Lady Driffield also shook hands, but, with constitutional *gaucherie*, she did not second Mrs. Wellesdon's remark; she stood by silent and stiff.

'Oh, no, thank you,' said Lucy, hurriedly, 'I am quite well.'

When she had disappeared, the other two walked on.

'What a stupid little thing!' said Lady Driffield. 'The husband may be interesting—Driffield says he is—but I defy anybody to get anything out of the wife.'

It occurred to Marcia that nobody had been very anxious to make the attempt. But she only said aloud:

'I'm sure she is very shy. What a pity she wears that kind of dress! She might be quite pretty in something else.'

Meanwhile Lucy, after shutting the outer door of their little suite behind her, was overtaken as she opened that leading to her own room by a sudden gust of wind coming from a back staircase emerging on to their private passage, which she had not noticed before. The candle was blown out, and she entered the room in complete darkness. She groped for the matches, and found the little stand; but there were none there. She must have used the last in the making of her great illumination before dinner. After much hesitation, she at last summoned up courage to ring the bell, groping her way to it by the help of the light in the passage.

For a long time no one came. Lucy, standing near her own door, seemed to hear two sounds—the angry beating of her own heart, and a murmur of far-off talk and jollity, conveyed to her up the mysterious staircase, which apparently led to some of the servants' quarters.

Fully five minutes passed; then steps were heard approaching, and a housemaid appeared. Lucy timidly asked for fresh matches. The girl said 'Yes, ma'am,' in an off-hand way, looked at Lucy with a somewhat hostile eye, and vanished.

The minutes passed, but no matches were forthcoming. The whirlpool of the lower regions, where the fun was growing uproarious, seemed to have engulfed the messenger. At last Lucy was fain to undress by the help of a glimmer of light from her door left ajar, and after many stumbles and fumblings at last crept, tired and wounded, into bed. This finale seemed to her of a piece with all the rest.

As she lay there in the dark, incident after incident of her luckless evening coming back upon her, her heart grew hungry for David. Nay, her craving for him mounted to jealousy and passion. After all, though he did get on so much better in grand houses than she did, though they were all kind to him and despised her, he was *hers*, her very own, and no one should take him from her. Beautiful Mrs. Wellesdon might talk to him and make friends with him, but he did not belong to any of them, but to *her*, Lucy. She pined for the sound of his step—thought of throwing herself into his arms, and seeking consolation there for the pains of an habitual self-importance crushed beyond bearing.

But when that step was actually heard ouside, her mind veered in an instant. She had made him come; he would think she had disgraced him; he had probably noticed nothing, for a certain absent-mindedness in society had grown upon him of late years. No, she would hold her peace.

So when David, stepping softly and shading his candle, came in, and called 'Lucy' under his breath to see whether she might be awake, Lucy pretended to be sound asleep. He waited a minute, and then went out to change his coat and go down to the smoking-room.

Poor little Lucy! As she lay there in the dark, the tears dropping slowly on her embroidered pillow, the issue of all her mortification was a new and troubled consciousness about her husband. Why this difference between them? How was it that he commanded from all who knew him either a warm sympathy or an involuntary respect, while she—

She had gathered from some scraps of the talk round him which had reached her that it was just those sides of his life—those quixotic ideal sides—which were an offence and annoyance to her that touched other people's imagination, opened their hearts. And she had worried and teased him all these years! Not since the beginning. For, looking back, she could well remember the days when it was still an intoxication that he should have married her, when she was at once in awe of him and foolishly, proudly, happy. But there had come a year when David's profits from his business had amounted to over 2,000*l.*, and when, thanks to a large loan pressed upon him by his Unitarian landlord, Mr. Doyle, he had taken the new premises in Prince's Street. And from that moment Lucy's horizon had changed, her ambitions had hardened and narrowed; she had begun to be impatient with her husband, first, that he could not make her rich faster, then, after their Tantalus gleam of wealth, that he would put mysterious and provoking obstacles in the way of their getting rich at all.

She meant to keep awake—to wait for him. But she began to think of Sandy. *He* would be glad to see his 'mummy' again! In fancy she pressed his cheek against her own burning one. He and David were still alive—still hers—it was all right somehow. Consolation began to steal upon her, and in ten minutes she was asleep.

CHAPTER IV

When David came in later, he took advantage of Lucy's sleep to sit up awhile in his own room. He was excited, and any strong impression, in the practical loneliness of his deepest life, always now produced the impulse to write.

'*Midnight.*—Lucy is asleep. I hope she has been happy and they have been kind to her. I saw Mrs. Wellesdon talking to her after dinner. She must have liked that. But *at* dinner she seemed to be sitting silent a good deal.

'What a strange spectacle is this country-house life to anyone bringing to it a fresh and unaccustomed eye! "After all," said Mrs. Wellesdon, "you must admit that the best of anything is worth keeping. And in these country-houses, with all their drawbacks, you do from time to time get the best of social intercourse, a phase of social life as gay, complex, and highly finished as it can possibly be made."

'Certainly this applies to me to-night. When have I enjoyed any social pleasure so much as my talk with her at dinner? When have I been conscious of such stimulus, such exhilaration, as the evening's discussion produced in me? In the one case, Mrs. Wellesdon taught me what general conversation might be—how nimble, delicate, and pleasure-giving; in the other, there was the joy of the intellectual wrestle, mingled with a glad respect for one's opponents. Perhaps nowhere, except on some such ground and in some such circumstances as these, could a debate so earnest have taken quite so wholesome a tone, so wide a range. We were equals—debaters, not controversialists—friends, not rivals—in the quest for truth.

'Yet what drawbacks! This army of servants—which might be an army of slaves without a single manly right, so mute, impassive, and highly trained it is—the breeding of a tyrannous temper in the men, of a certain contempt for facts and actuality even in the best of the women. Mrs. Wellesdon poured out her social aspirations to me. How naïve and fanciful they were! They do her credit, but they will hardly do anyone else much good. And it is evident that they mark her out in her own circle, that they have brought her easily admiration and respect, so that she has never been led to test them, as any one, with the same social interest, living closer to the average realities and griefs of life, must have been led to test them.

'The culture, too, of these aristocratic women, when they are cultured, is so curious. Quite unconsciously and innocently it takes itself for much more than it is, merely by contrast with the *milieu*—the *milieu* of material luxury and complication—in which it moves.

'But I am ungrateful. What a social power in the best sense such a woman might become—a woman so sensitively endowed, so nobly planned!'

David dropped his pen awhile. In the silence of the great house, a silence broken only by the breathings of a rainy autumn wind through the trees outside, his thought took that picture-making intensity which was its peculiar gift. Images of what had been in his own life, and what might have been—the dream of passion which had so deeply marked and modified his manhood—Elise, seen in the clearer light of his richer experience—his married years—the place of the woman in the common life—on these his mind brooded, one by one, till gradually the solemn consciousness of opportunities for ever missed, of failure, of

limitation, evoked another, as solemn, but sweeter and more touching, of human lives irrevocably dependent on his, of the pathetic unalterable claim of marriage, the poverty and hopelessness of all self-seeking, the essential wealth, rich and making rich, of all self-spending. As he thought of his wife and son a deep tenderness flooded the man's whole nature. With a long sigh, it was as though he took them both in his arms, adjusting his strength patiently and gladly to the familiar weight.

Then, by a natural reaction, feeling, to escape itself, passed into speculative reminiscence and meditation of a wholly different kind.

'Our discussion to-night arose from an attack—if anyone so gentle can be said to attack—made upon me by Canon Aylwin, on the subject of those "Tracts on the New Testament"—tracts of mine, of which we have published three, while I have two or three more half done in my writing-table drawer. He said, with a certain nervous decision, that he did not wish to discuss the main question, but he would like to ask me, Could anyone be so sure of supposed critical and historical fact as to be clear that he was right in proclaiming it, when the proclamation of it meant the inevitable disturbance in his fellow-men of conceptions whereon their moral life depended? It was certain that he could destroy; it was most uncertain, even to himself, whether he could do anything else, with the best intentions; and, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, ought not the certainty of doing a moral mischief to outweigh, with any just and kindly mind, the much feebler and less solid certainty he may imagine himself to have attained with regard to certain matters of history and criticism?

'It was the old question of the rights of "heresy," the function of the individual in the long history of thought. We fell into sides: Lord Driffield and I against the Dean and Canon Aylwin. The Dean did not, indeed, contribute much. He sat with his square powerful head bent forward, throwing in a shrewd comment here and there, mainly on the logical course of the argument. But when we came to the main question, as we inevitably did, he withdrew altogether, though he listened.

'"No," he said, "no. I am not competent. It has not been my line in life. I have found more than enough to tax my strength in the practical administration of the goods of Christ. All such questions I leave, and must leave, to experts, such experts as"—and he mentioned the names of some of the leading scholars of the English Church—"or as my friend here," and he laid his hand affectionately on Canon Aylwin's knee.

'Strange! He leaves to experts such questions as those of the independence, authenticity, and trustworthiness of the Gospel records; of the culture and idiosyncrasies of the first two centuries as tending to throw light on those records; of the earliest growth of dogma, as, thanks mainly to German labour, it may now be exhibited within the New Testament itself. In

a Church of private judgment, he takes all this at second hand, after having vowed at his ordination "to be diligent in such studies as help to the knowledge of the Scriptures"!

'Yet a better, a more God-fearing, a more sincere, and, within certain lines, a more acute man than Dean Manley it would certainly be difficult to find at the present time within the English Church. It is an illustration of the dualism in which so many minds tend to live, divided between two worlds, two standards, two wholly different modes of thought—the one applied to religion even in its intellectual aspect, the other applied to all the rest of existence. Yet—is truth divided?

'To return to Canon Aylwin. I could only meet his reproach, which he had a special right to make, for he has taken the kindliest interest in some of the earlier series of our "Workmen's Tracts," by going back to some extent to first principles. I endeavoured to argue the matter on ground more or less common to us both. If both knowledge and morality have only become possible for man by the perpetual action of a Divine spirit on his since the dawn of conscious life; if this action has taken effect in human history, as, broadly speaking, the Canon would admit, through a free and constant struggle of opposites, whether in the realm of interest or the realm of opinion; and if this struggle, perpetually reconciled, perpetually renewed, is the divinely ordered condition, nay, if you will, the sacred task of human life,—how can the Christian, who clings, above all men, to the victory of the Divine in the human, who, moreover, in the course of his history has affronted and resisted all possible "authorities" but that of conscience—how can he lawfully resent the fullest and largest freedom of speech, employed disinterestedly and in good faith, on the part of his brother man? The truth must win; and it is only through the free life of the spirit that she has hitherto prevailed. So much, at least, the English Churchman must hold.

It comes to this: must there be no movement of thought because the individual who lives by custom and convention may at least temporarily suffer? Yet the risks of the individual throughout nature—so far we were agreed—are the correlative of his freedom and responsibility.

'"Ah, well," said the dear old man at last, with a change of expression which went to my heart, so wistful and spiritual it was, "perhaps I have been faithless; perhaps the Christian minister would do better to trust the Lord with His own. But before we leave the subject, let me say, once for all, that I have read all your tracts, and weighed most carefully all that they contain. The matter of them bears on what for me has been the study of many years, and all I can say is that I regard your methods of reasoning as unsound, and your conclusions as wholly false. I have been a literary man from my youth as well as a theologian, and I completely dissent from your literary judgments. I believe that if you had not been already possessed by a hostile philosophy—which will allow no space for miracle and revelation—you would not have arrived at them. I am old and you are young. Let me bear my testimony while there is time. I have taken a great interest in you and your work."

'He spoke with the most exquisite courtesy and simplicity, his look was dignified and heavenly. I felt like kneeling to ask his blessing, even though he could only give it in the shape of a prayer for my enlightenment.

'But now, alone with conscience, alone with God, how does the matter stand? The challenge of such a life and conviction as Canon Aylwin's is a searching one. It bids one look deep into one's self, it calls one to truth and soberness. What I seem to see is that he and I both approach Christianity with a prepossession, with, as he says, "a philosophy." His is a prepossession in favour of a system of interference from without, by Divine or maleficent powers, for their own ends, with the ordinary sequences of nature—which once covered, one may say, the whole field of human thought and shaped the whole horizon of humanity. From the beginning of history this prepossession—which may be regarded in all its phases as an expression of man's natural impatience to form a working hypothesis of things—has struggled with the "impulse to know." And slowly, irrevocably, from age to age the impulse to know has beaten back the impulse to imagine, has confined the prepossession of faith within narrower and narrower limits, till at last it is even preparing to deny it the guidance of religion, which it has so long claimed. For the impulse of science, justified by the long wrestle of centuries, is becoming itself religious,—and there is a new awe rising on the brow of Knowledge.

'*My* prepossession—but let the personal pronoun be merely understood as attaching me to that band of thinkers, "of all countries, nations, and languages," whose pupil and creature I am—is simply that of science, of the organised knowledge of the race. It is drawn from the whole of experience, it governs without dispute every department of thought, and without it, in fact, neither Canon Aylwin nor I could think at all.

'Moreover, I humbly believe that I desire the same spiritual goods as he: holiness, the knowledge of God, the hope of immortality. But while for him these things are bound up with the maintenance of the older prepossession, for me there is no such connection at all.

'And again, I seem to see that when this intellect of his, so keen, so richly stored, approaches the special ground of Christian thought, it changes in quality. It becomes wholly subordinate to the affections, to the influences of education and habitual surroundings. Talk to him of Dante, of the influence of the barbarian invasions on the culture and development of Europe, of the Oxford movement, you will find in him an historical sense, a delicate accuracy of perception, a luminous variety of statement, which carry you with him into the very heart of the truth. But

discuss with him the critical habits and capacity of those earliest Christian writers, on whose testimony so much of the Christian canon depends—ask him to separate the strata of material in the New Testament, according to their relative historical and ethical value, under the laws which he would himself apply to any other literature in the world—invite him to exclude this as legendary and that as accretion, to distinguish between the original kernel and that which the fancy or the theology of the earliest hearers inevitably added—and you will feel that a complete change has come over the mind. However subtle and precise his arguments may outwardly look, they are at bottom the arguments of affection, of the special pleader. He has fenced off the first century from the rest of knowledge; has invented for all its products alike special *criteria* and a special perspective. He cannot handle the New Testament in the spirit of science, for he approaches it on his knees. The imaginative habit of a lifetime has decided for him; and you ask of him what is impossible.

'"An end must come to scepticism somewhere!" he once said in the course of our talk. "Faith must take her leap—you know as well as I!—if there is to be faith at all."

'Yes, but *where*—at what point? Is the clergyman who talks with sincere distress about infidel views of Scripture and preaches against them, while at the same time he could not possibly give an intelligible account of the problem of the Synoptic Gospels as it now presents itself to the best knowledge, or an outline of the case pressed by science for more than half a century with increasing force and success against the historical character of St. John's Gospel—is he justified in making his ignorance the leaping-point?

'Yet the upshot of all our talk is that I am restless and oppressed.

'. . . I sit and think of these nine years since Berkeley and sorrow first laid hold of me. Berkeley rooted in me the conception of mind as the independent antecedent of all experience, and none of the scientific materialism, which so troubles Ancrum that he will ultimately take refuge from it in Catholicism, affects me. But the ethical inadequacy of Berkeley became very soon plain to me. I remember I was going one day through one of the worst slums of Ancoats, when a passage in his examination of the origin of evil occurred to me:

'"But we should further consider that the very blemishes and defects of nature are not without their use, in that *they make an agreeable sort of variety*, and augment the beauty of the rest of the creation, as shades in a picture serve to set off the brighter and more enlightened parts."

'I had just done my best to save a little timid scarecrow of a child, aged about six, from the blows of its brutal father, who had already given it a black eye—my heart blazed within me,—and from that moment Berkeley had no spell for me.

'Then came that moment when, after my marriage, haunted as I was by the perpetual oppression of Manchester's pain and poverty, the Christian mythology, the Christian theory with all its varied and beautiful flowerings in human life, had for a time an attraction for me so strong that Dora naturally hoped everything, and I felt myself becoming day by day more of an orthodox Christian. What checked the tendency I can hardly now remember in detail. It was a converging influence of books and life—no doubt largely helped, with regard to the details of Christian belief, by the pressure of the German historical movement, as I became more and more fully acquainted with it.

'At any rate, St. Damian's gradually came to mean nothing to me, though I kept, and keep still, a close working friendship with most of the people there. But I am thankful for that Christian phase. It enabled me to realise as nothing else could the strength of the Christian case.

'And since then it has been a long and weary journey through many paths of knowledge and philosophy, till of late years the new English phase of Kantian and Hegelian thought, which has been spreading in our universities, and which is the outlet of men who can neither hand themselves over to authority, like Newman, nor to a scientific materialism, like Clifford and Haeckel, nor to a mere patient nescience in the sphere of metaphysics, like Herbert Spencer, has come to me with an ever-increasing power of healing and edification.

'That the spiritual principle in nature and man exists and governs; that mind cannot be explained out of anything but itself; that the human consciousness derives from a universal consciousness, and is thereby capable both of knowledge and of goodness; that the phenomena and history of conscience are the highest revelation of God; that we are called to co-operation in a divine work, and in spite of pain and sin may find ground for an infinite trust, covering the riddle of the individual lot, in the history and character of that work in man, so far as it has gone—these things are deeper and deeper realities to me. They govern my life; they give me peace; they breathe to me hope.

'But the last glow, the certainties, the *vision*, of faith! Ah! me, I believe that He is there, yet my heart gropes in darkness. All that is personality, holiness, compassion in us, must be in Him intensified beyond all thought. Yet I have no familiarity of prayer. I cannot use the religious language which should be mine without a sense of unreality. My heart is athirst.

'And can religion possibly *depend* upon a long process of thought? How few can think their way to Him—perhaps none, indeed, by the logical intellect alone. He reveals himself to the simple. *Speak to me, to me also, O my Father!*'

Sunday morning broke fresh and golden after a wet night. Lucy lay still in the early dawn, thinking of the day that had to be faced, feeling more cheerful, however, with the refreshment

of sleep, and inclined to hope that she might have got over the worst, and that better things might be in store for her.

So that when David said to her, 'You poor little person, did they eat you up last night—Lady Driffield and her set?' she only answered evasively that Mrs. Wellesdon had been nice, but that Lady Driffield had very bad manners, and she was sure everybody thought so.

To which David heartily assented. Then Lucy put her question:

'Did you think, when you looked at me last night at dinner, that I—that I looked nice?' she said, flushing, yet driven on by an inward smart.

'Of course I did!' David declared. 'Perhaps you should hold yourself up a little more. The women here are so astonishingly straight and tall, like young poplars.'

'Mrs. Wellesdon especially,' Lucy reflected, with a pang.

'But you thought I—had done my hair nicely?' she said desperately.

'Very! And it was the prettiest hair there!' he said, smoothing back the golden brown curls from her temple.

His compliment so delighted her that she dressed and prepared to descend to breakfast with a light heart. She was not often now so happily susceptible to a word of praise from him; she was more exacting than she had once been, but since her acquaintance with Lady Driffield she had been brought low!

And her evil fortune returned upon her, alas, at breakfast, and throughout the day. Breakfast, indeed, seemed to her a more formidable meal than any. For people straggled in, and the ultimate arrangement of the table seemed entirely to depend upon the personal attractiveness of individuals, upon whether they annexed or repelled new-comers. Lucy found herself at one time alone and shivering in the close neighbourhood of Lady Driffield, who was intrenched behind the tea-urn, and after giving her guest a finger, had, Lucy believed, spoken once to her, expressing a desire for scones. The meal itself, with its elaborate cakes and meats and fruits, intimidated Lucy even more than the dinner had done. The breach between it and any small housekeeping was more complete. She felt that she was eating like a school-girl; she devoured her toast dry, out of sheer inability to ask for butter; and, sitting for the most part isolated in the unpopular—that is to say, the Lady Driffield—quarter of the table, went generally half-starved.

As for David, he, with Lord Driffield, Mrs. Wellesdon, Lady Alice, Reggie, and Mrs. Shepton for company at the other end, had on the whole an excellent time. There was, however, one uncomfortable moment of friction between him and Colonel Danby, who had strolled in last of all, with the vicious look of a man who has not had the good night to which he considered himself entitled, and must somehow wreak it on the world.

Just before he entered, Lady Driffield, looking round to see that the servants had departed, had languidly started the question: 'Does one talk to one's maid? Do you, Marcia, talk to your maid? How can anyone ever find anything to say to one's maid?'

The topic proved unexpectedly interesting. Both Marcia Wellesdon and Lady Alice declared that their maids were their bosom friends. Lady Driffield shrugged her shoulders, then looked at Mrs. Grieve, who had sat silent, opened her mouth to speak, recollected herself, and said nothing. At that moment Colonel Danby entered.

'I say, Danby!' called the young attaché, Marcia's brother, 'do you talk to your valet?'

'Talk to my valet!' said the Colonel, putting up his eye-glass to look at the dishes on the side table—he spoke with suavity, but there was an ominous pucker in the brow—'what should I do that for? I don't pay the fellow for his conversation, I presume, but to button my boots, and precious badly he does it too. I don't even know what his elegant surname is. "Thomas," or "James," or "William" is enough peg for me to hang my orders on. I generally christen them fresh when they come to me.'

Little Lady Alice looked indignant. Lucy caught her husband's face, and saw it suddenly pale, as it easily did under a quick emotion. He was thinking of the valet he had seen at the station standing by the Danbys' luggage—a dark, anxious-looking man, whose likeness to one of the compositors in his own office—a young fellow for whom he had a particular friendship—had attracted his notice.

'Why do you suppose he puts up with you—your servant?' he said, bending across to Colonel Danby. He smiled a little, but his eyes betrayed him.

'Puts up with me!' Colonel Danby lifted his brows, regarding David with an indescribable air of insolent surprise. 'Because I make it worth his while in pounds, shillings, and pence; that's all.'

And he put down his pheasant *salmi* with a clatter, while his wife handed him bread and other propitiations.

'Probably because he has a mother or sister,' said David, slowly. 'We trust a good deal to the patience of our "masters."'

The Colonel stopped his wife's attentions with an angry hand. But just as he was about to launch a reply more congruous with his gout and his contempt for 'Driffield's low-life friends' than with the amenities of ordinary society, and while Lady Venetia was slowly and severely studying David through her eyeglass, Lord Driffield threw himself into the breach with a nervous story of some favourite 'man' of his own, and the storm blew over.

Lady Driffield, indeed, who herself disliked Colonel Danby, as one overbearing person dislikes another, and only invited him because Lady Venetia was her cousin and an old friend, was rather pleased with David's outbreak. After breakfast she graciously asked him if she should show him the picture gallery.

But David was still seething with wrath, and looked at Vandeveldes and De Hoochs and Rembrandts with a distracted eye. Once, indeed, in a little alcove of the gallery hung with English portraits, he woke to a start of interest.

'Imagine that that should be Gray!' he said, pointing to a picture—well known to him through engraving—of a little man in a bob wig, with a turned-up nose and a button chin, and a general air of eager servility. '*Gray*,—one of our greatest poets!' He stood wondering, feeling it impossible to fit the dignity of Gray's verse to the insignificance of Gray's outer man.

'Oh, Gray—a great poet, you think? I don't agree with you. I have always thought the "Night Thoughts" very dull,' said Lady Driffield, sweeping along to the next picture, in a sublime unconsciousness. David smiled—a flash of mirth that cleared his whole look—and was himself again. Moreover he was soon taken possession of by Lord Driffield, and the two disappeared for a happy morning spent between the library and the woods.

Meanwhile Lucy went to church, and had the bliss of feeling that she made one too many in the omnibus, and that, squeeze herself as small as she might, she was still crushing Miss Danby's new dress—a fact of which both mother and daughter were clearly aware. Looking back upon it, Lucy could not remember that for her there had been any conversation going or coming; but it is quite possible that her memory of Benet's Park was even more pronounced than in reality.

David and Lord Driffield came in when lunch was half over, and afterwards there was a general strolling into the garden.

'Are you all right?' said David to his wife, taking her arm affectionately.

'Oh yes, thank you,' she said hurriedly, perceiving that Reggie Calvert was coming up to her. 'I'm all right. Don't take my arm, David. It looks so odd.'

And she turned delightedly to talk to the young diplomatist, who had the kindliness and charm of his race, and devoted himself to her very prettily for a while, though they had great difficulty in finding topics, and he was coming finally to the end of his resources when Lady Driffield announced that 'the carriage would be round in half an hour.'

'Goodness gracious! then I must write some letters first,' he said, with the importance of the budding ambassador, and ran into the house.

The others seemed to melt away—David and Canon Aylwin strolling off together—and soon Lucy found herself alone. She sat down in a seat round which curved a yew hedge, and whence there was a somewhat wide view over a bare, hilly country, with suggestions everywhere of factory life in the hollows, till on the southwest it rose and melted into the Derbyshire moors. Autumn—late autumn—was on all the reddening woods and in the cool sunshine; but there was a bright border of sunflowers and dahlias near, which no frost had yet touched, and the gaiety both of the

flowers and of the clear blue distance forbade as yet any thought of winter.

Lucy's absent and discontented eye saw neither flowers nor distance; but it was perforce arrested before long by the figure of Mrs. Shepton, who came round the corner of the yew hedge.

'Have they gone?' said that lady.

'Who?' said Lucy, startled. 'I heard a carriage drive off just now, I think.'

'Ah! then they *are* gone. Lady Driffield has carried off all her friends—except Mrs. Wellesdon, who, I believe, is lying down with a headache—to tea at Sir Wilfrid Herbart's. You see the house there'—and she pointed to a dim, white patch among woods, about five miles off. 'It is not very civil of a hostess, perhaps, to leave her guests in this way. But Lady Driffield is Lady Driffield.'

Mrs. Shepton laughed, and threw back the flapping green gauze veil with which she generally shrouded a freckled and serviceable complexion, in no particular danger, one would have thought, of spoiling.

Lucy instinctively looked round to see how near they were to the house, and whether there were any windows open.

'It must be very difficult, I should think, to be—to be friends with Lady Driffield.'

She looked up at Mrs. Shepton with the childish air of one both hungry for gossip and conscious of the naughtiness of it.

Mrs. Shepton laughed again. She had never seen anyone behave worse, she reflected, than Lady Driffield to this little Manchester person, who might be uninteresting, but was quite inoffensive.

'Friends! I should think so. An armed neutrality is all that pays with Lady Driffield. I have been here many times, and I can now keep her in order perfectly. You see, Lady Driffield has a brother whom she happens to be fond of—everybody has some soft place—and this brother is a Liberal member down in our West Riding part of the world. And my husband is the editor of a paper that possesses a great deal of political influence in the brother's constituency. We have backed him up through this election. He is not a bad fellow at all, though about as much of a Liberal at heart as this hedge,' and Mrs. Shepton struck it lightly with the parasol she carried. 'My husband thinks we got him in—by the skin of his teeth. So Lady Driffield asks us periodically, and behaves herself, more or less. My husband likes Lord Driffield. So do I; and an occasional descent upon country houses amuses me. It especially entertains me to make Lady Driffield talk politics.'

'She must be very Conservative,' said Lucy, heartily. Conservatism stood in her mind for the selfish exclusiveness of big people. Her father had always been a bitter Radical.

'Oh dear no—not at all! Lady Driffield believes herself an advanced Liberal; that is the comedy of it. *Liberals!*' cried

Mrs. Shepton, with a sudden bitterness, which transformed the broad, plain, sleepy face. 'I should like to set her to work for a year in one of those mills down there. She might have some politics worth having by the end of it.'

Lucy looked at her in amazement. Why, the mill people were very happy—most of them.

'Ah well!' said Mrs. Shepton, recovering herself, 'what we have to do—we intelligent middle class—for the next generation or two, is to *drive* these aristocrats. Then it will be seen what is to be done with them finally. Well, Mrs. Grieve, we must amuse ourselves. *Au revoir!* My husband has some writing to do, and I must go and help him.'

She waved her hand and disappeared, sweeping her green and yellow skirts behind her with an air as though Benet's Park were already a seminary for the correction of the great.

Lucy sat on pondering till she felt dull and cold, and decided to go in. On finding her way back she passed round a side of the house which she had not yet seen. It was the oldest part of the building, and the windows, which were mullioned and narrow, and at some height from the ground, looked out upon a small bowling-green, closely walled in from the rest of the gardens and the park by a thick screen of trees. She lingered along the path looking at a few late roses which were still blooming in this sheltered spot against the wall of the house, when she was startled by the sound of her own name, and, looking up, she saw that there was an open window above her. The temptation was too great. She held her breath and listened.

'Lord Driffield says he married her when he was quite young, that accounts for it.' Was not the voice Lady Alice's? 'But it is a pity that she is not more equal to him. I never saw a more striking face, did you? Yet Lord Driffield says he is not as good-looking as he promised to be as a boy. I wish we had been there last night after dinner, Marcia! They say he gave Colonel Danby such a dressing about some workmen's question. Colonel Danby was laying down the law about strikes in his usual way—he *is* an odious creature!—and wishing that the Government would just send an infantry regiment into the middle of the Yorkshire miners that are on strike now, when Mr. Grieve fired up. And everybody backed him. Reggie told me it was splendid; he never saw a better shindy. It is a pity about her. Everybody says he might have a great career if he pleased. And she can't be any companion to him.—Now, Marcia, you know your head *is* better, so don't say it isn't! Why, I have used a whole bottle of eau de Cologne on you.'

So chattered pretty, kindly Lady Alice, sitting with her back to the window beside Marcia Wellesdon. Lucy stood still a moment, could not hear what Mrs. Wellesdon said languidly in answer, then crept on, her lip quivering.

From then till long after the dark had fallen she was quite alone. David, coming back from a long walk, and tea at the

agent's house on the further edge of the estate, found his wife lying on her bed, and the stars beginning to look in upon her through the unshuttered windows.

'Why, Lucy! aren't you well, dear?' he said, hurrying up to her.

'Oh yes, very well, thank you,' she said, in a constrained voice. 'My head aches rather.'

'Who has been looking after you?' he said, instantly reproaching himself for the enjoyment of his own afternoon.

'I have been here since three o'clock.'

'And nobody gave you any tea?' he asked, flushing.

'No, I went down, but there was nobody in the drawing-room. I suppose the footman thought nobody was in.'

'Where was Lady Driffield?'

'Oh! she and most of them went out to tea—to a house a good way off.'

Lucy's tone was dreariness itself. David sat still, his breath coming quickly. Then suddenly Lucy turned round and drew him down to her passionately.

'When can we get home? Is there an early train?'

Then David understood. He took her in his arms, and she broke down and cried, sobbing out a catalogue of griefs that was only half coherent. But he saw at once that she had been neglected and slighted, nay more, that she had been somehow wounded to the quick. His clasped hand trembled on his knee. This was hospitality! He had gauged Lady Driffield well.

'An early train?' he said, with frowning decision. 'Yes, of course. There is to be an eight o'clock breakfast for those who want to get off. We shall be home by a little after nine. Cheer up, darling. I will look after you to-night—and think of Sandy to-morrow!'

He laid his cheek tenderly against hers, full of a passion of resentment and pity. As for her, the feeling with which she clung to him was more like the feeling she had first shown him on the Wakely moors, than anything she had known since.

'Sandy! why don't you say good morning, sir?' said David next morning, standing on the threshold of his own study, with Lucy just behind. His face was beaming with the pleasures of home.

Sandy, who was lying curled up in David's arm-chair, looked sleepily at his parents. His thumb was tightly wedged in his mouth, and with the other he held pressed against him a hideous rag doll, which had been presented to him in his cradle.

'Jane's asleep,' he said, just removing his thumb for the purpose, and then putting it back again.

'Heartless villain!' said David, taking possession of both him and Jane. 'And do you mean to say you aren't glad to see Daddy and Mammy?'

'Zes—but Sandy's *so* fond of childwen,' said Sandy, cuddling Jane up complacently, and subsiding into his father's arms.

Husband and wife laughed into each other's eyes. Then Lucy knelt down to tie the child's shoe, and David, first kissing the boy, bent forward and laid another kiss on the mother's hair.

CHAPTER V

'An exciting post,' said David to Lucy one morning as she entered the dining-room for breakfast. 'Louie proposes to bring her little girl over to see us, and Ancrum will be home to-night!'

'Louie!' repeated Mrs. Grieve, standing still in her amazement. 'What do you mean?'

It was certainly unexpected. David had not heard from Louie for more than six months; his remittances to her, however, were at all times so casually acknowledged that he had taken no particular notice; and he and she had not met for two years and more—since that visit to Paris, in fact, recorded in his journal.

'It is quite true,' said David; 'it seems to be one of her sudden schemes. I don't see any particular reason for it. She says she must "put matters before" me, and that Cécile wants a change. I don't see that a change to Manchester in February is likely to help the poor child much. No, it must mean more money. We must make up our minds to that,' said David with a little sad smile, looking at his wife.

'David! I don't see that you're called to do it at all!' cried Lucy. 'Why, you've done much more for her than anybody else would have done! What they do with the money I can't think—dreadful people!'

She began to pour out the tea with vehemence and an angry lip. She had always in her mind that vision of Louie, as she had seen her for the first and only time in her life, marching up Market Place in the 'loud' hat and the black and scarlet dress, stared at and staring. Nor had she ever lost her earliest impression of strong dislike which had come upon her immediately afterwards, when Louie and Reuben had mounted to Dora's sitting-room, and she, Lucy, had angrily told the quick-fingered, bold-eyed girl who claimed to be David Grieve's sister not to touch Dora's work. Nay, every year since had but intensified it, especially since their income had ceased to expand rapidly, and the drain of the Montjoies' allowance had been more plainly felt. She might have begun to feel a little ashamed of herself that she was able to give her husband so little sympathy in his determination to share his gains with his co-workers. She was quite clear that she was right in resenting the wasting of his money on such worthless people as the Montjoies. It was disgusting that they should sponge upon them so—and with hardly a 'thank you' all the time. Oh dear, no!—Louie took everything as her right, and had once abused David through four pages because his cheque had been two days late.

David received his wife's remarks in a meditative silence. He

devoted himself a while to Sandy, who was eating porridge at his right hand, and tended with great regularity to bestow on his pinafore what was meant for his mouth. At last he said, pushing the letter over to Lucy:

'You had better read it, Lucy. She talks of coming next week.'

Lucy read it with mounting wrath. It was the outcome of a fit of characteristic violence. Louie declared that she could stand her life no longer; that she was coming over to put things before David; and if he couldn't help her, she and her child would just go out and beg. She understood from an old Manchester acquaintance whom she had met in the Rue de Rivoli about Christmas-time that David was doing very well with his business. She wished him joy of it. If he was prosperous, it was more than she was. Nobody ever seemed to trouble their heads about her.

'Well, I never!' said Lucy, positively choked. 'Why, it's not much more than a month since you sent her that last cheque, And now I know you'll be saying you can't afford yourself a new great-coat. It's disgraceful! They'll suck you dry, those kind of people, if you let them.'

She had taken no pains so far to curb her language for the sake of her husband's feelings. But as she gave vent to the last acid phrase she felt a sudden compunction. For David was looking straight before him into vacancy, with a painful intensity in the eyes, and a curious droop and contraction of the mouth. Why did he so often worry himself about Louie? *He* had done all he could, anyway.

She got up and went over to him with his tea. He woke up from his absorption and thanked her.

'Is it right?'

'Just right!' he said, tasting it. 'All the same, Lucy, it would be really nice of you to be kind to her and poor little Cécile. It won't be easy for either of us having Louie here.'

He began to cut up his bread with sudden haste, then, pausing again, he went on in a low voice. 'But if one leaves a task like that undone it makes a sore spot, a fester in the mind.'

She went back to the place in silence.

'What day is it to be?' she said presently. Certainly they both looked dejected.

'The 16th, isn't it? I wonder who the Manchester acquaintance was. He must have given a rose-coloured account. We aren't so rich as all that, are we, wife?'

He glanced at her with a charming half-apprehensive smile, which made his face young again. Lucy looked ready to cry.

'I know you'll get out of buying that coat,' she said with energy, as though referring to an already familiar topic of discussion between them.

'No, I won't,' said David cheerfully. 'I'll buy it before Louie comes, if that will please you. Oh, we shall do, dear! I've had a real good turn at the shop this last month. Things will look better this quarter's end, you'll see.'