking again at Wiltshire—"is it because of that that you want to—to release me?"

"I know why you went there. As you say, it was to bid him good-bye. But if you hadn't loved him you wouldn't have wanted to do it."

There was no reproach in Wiltshire's tone. He tried to keep out of it everything but a mere statement of the fact.

"I do love him," Paula said, after a minute's hesitation. "I needn't deny it. A lot of people know it. Your sister knows it, and papa, and—"

"I swear I didn't, Paula," Trafford cried. "I thought you had given the man up."

"So I have, papa. But don't you remember that I told you I should always love him—even if I married some one else."

"You see, then—" Wiltshire began.

"But that doesn't keep me from loving you," she went on, quickly, "just as much as I've always loved you. Only it isn't the same thing. It isn't even the same sort of thing. If you think I've changed towards you, Duke, or that I don't want to keep my word, you're quite wrong."

"But I don't think so, Paula. I know you're ready to marry me, and I know you'd do it from the highest motives that can rule in human conduct, but I couldn't have the heart of a man and allow you to do it."

"Let's sit down," Trafford suggested, with something like a groan.

When they had taken seats, Wiltshire defined the situation between them. He took the responsibility for it entirely upon himself. He had practically laid a trap for her. He had placed her in a position in which it had been almost impossible

for her to refuse him. He had known that at the time. He had been quite aware that unless she had other reasons for doing so she could not marry him for love. He would say in his own defence that he hoped that the love which was lacking now she might learn to give him as their lives went on together. It was a hope founded on the assumption that if she did not love him much, at least she loved no one else more. Now that he knew to the contrary, he must beg her not to sacrifice herself in an effort that could only fail. She listened with downcast eyes. Her face was pale and drawn, and though she maintained her self-control, her emotion betrayed itself in the nervousness with which she twirled round and round the one ring she wore—her engagement-ring. She was unconscious of the action, but Wiltshire noted how loosely the ring clung to the thin white finger.

"I don't think you do me justice, Duke," she said, when he had finished speaking. She raised her eyes and looked at him with apparent calmness. "You seem to think I have taken this step without knowing what I was doing, or counting the cost. But I did all that beforehand. If I hadn't believed that I could be a good wife to you, I shouldn't have undertaken to try. That I loved some one else differently was something I never intended that you should know. It wouldn't have been necessary. I don't suppose that any two married people know everything about each other—or that they need to know. You'd have been happy with me—"

"Ah, but would you have been happy with me, Paula?"

"A woman's happiness, Duke, is very easily secured. A large part of it—the very largest part of it—is in the happiness of those she cares for. If you and papa were pleased, that in itself would mean a great deal to me. I don't say that it would be enough to make me put aside all positive desires of my own, if there were no other reason. But there *is* another reason—"

"What?"

"Papa knows. I needn't explain it. It's enough to say that it exists. I couldn't marry Mr. Winship, however much I cared for him. And since that is so, why shouldn't I take what's left of my life to bring some comfort into yours?"

Wiltshire sprang up and crossed the room towards her.

"No, no, Paula. It can't be. You wouldn't be bringing comfort into my life when I knew you were desolating your own. It isn't as if everything were surely over for the love you own to. If it were, then, perhaps—who knows?—I might let you come in to the poor shelter I could offer you. But everything isn't over—"

"Oh, Duke, don't say that," she cried, in a sharp tone of pleading.

"I do say it. I say it and repeat it. Reasons that exist to-day may not exist to-morrow. What should I feel if the time ever came when you might be free to marry him, if you had not been tied to me?"

She started with a little gasp, raising her hand as if to brush the thought away from her. It was the hand on which her engagement-ring hung so loosely. Wiltshire caught it, holding it firmly in his own grasp.

"I'm going to take this off, Paula. It should never have gone on."

She looked at him piteously, big tears beginning to roll down her cheeks. Trafford sprang from his chair, with an inarticulate sound of impatience. Wiltshire drew the ring so slowly from the finger that he seemed to be counting the seconds by which his own life ebbed away.

In the long minute of silence a discreet tap on the door sounded startlingly loud. To Trafford's quick "Come in," his secretary entered, apologetically offering a card.

"The gentleman said his errand was urgent," the secretary explained, "otherwise I shouldn't have ventured—"

"You're quite right, Smithson. Ask Durand to show the gentleman in here."

"But who is it, papa?" Paula cried, rising, "I can't see any one."

"You'd better see *him*," Trafford said, gruffly.

He handed the card to Wiltshire, who, having read it, passed it on to Paula.

"You see, I was right," he said, softly. "Everything isn't over yet."

"But, papa," Paula protested, with an air of distress, "I can't see Mr. Winship with this—this wedding-dress on."

"Then take it off."

"Yes, take it off, Paula," Wiltshire said, with a sad smile. "As long as I live I shall remember with joy that you were willing to wear it. Now I am going to say good-bye. You mustn't be sorry for anything that's occurred, because, even as things are, I'm a great deal happier than if—than if I didn't love you."

"Oh, Duke—" she began, brokenly.

"Hush," he whispered. "Don't try to say anything. Winship will be here in a minute, and you must go and take that off. But you can lay it away somewhere—can't you?—and keep it in memory of the sacrifice—from which I saved you."

Again Paula tried to speak, but he turned quickly from her. With a rapid pressure of Trafford's hand, he left by one door, while Paula went out by another. Trafford was thus left alone to wait for Winship.

CHAPTER XXVIII

Years of use had developed into an instinct Trafford's faculty for rapidly seizing the salient points of a situation. He never lost sight of the end to be attained, or suffered side issues to divert his attention. His victories had been won less by the success of his plans than by the execution of new moves when his plans were thwarted. He wasted no time in forcing the manoeuvre that could not be carried out, or in lamenting the one that had failed. Whether the means were in men or in money, he prized them only in so far as they reached the aim on which his mind was fixed. His promptness of judgment, quickness of action, and concentration of purpose excluded sentiment for those who had ceased to fight by his side. Even if he had the will to think of them, he had not the time.

When Wiltshire closed the door behind him, he disappeared from Trafford's plan of action as completely as if he had never been in it. It was one more instance of the tool that had been bent in the hand, and could only be cast aside. He had been singled out to insure Paula Trafford's happiness, but circumstances had rendered him unsuited to the task. Very well; there was nothing to be done but to turn to some one who would be equal to the undertaking, even though it were a Roger Winship. Trafford was subconsciously aware that a day would come when he would have leisure to look back with regret to the hopes he had built upon the Duke, but events pressed too closely to allow of his doing it now.

During the few minutes that passed between the Duke's departure and Winship's appearance, Trafford reviewed, in his rapid way, the points of the situation, one by one, and prepared himself for any step he might be called upon to take.

The meeting between the two men was cold and formal. Each kept himself on his guard. It was impossible for Winship's trained observation not to see that Trafford was a broken man, and equally so for Trafford, with his habit of quick scrutiny, not to perceive in Winship a certain development in command and importance, since their meeting of six months ago.

"I must thank you for receiving me," Winship began, when they had taken seats. "I shouldn't have ventured to disturb you, if I had not something of importance to say."

"I'm very willing to see you, Mr. Winship," Trafford said, with a faint suggestion of friendliness.

"My business may be briefly stated," Winship continued, "but my motives may require a word of explanation."

"I'm entirely at your service for anything."

"Six months ago," Winship pursued, with some evident difficulty, "you offered my sister and myself a large sum of money. That is to say, while no definite sum was named for me, you contemplated, I think, something of the sort."

"You're quite right."

"We refused the money then. We meant that refusal to be final; but since last night we've reconsidered the matter. If you are still in the same frame of mind—"

"I am."

"We should be willing to accept it."

"I shall have the matter arranged at once. I believe I said five hundred thousand for Miss Winship. If you'll permit me, I'll double the sum for you; or, if you prefer it, I will double that again."

"The amount is of no consequence. Neither of us could ever use the money for ourselves. As far as we are concerned, its transference to our names would be a mere formality. I know we lay ourselves open to the charge of compromising with the man who ruined our father and mother—"

"Couldn't we discuss the subject, Mr. Winship, without bringing that point up again?"

The curious gentleness of Trafford's tone struck Winship strangely.

"I'll try," he said, briefly.

"I'll tell you why," Trafford explained. "I know you're doing this for my daughter; and I've reached a point where I can't

bear that there should be bitterness of speech in anything where she's concerned."

"That's right," Winship said, with more emotion of tone than he had displayed hitherto. "I ought to have remembered it—especially as my errand here this morning is to say that my sister and I want to bury the sword at your daughter's feet."

"In what way, Mr. Winship? Will you be good enough to tell me exactly what you and Miss Winship mean?"

"Our impulses are different. My sister's is a very simple one. She has always treated Miss Trafford harshly—unjustly. But she has done it with a sort of kicking against the pricks. Now that she realizes her goodness, her elevation of character, she is ready to do anything, however hard, to make amends. It's not an unusual manifestation of remorse. My own motives are somewhat more complicated—just as the whole question is a complicated one. I understand that Miss Trafford is to be married in a few days to the Duke of Wiltshire. Well, I rebelled against that when she told me yesterday—for you may not know that I saw her yesterday. But the night brings counsel, and I've come to see that, in all the circumstances, it's perhaps the best thing for every one. Wiltshire is a good man, and, if he can't make her happy, he will at least surround her with love and kindness. I'm the only one who could have made her happy—"

"And you wouldn't do it," Trafford broke in. "You threw away your chance."

"I don't think I really had it. The Cid and Chimène were not separated by so impassable a barrier as she and I. At all events, if I've made a mistake I'm ready to pay the penalty. She's not happy, and she's not well. Any one can see that. I think it might help her towards being both if she knew I had taken the money. She feels strongly on the point—more strongly, I fancy, than any of us is aware of."

"That is, she thinks—mind you, I'm speaking quite calmly, Mr. Winship, I'm merely trying to state the case as it is—she thinks I've done you and your family a wrong, and she would be happier if she thought I had righted it."

"I think that's her conviction."

"And you're willing to make it seem as if I had righted it, in order that she may be more at peace."

"Quite so. Miss Trafford need never know anything more than that I have taken the money. Before she is married I shall have sailed for New York, where I mean to live. It's hardly likely that our paths will cross again; and so, in the course of time—"

"May I ask if you are going to America also on my daughter's account?"

"Only partially. The time has come for me to return there, in any case. I'm only hastening my departure."

For a few minutes there was silence. Winship, having stated his case, had little more to add. Trafford looked musingly at the floor, and even when he spoke he did not lift his eyes.

"Look here, Winship," he said at last, "why shouldn't you wait a few days and take my daughter with you?"

There was a second or two of dead stillness before Winship replied, "I don't understand."

"It's easy enough, however," Trafford pursued, still without looking up. "Paula is not going to marry the Duke of Wiltshire."

"Oh!" Winship started.

"He came here just now to release her. He'd learned that Paula didn't love him—that, in fact, she loved you. And since she does—and you love her—and you've met me half-way by offering to take the money—why shouldn't we—?"

"I didn't expect this," Winship gasped.

"No, of course you didn't. Naturally it would put you back in the same position as before—before you dealt that blow at me in June. Now, don't speak, Winship. Let me give you the thing from my point of view." Trafford looked up and spoke with more animation. "You've grown up in the idea of working off on me a bit of family revenge. Chance put you in the way of doing it. You would have carried off my daughter, and left me childless. You would have done it in such a way that the very manner of her going with you would have been the severest condemnation of my life and me. You didn't quite succeed, and yet you haven't wholly failed. My daughter stands by me before the world; she only condemns me in

secret, she only shrinks from me by ways which she thinks I don't see or understand. As a matter of appearance she's still my child, but as a matter of fact I've lost her. You see, then, that you've done the most important part of your work—you've effected between her and me that sort of moral separation that nothing can ever heal. Whatever happens now, whatever turn events may take, she'll never be to me again—what she used to be. You see, you've done as much as that. It's part of what you wanted, isn't it?"

Winship hesitated a minute before replying. "Yes," he said at last.

"But there's one thing you haven't realized," Trafford went on, in the same calm voice. "You've made me suffer, but I'm not the only one. I'm not sure, even, that I'm the one who suffers most. You couldn't have guessed beforehand what it would mean to a nature like my little girl's to lose her faith in me. But you must know it now, if you saw her yesterday. She didn't look like that when you saw her first, did she, Winship? That's your work. As the Duke said this morning, she's not dying merely because she gave up one man to marry another; she's dying because she finds herself in a world so tainted that she can't breathe in it. You see, then, Winship; you wanted to kill me, and you've gone far towards killing her. There's just one thing that will bring her back to life. Do you want me to tell you what it is?"

Winship was gazing at Trafford with haggard eyes, but he did not speak.

"Our reconciliation," Trafford said, with the same unemphasized intensity.

Winship rose slowly to his feet.

"I'm only a man," he said, hoarsely. "I've no power to work a miracle."

"Then, for God's sake, couldn't you pretend to do it?" Trafford cried, springing up in his turn. "You're ready to make sacrifices for her sake, you're ready to take the money, you're ready to go away, you're ready to tear out your own heart and hers too. Is it so much easier to do all that than merely to take the hand outstretched to you? True, it's my hand, the hand, you will say, that crushed your father and struck your mother down; but even so, wouldn't you rather touch it—just touch it—than grind the life out of a sweet and blameless child? I know your revenge is dear to you—but you've got it. You've got it in the very fact that I, Paul Trafford, come pleading to you, as I never expected to plead to any man. I've used men as the mere bricks with which to build my castle, and yet I'm brought to the necessity of begging you for a recognition. Can't you afford to laugh, man? Can't you afford to triumph over me? You couldn't gloat at the sight half so much if you saw me in my coffin as you can now in watching me at your feet. God Almighty has put me at your mercy, in menacing my poor child's life; but you'd be a monster, and not a man, to keep me there."

He paused, waiting for a reply; but for a minute or two Winship said nothing. He stood erect, his hands behind his back, his lips tightly set, and his deep eyes gazing off into the distance above Trafford's head. Trafford himself watched with an expression of rather pitiful beseeching.

"I find my position a very hard one," Winship said, slowly. He spoke in a low voice, but with what seemed to Trafford curious distinctness. "I have to put it to you crudely—very crudely—in order that you may see how hard it is. I thought I was ready to make any sacrifice for Miss Trafford, merely to give her peace of mind. Now I have to hesitate to save her life. But I've never contemplated the possibility of even a nominal reconciliation with you. If it were only a question of private enmity, I shouldn't shrink from it. But it's more than that. It's a great point of honor. If I do as you suggest, I shall be allying myself, openly and before the world, with a man whose life, work, and character I look upon as a national evil. I shall be entering into a system of organized depredation which is already bringing our country into disrepute, and may lead it to disaster. I shall be abandoning my own principles of simplicity, honesty, and self-respect, to take up—or to seem to take up—those of plunder, cruelty, and greed. I must ask you to forgive me for speaking in this way. I shouldn't do it if it were not for the sake of making my position clear. You must see yourself that it was one thing for me to try to take your daughter out of the life you stand for, but it's quite another to be willing to go into it with her. But that's what it comes to. However nominal my act might be, that's what I should be doing. I repeat that I can forget all the reasons I've had for personal hostility. But I can't forget that you're the chief of that group of men who, as I believe in my heart, are the corrupters—"

"I won't trouble you for further explanations of that sort," Trafford interrupted, without show of anger. "I've been treated to such a lot of eloquence on the subject, at one time or another, that I know in advance exactly what you want to say. I shall only ask you to remember that if I've never said anything in my own defence, and if I say nothing now, it doesn't follow that I've no defence at all. At the same time I may admit that I see your point, and in spite of the fact that it isn't

flattering to me, I'm not without a certain respect for your position. Don't give me an answer now. Think over it. Then, if you can't do it, why we shall just have to bear the consequences, that's all. But remember this, Winship: that if what you call your honor outweighs what you call your love, and my little girl dies, it won't be because you wouldn't marry her. She's no such weakling as to break her heart for that. It will be, as I've said already, because the world will have become unfit for her to live in. Now go and think it all over. If we talk about it any longer we may say the wrong thing. Remember that you're on the point of making a big decision, and take your time. To-day is Tuesday. Suppose you were to come to see me again on Thursday afternoon?"

After further discussion it was settled in this way, and Winship rose to go. He was at the door when he paused and turned.

"It often happens," he said, in a tone of voice he had not used hitherto, "that men who are furthest apart in matters of principle find some place for mutual sympathy when they come into personal contact. I've been twice put in situations where I've had to speak out my mind with something more than plainness; and yet the superb patience with which you've borne what I've had to say has made me feel as if I were shooting into the air. I should like to add, however, that it won't be necessary for me to begin in that strain again."

"My dear fellow," Trafford responded, warmly, "nobody appreciates a good fighter like an old soldier. It would never occur to me to resent anything you say; I'm too much occupied in trying to make you think differently. That's my form of winning a victory. Who knows but what we may both live to talk over all these things, as I've heard two old soldiers of the North and South, each giving his account of the same battle from his own point of view?"

Winship made no reply to this, but he allowed Trafford to take his hand and hold it for a second, with a pressure that was not unkindly.

CHAPTER XXIX

In spite of what he knew of Marah's changed attitude towards Paula, it was a surprise to Winship to find that she counselled him at once to fall in with Trafford's plans.

"It's a case that admits of no hesitation," she said, as they talked the subject over in the long, red studio that night. "If anything were to happen to her—"

"Why should you suggest that?"

"I must suggest it, Roger. And if anything did happen to her, it would be little comfort to you then to remember that you hadn't done violence to your scruples. I don't deny that you're in a difficult position. When a man's right course is to throw in his fortunes with what he believes to be wrong, he offers a curious problem to the casuist. And yet it seems to me there's no doubt as to what you ought to do. We're human beings first and members of a social order afterwards. If Paula is as ill as you say, there can be no thought for any one but her."

They sat at the table from which the servant had cleared away their simple evening meal. Marah had brought her paints and brushes to the light, and Winship had opened mechanically a portfolio of drawings, at which he did not look. He sat smoking pensively, allowing Marah to pursue her thoughts without interruption.

"At the same time," she continued, "you'd have to count the cost. We should both have to do it. It's in the very nature of the circumstances that, whatever compromise must be made, I should have to share it."

"That's hard on you," Winship said, absently. "You'd be paying the price without securing any of the reward."

"My reward doesn't matter," she snapped. "It's too late now to think of happiness for me. If I can get the reflection of yours it will be enough. And you would have it. It's no use talking as if you were making a great sacrifice to get nothing in return."

"I don't think I ever did. If I have scruples, they come entirely from the fear of buying my happiness at a price I ought not to pay."

"Of course; but that's not the question any longer. It often happens in life that it's your duty to spend on some one else the money which you wouldn't be justified in wasting on yourself. That's the position here. If your only thought was of what you were to get you wouldn't do it. You'd be the man who was gaining the whole world and losing his own soul. I'm sorry to say that that was the light at which I looked at it in June. I didn't see that there was another side to it. I thought of Paula only as a Trafford; and I didn't realize that good things could come even out of Nazareth. Now I feel as if life couldn't be long enough to make her the necessary reparation."

She stopped, with a little quiver in her voice. Bending her head, she made sharp, tiny strokes on the unfinished miniature before her.

"But we must be clear in advance," she pursued, after a few minutes of silence, "that the price you'd have to pay would be a heavy one. You mustn't be blind to that fact now, and indignant when the world calls you to the reckoning afterwards. In the first place, you'll be looked upon as a successful fortune-hunter. Oh, you needn't frown, because no one, outside the Traffords and ourselves, will have any other opinion about you. They'll ignore the fact that Paula is a girl whom any man might be eager to marry for herself. Even our own best friends won't give you the benefit of the doubt in this case."

"I shall be able to live without it," he interrupted, dryly.

"Of course you will. But you won't be able to live without many a twinge of pain arising from the fact. And there'll be even worse, Roger. In our little group of intimates, where you've been the chief, where your ideas have converted so many to sane and simple views of life, where you've inspired them to go home, and fight against greed and corruption, and to work for whatever is pure and lovely in American life, from the aspect of the streets to the attitude of the mind—there you'll be looked upon as worse than a lost leader, as more despicable than a turncoat. After all, a man has a right to change his mind, and to adopt new principles if he wants to; but they won't allow you that privilege. You'll be considered simply as a traitor—as the man who denied his faith, and went over to the enemy, for the sake of a big prize.

There, again, you'll be able to live without their good opinion; the very magnitude of your fortunes will enable you to do that; but you must face the trial of becoming the object of their scorn, and of being made to feel it. The very fact that you'll be so far removed from your old friends in circumstance will make you want to cling to them all the more in heart; and they'll reject you."

Winship still puffed pensively at his pipe, looking far away into the darkness of the long, dimly lighted room.

"And yet," she continued, speaking calmly, "you wouldn't be the first man to live under the unjust condemnation of the world. It isn't so hard, if you once steel yourself to do it. It will be easier in your case than in most, for the simple reason that, in your position, you'll be surrounded by a host of new friends and flatterers who'll stand well between you and those you've left behind. Besides, there will be a lot of people by whom you will be treated with sincere respect, as the man who got the best of the great Paul Trafford. You will be the conqueror's conqueror, and that fact alone will give you a high place among those whose approval you despise. But having won that, you'll have to live up to it. Having accepted the position, you'll have to show yourself equal to its tasks. All your own simple tastes and habits of life must be abandoned. You'll have to give up your art—"

"No," he thundered, bringing his clinched hand down on the table.

"Yes, Roger. You need only reflect a minute to see how incongruous your art will have become in your new surroundings. An artist is essentially a worker, a toiler, and, relatively, a poor man. You, on the contrary, will have become one of the few very rich men in the whole world. You can see at once how absurd it would be to go on painting portraits at five or ten or even twenty thousand dollars apiece. In the first place, you'd be taking the bread out of other men's mouths; and in the second, your new duties wouldn't allow you the time. The first thought of a man as rich as you will be must be his money—the care of it, the spending of it, or even the giving of it away. Art will mean no more to you than a crutch would mean to an eagle. You've got to face that fact. I'm only putting it before you now so that you won't rebel against it when it's too late. It will be easier for you to give it up beforehand, of your own free choice, than to have the renunciation forced upon you, when you don't want to make it. But, on the other hand, you'll have Paula. There'll be that compensation at least. If there's to be a revolution in your life, it will be the kind of revolution that comes to a man when he's torn away from the interests of this world, to go and live in heaven."

Marah said much more, but Winship followed with only a wavering attention. He was realizing with greater fulness what his acceptance of Trafford's proposition would mean. The reversal of his aims became more complete as he saw it in the light of her direct, feminine observations. Hitherto he had thought chiefly of the change to be produced within himself—of the giving up of his pursuit of vengeance, and of the abandonment of those altruistic social principles which he had urged upon others as being of the American republic's very soul. He had not seen himself as he would figure in the eyes of those who formed his world—the men and women who had looked up to him, who had encouraged him, and whose mouth-to-mouth applause had been a large element in his present incipient celebrity. They were the generous, eager, enthusiastic young souls whom Paris had drawn from every corner of the Union, to send them back again with ideas heightened, broadened, and clarified by touch with the accumulated wisdom of mankind. For ten years Winship had gone in and out among them, sharing their ambitions, their follies, and their tasks, gradually sobering to one steady vision of the good they would all do when they "went home." His heart had gone out to theirs, and their hearts to him, in that sort of trust which contains the element of a life-long bond, defying chance and change. It would have been hard enough to turn his back on them in any case; it was harder still to know that after he had done it they would hoot him down with pitiless, jeering anathemas. They were still young and ardent enough to show no mercy on the man who could sell his ideals for a fortune.

When Marah went to bed he paced up and down the studio thinking of them. He came back from them to himself again, and passed from himself to the thought of the beloved art he must abandon with the rest. He had not accepted Marah's opinion when she first expressed it, but, little by little, as he reflected, he saw that she was right. The hugely wealthy portrait-painter would be futile and anomalous. Art was in some sense the daughter of necessity, and he would become incapable of work when he had entered into the Nirvana of Paul Trafford's money.

He went about the room taking up and laying down the familiar objects connected with his painting. It seemed to him already as if he came back to them like a disembodied spirit, unable to handle them any more. He drew the cloth away from the newly finished portrait on the easel, and stood gazing at it, as if bidding it a mute farewell. When he lit his candle and went to bed he knew that his mind was made up. He knew, in fact, that it had been made up from the beginning. Whatever might be his pain at forsaking his old life, he could have no real hesitation when Paula had need of

him to make hers anew.

On Thursday afternoon he went to give Trafford his reply.

For father and daughter the intervening time had passed in a kind of lull. From the fact that Trafford said nothing of the purpose of Winship's previous visit, Paula gathered that something was in suspense. As Trafford watched her, it seemed to him that she was better and brighter, as if her new freedom had brought her relief already. Her step was lighter as she went about the house, and in her cheek there was a tinge of color like the first hint of coming dawn. When at luncheon on Thursday he asked her to remain at home during the afternoon, her blush betrayed the knowledge that some decisive moment was approaching.

Trafford waited in the small sitting-room that had been his wife's, adjoining Paula's boudoir.

"It's a queer world," he mused, "and we old ones have tumbled into the midst of a strangely constructed generation. I'll be hanged if I can understand it. Here's a young fellow who, I suppose, is typical of the twentieth century, hesitating to marry the loveliest girl and the biggest fortune in the world. By gad! it was different in my time. It's true that in my time there were no such heaps of money lying around, to be scooped up with a wedding-ring. I've set the new pace in that. I've piled up wealth, till the very thought of it is staggering, and it's just as if nobody wanted it."

He smiled bitterly to himself, as he made the reflection, while there floated through his mind a verse of the Scriptures that had found a place in his memory, he knew not how:

"For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them."

"It's almost as if those words were written for me," he mused on. "I've done the thing, and what's the good of it, after all? I've heaped up the riches, but who's to gather them? Paula would rather be rid of the money than take it; George has as much as he knows what to do with; I go begging to old Roger Winship's son to take the stuff off my hands, and he hesitates to do me the favor. Lord! if I could wave a fairy wand and conjure it all back to where it came from, I'll be blown if I wouldn't do it. It's a curious Nemesis to overtake a man like me. I've had the most stupendous luck that any one ever had on earth; and now I can only say that I've walked in a vain shadow, and disquieted myself in vain."

Winship came at four. From the manner of his entering, Trafford knew that this much of the cause was won. He strode in, looking very tall, erect, and grave, and held out his hand. Trafford rose and took it, with sudden gravity on his part. For a few seconds they stood, with hands clasped, staring each other in the eyes. It was difficult for either to find words to express the situation.

"You needn't say anything," Trafford said, at last, as they moved apart. "I know you mean to do it, and that you'll do it well. It will be for me to show that I appreciate your action."

"It will only be necessary for each of us to remember that whatever we do we do for Paula's sake, to make what's difficult easy."

"That's well spoken, Winship. You can trust me not to forget it, as I am sure you won't. Now let me call her."

When she appeared on the threshold, the scene brought back so painfully her similar entry, on the similar occasion in June, that Trafford hastened forward and took her by the hand.

"Come here, dear," he whispered. "Let me lead you to him. There, take her," he added to Winship; "and no man on earth ever received so rare a gift."

"No man on earth could value it more preciously," Winship returned. Taking her hands gently in his own, he stooped and kissed them both.

The whole action was so sudden that it took Paula by surprise. With her hands still in Winship's, she looked at her father, and from her father back again to Winship.

"What does it mean?" she asked. Whatever color had been in her face died away now.

"It means, dear," Trafford replied, "that the two hearts who love you most have become one in you."

"Is it true, Roger?"

"It's true, Paula—after all."

With her hands still in his, she looked once more towards her father.

"You wish it, papa?"

"I do, dearest. In going to the man you love, you go with all my good-will."

"And without—without the money?"

The question was unexpected. For a moment neither of the men replied. When Trafford spoke it was stammeringly.

"He's—he's—going to take it, dear."

"Then I can't let him," she said, firmly. She withdrew her hands and fell back a step or two. "It's what I was afraid of," she went on, speaking in tones of quiet decision. "I thought he had come to say so the other day. But I could never consent to it."

"But, darling—" Trafford began to implore.

"No, papa. I've thought it all over in the last two days, and I see what he would be doing for me. He knows how I've been suffering. And to save me he's willing to commit a great apostasy."

"But, Paula—"

"You needn't speak, Roger. I know your heart better than you do yourself. No one has firmer convictions than you; no one is more sure of what he considers right. And yet, for my sake, you'd renounce what you believe in, just as, in a time of persecution, some Christian might renounce his God, and his eternal hopes, for the sake of a heathen maiden. But how can I accept such sacrifice? The Duke of Wiltshire wouldn't let me do far less than that for him. Papa, dear," she pursued, "you mustn't be offended at anything I say; but it must be clear to us all that Roger hasn't the same ideas about life that—that we have. I don't say that his are necessarily right and ours wrong; they're only different. He couldn't possibly give up his and accept ours without doing violence to his nature. He may pretend to be a convert, but he isn't; and we know that nothing is so hollow, or so hard to keep up, as a conversion in which there's no faith."

"But I should put faith into it, Paula."

"Don't say that, Roger. It pains me. I like to know that you're living for your own aims, and for nothing else. For you to abandon them would seem to me a good deal more than a desertion. I could never lend myself to such a plan, or be satisfied to see you carry it out. No, Roger. Your way isn't ours, nor ours yours."

"You didn't think so six months ago," Trafford broke in, despairingly.

"I've learned a great deal in six months, papa. I understand now things that I knew nothing about then."

"What things?" he demanded, with the quickness of one who feels touched where he is sensitive.

"Very serious things. I've thought about them, and read about them, and prayed about them, until I've obtained some small degree of insight. I know that some are higher and some are lower, and that Roger's are the higher. How could I ask him to come down? How could I bear to be the very instrument of such a renunciation? You mustn't feel hurt, papa, at my saying this. Your life is my life, and I'm going to lead it; but I couldn't let Roger come and share it. He'd be wretched with us, and, when we saw it, we'd be wretched with him. Better let each live for his own—he in his way, and you and I together."

"You and I together—in the lower way," Trafford said, sadly.

"I don't say so, papa. I've been thinking that over, too, and it seems to me that different generations have different uses. You belong to the great age of material effort. That's the age we've been living in, and there must be good in it. It hasn't only made the country rich and powerful, but it has developed the great storehouse God has kept laid up in it, until mankind had need to come and use it. That's been part of your work, papa, and it would be wicked to say that it hasn't its

noble aspects. But mayn't it be that, now that so much of it is done, we're passing on to other phases—phases in which we sha'n't have to think so much of the material, and so may be free to lift up our hearts to something else? Aren't there signs of it everywhere—among all classes of our people? Don't think me foolish," she continued, spreading her hands apart in a gesture of appeal—"don't fancy that I suppose for a moment that I can teach you. But I've had to go over it all in the last few months, and it does seem to me as if I could feel the stir of a great spiritual awakening. As I look over the new books, as I turn the pages of the magazines, as I listen to sermons or read reports of them, as I see in the papers the new kinds of effort that are being put forth, I can't help the conviction that our whole country is groaning and travailing in pain together to burst its bonds and let its soul go free."

"How?"

"By getting beyond the idea that the greatest thing in the world is to make money and live in luxury," she replied, promptly. "We've only had to do it to see how unsatisfying it is, and we're feeling after something better. There are people going before us to show us the way, and the impulse is coming to the rest of us to press in behind and follow on."

"She looks like a prophetess," Trafford whispered to Winship.

"I often think," she continued, heedless of the interruption, "that when God kept our continent hidden for so many generations it was in order that we might have virgin ground on which to begin all over again, with a civilization that could be truer to the principles of Christ. I believe that in our heart of hearts we know it. I believe that there's not an American anywhere who doesn't feel, in some obscure depth of his being, that we've missed our calling hitherto. We've been sent to preach the gospel to the poor and heal the broken-hearted, and we haven't done it. But I'm sure there's a growing sense that we ought to, and that we must. There are men and women starting up in all directions to tell us how. Roger's one of them, and I couldn't call him back. He has his word of the message to deliver, and I couldn't ask him to be silent. I can see now that what happened last June was for the best—the very best. Roger, dear," she continued, turning towards Winship, "I thank you for what you're willing to do for me. You know I love you—that I shall always love you. I haven't made a secret of it, and I never shall. But I couldn't—I couldn't—"

She faltered, her hands crossed on her breast, and her lips quivering.

The two men looked at each other helplessly.

"You see that you and I have to live for such different things that no marriage—papa, darling, don't turn away," she implored, as Trafford took two or three strides towards a window. "You mustn't be angry with me. You mustn't think I don't want to stay with you. I do. I do. With love like Roger's and mine we can be happy even if we're apart—can't we, Roger?—even if we never see each other any more. Our being married is of no consequence, papa," she went on, following after him. "It's one of the beauties of such a great, great love that it doesn't want anything but to do the best. Papa, papa," she begged, clinging to his shoulder, "turn round, look at me, kiss me. Don't think for a moment that I can want anything in this world half so much as to see you happy in the love of your little girl. Roger doesn't want it, either—do you, Roger? Look at me, papa, and kiss me, and make me feel that you want to keep me at your side."

For a long half-minute Trafford remained motionless. When he turned, it was so suddenly that he shook her from him. His face was crimson, but he astonished them both by bursting into a loud and pealing laugh. Paula stepped back from him, half afraid, half wondering. Trafford smote his hands together, and laughed again, louder and longer than before.

"Gad!" he cried, as if stifling in his mirth. "Gad! How easily the little thing is taken in! Didn't you see, dear? Didn't you understand? Why, it's all a trick—it's all a bit of play-acting. 'Pon my soul," he continued, coming nearer to her, "I didn't think you could be imposed upon like that. Roger isn't going to take the money," he roared, seizing her in his arms with a passion that almost hurt her. "He isn't going to take the money, and I don't mean to offer it. You're to go to him without it. It's all settled and understood. You're to live anywhere and anyhow that suits you, and the money can go to blazes. There's only one thing that matters on God's earth—that my little girl should be happy, and that she should owe some of her happiness to her old papa. Here, Roger—!"

"No, no, papa," she cried, clinging to him. "Don't let me go. I'm afraid. I'm afraid. Don't let me go."

"Here, Roger," Trafford shouted again. "Take her."

He flung her from him with a wild force that would have been brutal had not Winship caught her in his arms. He laughed

again as he groped, like a blind man, feeling his way from the room; but, being unused to comedy, he betrayed himself by stopping too abruptly, when he had banged the door behind him.

Within the room the silence was strange and sudden. Paula hung panting and helpless in Winship's arms, while Winship rained kisses on her lips and eyes and hair, in the unloosed passion of his long-pent-up love.

CHAPTER XXX

"That's done," Trafford panted to himself, when he was in the corridor. "It's done and settled for ever and ever. By God! I did it well. Very few men would have pulled it off like that. I don't believe there's another father in the world who would sacrifice himself as I've done. It's all over. I've lost her. I'm beaten. I had to let her go. There are very few men who would have done it like that."

Though he was sustained by a sense of his own heroism, the way seemed long between Paula's room and his own library-office. He stopped at every few steps, and muttered to himself.

"That's it. I've lost her. Oh, there's no use trying to shirk the fact. She'll go her way and I'll go mine. There's nothing else for us to do. I've lost them all now. Let me see. It was Harry first, then Arthur, then Constance, then Jennie, then poor Julia, and now—now—she's gone, and I'm all alone. I've walked in a vain shadow, and disquieted myself in vain. Well, all right, all right. If nobody wants to gather the riches I've heaped up, then, at least, I can give 'em back. By George! what a stir it would make if I did it! Paul Trafford resolving his immense fortune into its constituent elements! Andrew Carnegie wouldn't be in it beside me. Well, it would be occupation for my lonely old age, at any rate. But what's the use of dreaming? Money can no more be returned to where it came from than a rose could be reduced to the earth and water from whence it grew."

He tottered on a few paces farther, and stopped again.

"It's hard, though. It's damned hard. What's the world going to be to me now? I've got an income that I can't count, and nothing to do with it. I've got half a dozen big houses stuffed with luxury, and no one to live in them. She'll go back to New York, and stifle in a six-room flat at Harlem, while I shall be alone in my sixty rooms in Fifth Avenue. Why? Why? Why?"

He smote his hands together and groaned.

"Why? Why? Why?" he repeated. "And yet, I suppose, I know why. She won't put it into words, but she means it none the less. I seem born to be misunderstood. Even she misunderstands me. After all the good I've done, after the churches I've built and the institutions I've endowed, I'm still looked upon as a sort of monster—living for nothing but his money. Well, they shall learn better. I'll teach them. I'll show them that I made money just because I chose to make it, and I'll fling it back among them, and laugh to see them scramble for it. It'll be sport for me to watch them squirming in the mud, to pick up what I disdain and chuck away."

He held himself more erect at the thought, and walked down the corridor with firmer tread. He had reached his own door, when he paused again.

"And yet, I suppose Paula would think that wasn't the right spirit. She'd say the highwayman doesn't atone for robbery by giving the money to a church—the only place for it would be the pockets it was taken from. Well, I agree with her. It's just what I'd rather do, if it was possible. But I don't believe it is. There are some I could hunt up. I know that Brewer, of Albany, has a son working as a clerk at Wanamaker's; and then there are the Rosses and the Brents and the Dowlings and a few more. Rawson, who hanged himself in Fitchburg, left a family, I believe; and that fellow Jackson, who stabbed my agent, Pitts, has a wife, if not children. He must have served fifteen years of his sentence by this time, and I might get him a pardon. Then there was old Marshall—but, Lord! I'm not going on with this sort of catechism. I should go daft. They took their chances, just as I did. Whatever I may do for them or their families now I shall do as an act of mercy. Paula herself couldn't make me think otherwise."

He turned the handle of his door and entered. As he did so, the click of his secretary's type-writer came to him from the adjoining room. At the very sound, instinct and habit resumed their sway, and a few minutes later he was seated at his desk plunged into the details of work as profoundly as if no great crisis had changed the nature of his domestic life. He read the three or four cablegrams that had come during the afternoon, and told Smithson what to say in reply. He ran his eye over the secretary's answers to the day's correspondence, and signed his name where it was needed. He dashed off two or three important letters with his own hand, addressed and sealed and stamped them. He informed the Oregon & Ohio Railway that in their fight with the United Power Company he would stand behind them with unlimited money, while he indicated several important congressmen, whose influence had already been his, for proper consideration. He ordered George to spare nothing to get control of the Kansas, Leavenworth & Baltimore line, and to push the Jay-

Berryman combine until it went under. He instructed his Hartford agents, Messrs. Taft & Reed, to appeal against the verdict for two thousand dollars in favor of old Mrs. Breen, and to carry the case to a higher court. It put new nerve into him to feel that the impulse to fight till he won was as strong in him as ever. It annoyed him that the Scriptural words should sweep across his mind again:

"For man walketh in a vain shadow, and disquieteth himself in vain; he heapeth up riches and cannot tell who shall gather them."

As he dwelt upon the words, the faint upleaping of courage that had come from his half-hour of work died down again. He leaned his head wearily on his hands and pondered. What was the use of it all? Why should he fight against the United Power Company? Why should he try to get control of the K., L. & B.? Why should he hinder poor old Mrs. Breen from getting the damages rendered her for the husband killed in his employ? He did not grudge her the money. He had no enormous interest in smashing the Jay-Berryman combine. As for the United Power Company, he had no object but to drive it into a corner where it would have to capitulate to him. But why should he? Was it necessary to fight simply because he had the instinct? Was it necessary to wield a giant's strength simply because he had it? Was there no such word as enough? Was there no such quality as mercy? Was it outside the rules of business—to spare?

"Business! Business! Business!" he repeated to himself. "That's been my God, and I've worshipped it as if it were a misshapen idol. I suppose that if I'd served my Maker half as much I shouldn't be here, alone, to-night. I wonder if I could do a big, new thing that wasn't business at all? I wonder if I could start out on a course that would shock the business world to its foundations? I believe I feel myself coming to it. I've dreamed of it hitherto. Now, I think the minute has come for me to wake up and do."

He leaned forward and touched a bell. A few seconds later the secretary entered the room.

"Turn on the light, Smithson, please," Trafford said, with sudden briskness of tone. "You may remember that a few months ago I asked you to send to America for all the papers connected with the cases of Marshall *versus* the Vermont Mining Company, and of the Turtonville Improvement Company *versus* Marshall. I hope you have them."

"Yes, sir. They're in my safe. Shall I get them?"

"Please."

"You've looked them over, as I suggested?" he asked, when Smithson had laid the documents before him.

"Yes, sir."

"Marshall failed for about three hundred and fifty thousand, didn't he?"

"Between that and four hundred."

"You've made the inquiries I asked you to look up? The daughters are all living?"

"They were all living in October, sir. One of them was ill, and not expected to live long."

"Thanks, Smithson. That will do for the moment. Don't send any of those cablegrams to-night. I'll speak about them again to-morrow. No, you needn't post these letters. I'm not sure yet that I shall send them."

Smithson retired, and Trafford began to turn over the papers before him. He did not read them consecutively. A word here and there would arrest his attention and send him off dreaming.

"It's curious," he reflected. "I was in the right throughout this case, and yet it's one about which public opinion has given me no quarter. All the laws of supply and demand, of cause and effect, were on my side; but because old Marshall shot himself, leaving four daughters unprovided for, I've been made to appear as the instrument of the disaster. I don't feel so myself—not wholly so, at any rate; but Paula would agree with the public, if she knew about it. Well, I'll try to patch it up before she does. The wind will be taken out of that sail, at any rate."

He sighed, and went on with his desultory inspection of the Marshall papers. He was still occupied in doing so when a knock came to the door. Before he had time to look up and say "Come in," the door was pushed open and Paula entered, followed by Winship. Trafford remained seated. They advanced together, till they stood before his desk.

"We've come in to say that we can't do it, papa," Paula began, abruptly. "I can't go and leave you alone."

"I will not take her from you like this," Winship added. "It seems to me a sort of robbery. It wouldn't be blessed. If there's a sacrifice to be made, it must be ours. We're younger and stronger—"

"Stop," Trafford said, softly. "Stop."

Winship ceased, and there was a long silence. Trafford still remained seated, gazing absently at the papers on the desk before him, Winship and Paula waited in motionless attention. There was no sound but the click-click-click of the typewriter in the adjoining room.

Still without speaking, Trafford rose. Coming to them, he passed one hand through Paula's arm and one through Winship's.

"My little girl is willing to stay with me after all, is she?"

"I'm not only willing, papa, but I want to."

"Then, darling, you can't. You can't, because I'm going on a long journey."

As he spoke he turned them gently round, and began leading them towards the door.

"A long journey, papa?"

"Yes, dear—a journey that will take me all round, and round, and round the United States. I mean to go to New York when you go, after you've been married. Then I shall have to leave you."

"But where are you going, papa, dear?"

"I'm going first to a place called Turtonville, Wisconsin—"

"Not to see the old Miss Marshalls?" came from Paula, like a long-stifled cry.

Trafford started.

"Ah! What do you know about them?"

"I know all about them."

"Then I'm going to see them," he hurried on. "After that I'm going to see more people—then more—then more. When it's all over, I shall come back to you. Now kiss me—kiss me—and—go."

"Oh, papa, darling, how good you are!"

She kissed him, clinging to him, but he released her arms from about his neck.

"Now go—both of you," he insisted, opening the door.

"First let me say," Winship began, "that I beg your pardon for anything—"

"Oh, you needn't, Winship," he interrupted, with a weary smile. "I know how you've felt. I should have felt that way myself. You've been a good fighter, and you've only found out what all we fighters have to learn in time—that when we've struck, the blow hasn't given us the satisfaction we expected. Don't think any more about it. I'll do myself the justice to say that I've always respected you, even at the worst of times. Now—go—go off together. I've a great deal to do that I can only do—alone."

He forced them gently from the room, closing the door behind them. For a second he leaned against it, as if for support, till his habitual energy came back.

"That I can only do—alone," he repeated to himself. "By God! I shall do it—to the bitter end."

He strode back firmly to his desk and sat down again. With head erect and lips set, he was for an instant like the Paul Trafford of old.

"But the end may not be a bitter one," he reflected. "In the hair-shirt and penitence, Charles V. found something better than he had ever known upon the throne. Well, why shouldn't I? True, the hair-shirt will look queer in Wall Street, but I'm not afraid of that. If it has taken a giant's strength to do what I've done hitherto, it will require more to fulfil what lies before me. But I shall have it—I shall have it—the giant's strength—and more—God and my little girl helping me."

He rang the bell and called for Smithson. The new orders took the secretary so much by surprise that he was obliged to have them repeated two and three and four and five times before he mastered them. When he did so he was the first member of the great American public to call Paul Trafford mad. He was also the first to qualify the madness as divine.

THE END

Transcriber's Notes:

hyphenation, spelling and grammar have been preserved as in the original

Page 46, You needn't be afraid ==> "You needn't be afraid

Page 61, Couldn't you take me ==> "Couldn't you take me

Page 81, a woman s voice ==> a woman's voice

Page 161, say much ore ==> say much more

Page 171, to myself I'm ==> to myself. I'm

Page 186, tone of pique." ==> tone of pique.

Page 229, the après-dînée," ==> the après-dînée,

Page 339, He was still occuped ==> He was still occupied

[The end of *The Giants Strength* by Basil King]