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Such was her outer life; and all this time had been very long in passing. One idea possessed her inwardly. It grew upon her daily, and she existed only in the recollection of James Erskine, who had been kind to her. Although their gayeties were very limited—for the little girl's not being grown up, Aunt Jane had religious objections to a profitless going out—still, Georgy had contrived sometimes to meet Mr. Erskine; for when anyone is steadily resolved to meet another, it is astonishing how much may be done even under difficulties. She met with many rebuffs from Aunt Jane, and as a consequence, from her uncle also, being always busy, took his opinion on all family matters from his wife.

Georgy's going out only took place when there was a chance of meeting Mr. Erskine or his mother. On the latter, she bestowed a half-vicarious, half-real affection; she would always have liked her, but the extent of that liking was given somewhat for sake's sake. So in the ensuing years she sometimes saw them; and seeing no one else, there was but little possibility that her one deep impression should be effaced.

Often when some one, a stranger to her world and to her people, said, "What do you think I heard to-day? Who do you think I met?" and she knew that her face ought to express interest for a moment, the same senseless hope, the same groundless expectation arose; and though she felt that it was impossible, she hoped for a moment to hear of the only thing that interested her, and fancied that they might pronounce the only name she cared to hear.

There were times of remorse when she thought of Stephen Anstruther; times when she would not marry him, and wrote in her imagination long letters; letters which told him all; letters which must have been good, if an expenditure of misery and tears were to go for anything; and such, she was sure, as must make him forgive all. But—he never understood anything; and to put pen to paper and begin to write—oh! it would have been easier to have jolted in olden days a party of those German fanatics we read of, who paraded the streets of towns, denuded of all their garments. Then she would marry; she would not give up her one way of escape from Grainthorpe; and she laid to her heart each laughing bit of matrimonial scepticism which Mrs. Everett sometimes preached, all Mrs. Lewis' philosophy, and the cheerful, solid good sense with which her friend Jessie Macbean and her sisters regarded the subject. All true enough in a way, no doubt; but her disposition was not precisely the same as any of theirs, and it might have been a risk to take their creed to herself. She had grown up in great dread of her uncle; and the idea of facing his anger, and refusing Captain Anstruther, seemed half an impossibility.

On the understanding of his marriage, a great part of the Captain's little fortune had been embarked in those inexplicable speculations whereby in Georgy's money lay. The money prospects were gloomy now, and the impending loss to Stephen was a terrible vexation to Mr. Sandon. If Georgy had refused to fulfill her engagement when Stephen was already a loser, Uncle Robert's first impulse would have been (had he lived in ancient times) to sentence her to a summary imprisonment. Aunt Jane disliked her niece, who naturally reciprocated the feeling. Georgy knew that she seemed cold and distant to her uncle; she knew, too, that she had disappointed him. He had wished her to grow up a tall, talkative girl, saying no matter what and singing no matter how, only songs with plenty of verses in them. She felt that she should have been differently constituted, and that her nature was surely a fault in her.

There lay one more feeling in her heart, utterly unexpressed, and never distinctly recognized by herself; it was that her only real approach to James Erskine would be when she was married. She did not think that thought, but there lay the consciousness of it under her very thoughts; Macbeth had some such consciousness, perhaps, of how his desire might be accomplished, before he wished for its fulfilment.

Such dashes of what may be cross many a one; and sometimes circumstances and temptations develop them into active realities; and then those who have enacted them are criminal above the rest of their fellow-creatures. Are they not? Are guilt and innocence always divided by one strongly defined line of demarcation? There are some who, when they hear of crimes, say in their hearts, "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford." Or, if they be so innocent that no conscious understanding of that sin and misery is possessed by them, then that charity which is God's own gift, gives them the spirit of sympathy and pity. And there are some who, when they hear of crimes, say only that they are thankful not to be as others. These, too, must be all innocent, or fenced round by that happy obtuseness, given either by disposition or by a limited circle of events.

Perhaps Georgy was not guilty above others; perhaps she would have shrunk from the faintest fulfilment of that underthought of hers; but it was there. Happiness in this world meant but one thing for her, and that was the only way in which it would ever be gained. You had better give up the thought of happiness; you will not find it any more than others have done, here. If you do not leave the strife, then your deep passionate nature will know a fearful struggle, and you will find not happiness, but misery above that of others.

CHAPTER X.

Time had brought an unpleasant change to Mrs. Erskine and her son, for they both were considerably poorer than formerly. Mrs. Erskine's eldest son had engaged himself, and persuaded his mother to involve herself in railroad speculations, which had ended by causing them a considerable loss; and before this had happened, James, too, had engaged himself for his mother, and, in the desire to help the other two, had suffered along with them. He was working very hard now, and Mrs. Erskine was about to sell Monklands. If it were possible that with her one day could better others' love, then she loved James better than before, and most deeply did she lament the loss which his kind-heartedness had brought upon him.

One morning Aunt Jane and her niece, who were for a few days in the neighborhood, performed the periodical observance of a morning call at Millthorpe Grange; and after a good deal of conversation had passed, and luncheon was ended, Mrs. Lewis and Georgy walked into the garden, leaving Aunt Jane still talking in the drawing-room.

"Georgy, you look as sober as if you had the world upon your shoulders, or were, at the least, engaged to be married."

Georgy burst out, "Well! so I am, to Captain Anstruther; do you know him?"

"But, my dear girl, this must have been for ever so long; how shabby of you not to tell me!"

Georgy's face told so much, that Mrs. Lewis said, gravely, "Tell me now, dear."

"For ever so long, as you say; for nearly three years. I never could bring myself to make formal mention of it; and yet, that was very foolish of me; I had better have declared it at once."

"I am glad to hear this, Georgy; you will really have a comfortable home, I hope; and you will do very well, when it is once over, though you perhaps do not think so now."

"That is easier to preach than to feel," said Georgy, laughing nervously. "I wish oh, I wish that I had married three years ago! but I cannot say that I wish to do so now."

Mrs. Lewis did not preach or moralize, but she felt kindly towards Georgy, and set herself quietly to demonstrate that marriage was the best thing for her.

"What do you mean to do, my dear? You are more inclined to break stones on the road, perhaps; but as your uncle would not permit that, you must break with him first. You do not suppose that he would countenance your going out as a governess; which to you would be the meaning of breaking stones on the road; what shall you do? Living at Grainthorpe cannot be pleasant."

"Mrs. Lewis, I cannot dispute your wisdom, but I have no vocation for matrimony; I wish I had been married long ago."

"You are right there; a woman should be married before she knows good from evil; what is distasteful at eighteen, is still harder to swallow a few years later," she answered, sarcastically.

"But I would not speak so of Captain Anstruther, whom I have such real regard for, only—"

"I understand you perfectly," said Mrs. Lewis, who thought that as Georgy would certainly marry Captain Anstruther, it was wrong to speak dispraisingly of him.

"I am only speaking generally. I remember meeting Captain Anstruther; I thought him very, very amiable; he certainly looked it."

"Very," echoed Georgy; glad to find a "very" she could conscientiously join in.

This cool classification of husbands under the head of necessary evils, rather grated against her; for, like many of us, she disliked that the ideas which she often indulged in, should be reduced to a form of words.

"Georgy," said Mrs. Lewis again, when their colloquy was ended, "you should make up your mind, and not get frightened; no one can judge for another, but I think that you will be happier when married."

And so their talk was over; and it had exactly the contrary effect upon Georgy from that which was intended.

The idea of "making up her mind," frightened her, and she began to feel that it was impossible; even that mournful alternative of remaining at Grainthorpe was preferable.

She had often contemplated marriage—marriage at any price, as a deliverance from Grainthorpe; but now she shrank from the possibility of the realization of any such imaginings; Then she began to consider "Why should she throw up the battle of life, and saw inwardly that no good thing could befall her? She would not marry Stephen, and must say so without delay;" and for some days she nerved herself for an outbreak. "If they were very angry, well—she would go to her great-aunt and live there; and if she were penniless, well—teach music."

And so she played nearly a whole day, and began a dream of musical life among artists (if only a music mistress could ever realize it). She would do great things, and sometimes see Mr. Erskine.

Jessie Macbean bantered Mr. Sandon when she saw his niece's altered appearance; "she was evidently weary of waiting!" Jessie never meant to offend anybody, but generally gave utterance to whatever speech came uppermost. Georgy had never said that she was engaged; but from some words of Mr. Sandon's, Jessie was quite sure of it. She patronized Georgy, whom she thought a good, quiet little soul, not formed for society (in that, perhaps, she was right), and, on the whole, a little peculiar. This was the summary she gave of Georgy, but liked her nevertheless, and protected her. Georgy was very much in love with Stephen, that Jessie saw with half an eye; and they were two sober people, just suited to each other. Why, she had waited for three years, and never flirted with one of the Eastham officers! She deserved a good character for constancy; indeed, her conduct altogether edified Jessie, who said so to Captain Walters, with a coy insinuation that she should not be equal to such a course. Jessie said this while she was resting after a polka, and contemplating a galop. What would Jessie do in any world where people do not polk?

CHAPTER XI.

"Anstruther will return home this autumn, you know," Uncle Robert had said at breakfast; and all that day, Georgy watched for her uncle. A little before dinner, she saw him walking in the garden, and went at once to meet him.

"Uncle Robert."

"Well!"

"When do you think Stephen Anstruther will be at home?"

"What a question! how can I tell? All women will ask these questions; am I one of the Admiralty? His three years will soon be out, so you had better write to the Admiralty to say how much you want him, that he may return to a day. Are you in such a hurry?"

"Not at all—anything but that," she replied abruptly.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean," she said, feeling very nervous, "I mean, that I am not at all in a hurry for his arrival."

"What fancy have you taken now?"

"I do not want to marry Stephen Anstruther. I was very young when I was engaged, and I did not know my own mind; I don't want to marry him, now."

"Georgy," Mr. Sandon said, very sternly, "don't talk such nonsense, or you will make me angry. What do you mean? You cannot break your engagement."

"Why not?" (resolutely.)

"Why not) why not? why not? the d—l! Jane is right; and you have always been allowed far too much liberty."

"Why cannot I break my engagement? Is it better to marry, hating it all the time?"

"Don't be romantic, if you please. How the deuse should you hate marrying Stephen? What is there about him to hate?"

"Nothing," she answered with a half smile; for, the ice once broken, her courage began to rise.

"You must marry him; it would be wrong not, Georgy; so be reasonable, and tell me what you really mean."

He was quiet, now, and they took a turn on the walk in silence.

"The long and short of this, Georgy, is, that some one has begun to make love to you; when and where, I cannot conceive. Be open, and tell me all about it."

"I have nothing to tell; no one ever made love to me, but Stephen."

"You mean to tell me that?"

"Yes," she replied, looking him in the face, but crimsoning as she did so. It was a rash movement; her color brought forth the rather natural retort.

"Then you have fallen in love."

That stirred her. "You have no right to say such a thing," she said, sternly. "No right; do you hear me? Don't say it again. I will not marry Stephen Anstruther; I don't care for him, and I won't; that is all I have to say."

She was as savage as a desperate woman could be. Those chance words respecting some other love, had stirred the one chord which would have made her defy anything. Her uncle had never seen her in a rage before. She was nervously tearing to pieces the topmost roses on a little tree.

"Are you mad?"

"No; I am not. Is it mad to say I won't marry a man I don't care for? Would it not be much more mad to do it?"

"Do you like no one better?"

"A great many people; I have seen a great many people whom I would rather marry. Shall I tell them all over?" she continued, in a deliberate mocking tone.

"Stephen's money is involved in our concerns; and it was all on your account." Her uncle was momentarily quieted by her outbreak.

"I am very sorry; but I did not make him do it."

"You are a true woman; you will talk of liking or not liking by the hour, and then turn a deaf ear when you are told what is honorable or dishonorable."

"I know what is honorable or dishonorable, too," she retorted; her face contracting at the thought of some inward consciousness, with which her uncle's words had no connection.

"You shall marry Stephen, or I'll turn you out of the house?" Mr. Sandon was at a loss for any other argument.

"Very well. I won't wait to be turned out; I'll go."

"Where?"

"Anywhere, anywhere. What do you want? Shall I go now?" and she stood there biting her lips, her eyes wild with anger and excitement.

"Are you coming in to get ready for dinner?" called Aunt Jane from the window.

It was a relief to them both, and they walked silently into the house. He opened the door, and saw her in before him, as if he half expected to see her execute her offer of going at that moment.

For a few minutes Georgy sat in her own room, before she went to dinner; she was perplexed, and half beside herself. This is often the case with habitually gentle people, who when aroused, have less control over themselves, and are less measured in their wrath, than those who are often angry, and who so acquire a mean in their very desperation. All the repressed thoughts of years, had arisen suddenly, and she could not understand just then, how she had borne this life so long. The first beginning was made, and nothing now seemed so dreadful to her. She was ready in the drawing-room before either of the other two, for Uncle Robert was still in his dressing-room, declaiming vehemently to his wife.

For several days there was warfare at Grainthorpe, which was resolutely kept up, chiefly through the agency of Aunt Jane. Had it not been for her, Georgy and her uncle would have understood each other, at length. Had you in the course of conversation asked Mr. Sandon whether he wished to force anybody to marry against their will, he would certainly have been as shocked as if cannibalism had been imputed to him. But his wife—who knew him, and knew the right moment for urging him to opposition, and had often misrepresented Georgy's words and deeds—did not fail to do so now. If Georgy had first made a confidant of Aunt Jane, and had rendered her of some importance in the matter, she would have been more amiably disposed; but now she was thoroughly hostile to her niece. The latter seemed suddenly to have lost all fear of her aunt, and met her with utter indifference, and a grave, plausible sarcasm which rather kept her at a distance; for Mrs. Sandon was a coward at heart, and would behave better to any one who did not fear her. She had one way, however, of retaliating; for she could irritate her husband, and prevent his viewing Georgy fairly; against whom, now, she was particularly ardent on the charge of hypocrisy, which she imputed to her in consequence of her sudden change of conduct.

There was another stormy interview two days afterwards. Georgy said she would write to Stephen. "If you dare!" said Mr. Sandon. "You have nothing; almost nothing; and you shall not stay here." His wife had been at work, and had persuaded him of the efficacy of that threat.

"I will go to my aunt's, and teach music, and shall trouble no one."

This threat enraged him, and he swore and scolded; each day made him more bitter. Georgy became at last very silent.

"I will not, and you cannot make me," was all the answer which he received when he urged her marriage.

Again he burst out, "Jane is right—you know you're in love with somebody else."

"Leave me alone," she said, quite under her breath; "leave me alone; you had better. Your wife told you to say that."

"Well, and if she did, she thinks it true, perhaps; cannot you prove at once that she is wrong?"

"I have no afterthought. I am not bettering myself by refusing; but I cannot marry Stephen," she said sadly, in a low tone, and then went quietly towards her room.

He followed her, and made a show of locking the door; then unlocked it, half-ashamed of his blustering, and stood for a moment with his hand upon the lock of the half-opened door. He wanted to say something conciliatory, but Georgy gave him no opportunity; she did not perceive his intention, and so without more words he went downstairs.

They had dined early, as they often did in summer, and that afternoon Mr. and Mrs. Sandon were going to visit a friend beyond Eastham. Georgy sat a long time silent; she had heard them drive away, and still sat pondering and watching the landscape, without perceiving anything. She was glad that he had said it—glad that he had left her without a conciliatory word. Now she was justified in her own mind, and she would go.

She laid all her things in order; putting them as she wished them to be found by her aunt. Then she sat down and wrote to her uncle, telling him that "she had gone to her aunt's; that she would not stay at Grainthorpe, since her refusal to marry Stephen had brought matters to such a pass; and he would surely feel better that she should not." Some awkward phrase, expressing that she was not forgetful of his past kindness, rose to her thoughts; but it would have looked like a misplaced mockery there, and she could not write it. If he had not known it defore, how could she say it then? This was the crowning-piece to their mutual misunderstanding. Her anger helped her through quickly with the note, and then suddenly her last words recurred to her. "No afterthought; I have nobe," she thought proudly; "I will love no one." Yes; and she would prove it to herself. There lay a note amongst some relics of her mother's, in an old desk; it was a note from Mr. Erskine concerning some music, which Mrs. Lewis wished to borrow from her. It was but a short note, but it was to her more life-like, and brought back livelier recollections, than those remains of one whom she could scarcely remember.

She looked at the note wistfully, and then touched it with her lips, making believe it was a chance movement that induced her to raise her hand. She was alone, and still she made believe, for it seemed as if the chairs and tables had eyes to see her with, and she was busy keeping up appearances with herself. She burnt the note, and then she saw the envelope lying by itself; it was all that remained, and (the fool) she kept that; and only treasured it the more, I believe, because the rest was gone through her own magnanimous deed.

The children startled her by calling her to tea; she went mechanically, and began cutting bread and butter for them, wondering, meantime, how she was to go. The idea of wandering about the world, without even one gown to change, is not agreeable to a woman; however preoccupied she may be. Willie Anderson, she knew, would soon be passing with his post-cart, and she decided that he should take something for her. She bade Poppy run down to tell him to wait when he came, and then began to hasten tea over as much as possible. The children were left very quiet; one with a liberal donation of string, one with a book of hers, and Poppy with a piece of red silk and some faded artificial flowers.

"Oh, Georgy! you are very generous to us to-night," said Poppy.

"I have so much to be generous with, dear," she said, mournfully.

"A great deal; have you anything more to give us?" answered Poppy, literally.

"And if you will first be my horse, I'll be very good indeed."

"No, I am busy, and you must stay quietly here," said she, declining Poppy's gracious offer.

"You always say you are busy when papa has been scolding you; and what do you want Willie to wait for?"

"Never mind, dear."

"Will you come back soon and go into the garden?"

"Perhaps."

And so she got away, back to her room again. A small box was packed, and I regret to say no less than three dresses were crushed into it, besides numberless other things. Her bonnet was on, and she was counting up the contents of her purse, and calculating the price of the train, when Bessy, the housemaid, appeared.

"Willie canna be fashed to wait long; what do ye want wi' him, Miss Georgiana?"

"To take this little box to the station."

"What for? and where are ye off wi' your best bonnet on?"

"Oh, Bessy! don't trouble me now; it need not concern you in the least."

"Ye've been gettin' your scolds from the master or the mistress, I guess."

Georgy stood very irresolute; was she to implore Bessy's connivance—give her something—own to "gettin' her scolds," or what?

"What's came to ye, Miss Georgiana? you've been crying."

"I am going to my other aunt's; but, really, Bessy, you need not know anything about it."

Bessy would, however.

"Not to Miss Sparrow's?"

"Yes, to Miss Sparrow's."

"Eh! but she's a' London," Bessy chanted, rather than said, in her astonishment.

"Yes, she is there, and I am going to see her, at least for a while. I won't be denied, Bessy; I must take this box down myself, for I don't want to get you in trouble, and the less you ask about it, the better."

"I am not afraid of what nobody says to me," said Bessy, disdainfully. She was as free spoken as the raw, unsophisticated, north country servants always are; for this was her first place, and she hated the mistress and liked Georgy.

"But ye'll be coming back, I suppose; just tell me about it."

"I don't know, I'm sure. I am going straight to my aunt's; I can tell nothing else."

"Well, I'll not be saying anything; ye know best, Miss Georgy. Eh! but the mistress, she is hard upon ye; she's been fighting you, I know."

"Yes, she has; but Bessy let me go, that's a good woman."

"Well, come along, never mind what they say to me; you can't carry the box, Miss Georgy."

There was a sulky, rude kindness about Bessy, that made it difficult to offer her money, so Georgy only shook hands with her, and thanked her. Bessy made over the box to Willie, with orders to take it and Miss Sandon to the station."

"You must let me know if you get into trouble about me, Bessy," said she.

"The mistress had better not be too sharp with me; the situation does not please me over well, and I'm not over anxious to stop; she'll not get another quickly, to do all as I have done."

"Good-by, Bessy."

"Good-by, Miss Georgiana; and I'll maybe let ye know if me and the mistress has any disagreement." Bessy stood defiantly at the door till Georgy was out of sight, and then walked stolidly back to her work, rather pleased at this opportunity to contradict the mistress. Willie Anderson was not conversible or curious; he asked no questions, but merely made one or two local observations as they rode along. He deposited Georgy at the station, and before the sun had set, she was on her road to London.

CHAPTER XII.

A long, strange night she passed, being far too excited to sleep, and a vivid recollection of everything which had ever happened to her passing through her brain. How had she lived so long at Grainthorpe? that was a puzzle to her now. How had she not gone—gone no matter how, and why, long ago—she could not understand. It appeared to be another self that had lived so long at Grainthorpe. Gradually the gray morning began to appear, and her sleepy companions to arouse themselves, as the journey's end approached. Her only distinct idea was, that this was London; London, where, if she did not believe the streets were paved with gold, she fancied that all intellectual life and riches were to be found.

She had never been in London since she was a child; and now, as she watched that dark, smoky mass, and could see but a small part of that region of buildings, her heart beat quicker; she knew that she should soon be there, "in amongst the throngs of men;" there, in the midst of that life-giving strife and tumult, to be amongst which only would make her a participator therein. What a world of enthusiasm is sometimes poured forth upon that dark, dense city, and what strange contrasts it contains! How the fulness of its life, and the depth of its sufferings appear as foils one to the other in their intensity.

She nearly lost her luggage at the station, for she was bewildered by the noise and bustle, and very glad to find a temporary refuge at the Station Hotel. Here she counted the hours until she thought that she might set out to her aunt's. She did not want rest, but was so excited and confused that she liked to sit idly and reflect, and dreaded the occupation of keeping up a conversation. She did not fear a rebuff, for she felt confident that the kind-hearted old lady would receive her well.

She left her things at the hotel, for there was a sort of awkwardness in arriving with them and asking to be admitted, and she preferred leaving them to be sent for afterwards. It was well she did so, for, on arriving at —— street, Miss Sparrow was not there. Since her favorite niece's departure, whom she liked to be near, she had removed to another house. Georgy felt angry at her neglect of foresight; she might have gone to her aunt's own house first; she knew that this was not her permanent residence, and she need not be surprised. Her little stock of money was getting low, and anxious to be economical, she dismissed the cab, and walked on to —— Place.

The bustle of the street pleased her, and there was a great sense of enjoyment in her new-found freedom. Then, too, she somehow identified this great town with the one being whom she loved best in the world. All here had something of him in it. Something; yes, it was a wide proprietorship which she assigned to one man; for all here seemed to belong to him. She was free now, and all her life long might live upon that dream, if she would. The kind words of Mrs. Erskine were still ringing in her ears—she had built unconsciously upon them for months. She expected nothing actually, but Mrs. Erskine had bid her so heartily come and see her, that she meant in all simplicity to do so; bid her apply to her if she wanted anything; and so it was to her that she meant to go when she needed help and advice.

Georgy was tired with walking when she reached her aunt's house; but Miss Sparrow was not there; "No, this was Mrs.. Barker's." Georgy was thunderstruck. "But this is not Mrs. Barker's own house?"

"No, she leaves in a fortnight again; I'll ask if she knows Miss Sparrow."

The civil maid asked, and a civil lady appeared, who did not know Miss Sparrow. Miss Sparrow was at Brighton, and her house was let in she meantime. Mrs. Barker wrote down her address for Georgy, and then vaguely asked if she could be of any further use to her. But Georgy wanted nothing; she was going to see a friend who lived very near, and then she should go on to Brighton. Yes, she thought as she left the house, she must go on to Brighton immediately; but first a pleasant visit was to be paid—she would see Mrs. Erskine, and from her she was very sure to have advice and sympathy. She knew her road now, and passed through the Square where she had often been as a child; the little plants, not so tall as herself then, were now respectable shrubs; the church with florid architecture, which she had watched building from the nursery windows, was finished, and houses built in front of it, so that she could only see the steeple. She smiled to herself when she reached Mrs. Erskine's house; she had no misgivings as to the reception which she would find, and her only cause of fear was soon removed, for Mrs. Erskine was at home.

She was left waiting nearly ten minutes in the pretty, luxurious little drawing-room—then Mrs. Erskine appeared, saying that she was very tired and busy; she had just come to town, and, in truth, was preoccupied by her daughter's illness, money matters, and a whole train of annoyances of which Georgy knew nothing.

"So you are come to town! How pleased you must be; your aunt is such a kind, gentle creature, it must be pleasant to stay with her."

"Yes; I think she will be very kind."

"You must come and see me again; to-day I am very busy and tired. I only got back yesterday night from poor Julia's; she is far from well, and they are taking her to Edinburgh."

"I am very sorry, dear Mrs. Erskine."

"Everybody has their miseries, my dear; it is of no use troubling others with them, so I will not bore you."

"I think I must go to Brighton," (rather hesitatingly); but Mrs. Erskine had not paid attention.

"Oh, Brighton! I thought you were going to stay here; but Brighton will be very pleasant in this fine weather; I only wish that poor Julia ——" Her sentence was broken off by the entrance of visitors; two talkative ladies, one young and one middle-aged, intimate friends of Mrs. Erskine's, for they talked over Julia and her case; and then—James Erskine came in. He looked worn and tired; greeted the ladies, and then Miss Sandon.

"Oh, Miss Sandon! it is quite a pleasant surprise to see you; I did not know that you were coming to London."

He shook hands; but she was in a corner by Mrs. Erskine, and his natural place was on the other side of the room. The elder lady told some story; and, being opposite to Georgy, courteously recognized her presence, addressing it partly to her; but it was a story, the point of which hung on the knowledge of Charles Seymour, and his peculiar idiosyncrasies. Georgy did not know him, and felt the separation from them all Charles Seymour, was there to be "out of humanity's reach;" for, evidently, the lady no more expected her to be ignorant of who he was, than of who was reigning in France at that time. The conversation continued in the same unintelligible frame to Georgy, for a few moments, and then the ladies rose to go. They were relations, probably, for Mr. Erskine called the young lady Kate, and she spoke to him as James. Her mantle caught in the screen, just as they were going, and he caught hold of her shoulder just in time to prevent the rulp of the whole garment.

"Kate is too bad," said her mother; "she is very extravagant, and takes no care of her things when she has got them."

"One must have clothes in London," pleaded Kate.

"Of course," answered James, confidentially; "if they throw this torn mantle in your teeth, get another one to assert yourself."

"There, do you hear what James says, mamma?"

"What? now we must go, Kate," and James helped to replace the torn trimming on the mantle; but she never looked at him, for the mantle and its safety was uppermost in her thoughts.

"Is Mrs. Sandon in London?" asked James, in an absent way; and then, as the ladies descended the staircase, he crossed to the table, took possession of a newspaper, at which he had evidently been aiming, and slipped out of the room.

"James is terribly busy just now."

"Perhaps you are too, Mrs. Erskine?"

"Well, my dear, I will not ask you to stay to-day; I am so tired, and am not fit for anything."

She had just laughed heartily, and taken a keen interest in Charles Seymour. "You must mind and come another day, and tell me all about yourself. They are all well at Grainthorpe, I hope?"

"Quite well."

"I am glad to hear it," said she, leaning back, and relapsing into silence.

To be continued.