

Warner Susan

The Old Helmet. Volume I



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CHAPTER I. THE RUINS

"She look'd and saw that all was ruinous,
Here stood a shattered archway plumed with fern;
And here had fall'n a great part of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gay with wilding flowers,
And high above a piece of turret stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent,
Bare to the sun."

The first thing noticeable is a gleam of white teeth. Now that is a pleasant thing generally; yet its pleasantness depends, after all, upon the way the lips part over the ivory. There is a world of character discoverable in the curve of those soft lines. In the present case, that of a lady, as it is undoubtedly the very first thing you notice, the matter must be investigated. The mouth is rather large, with well cut lips however; and in the smile which comes not infrequently, the lips part freely and frankly, though not too far, over a wealth of white, beautiful teeth. So free is the curve of the upper lip, and so ready its revelation of the treasures beneath, that there is an instant suspicion of a certain frankness and daring, and perhaps of a little mischief, on the part of their possessor; so free, at the same time, as to forbid the least notion of consciousness or design in that beautiful revelation. But how fine and full and regular are those white treasures of hers! seeming to speak for a strong and perfect physical organisation; and if your eye goes further, for her flat hat is on the ground, you will see in the bountiful rich head of hair another token of the same thing. Her figure is finely developed; her colour clear and healthy; not blonde; the full-brown hair and eyes agree with the notion of a nature more lively than we assign to the other extreme of complexion. The features are not those of a beauty, though better than that, perhaps; there is a world of life and sense and spirit in them.

It speaks for her good nature and feeling, that her smile is as frank as ever just now, and as pleasant as ever; for she is with about the last one of her party on whom she would have chosen to bestow herself. The occasion is a visit to some celebrated ruins; a day of pleasure; and Eleanor would a good deal rather be walking and talking with another much more interesting member of the company, in whose society indeed her day had begun; but Mr. Carlisle had been obliged suddenly to return home for an hour or two; and Eleanor is sitting on a grassy bank, with a gentleman beside her whom she knows very little and does not care about at all. That is, she has no idea he can be very interesting; and he *is* a grave-looking personage, but we are not going to describe him at present.

A word must be given to the place where they are. It is a little paradise. If the view is not very extended, it is rich in its parts; and the eye and the mind are filled. The grass is shaven smooth on the bank where the two are sitting; so it is all around, under trees which stand with wilful wildness of luxuriance, grouped and scattered apparently as they would. They are very old, in several varieties of kind, and in the perfect development and thrift of each kind. Among them are the ruins of an old priory. They peep forth here and there from the trees. One broken tower stands free, with

ivy masking its sides and crumbling top, and stains of weather and the hues of lichen and moss enriching what was once its plain grey colour. Other portions of the ruins are seen by glimpses further on among the trees. Standing somewhat off by itself, yet encompassed by the congeners of those same trees, almost swallowed up among them, is a comfortable, picturesque little building, not in ruins; though it has been built up from the ruins. It is the parsonage, where the rector of the parish lives. Beyond this wood and these buildings, old and new, the eye can catch only bits of hills and woods that promise beauty further on; but nearer than they, and making a boundary line between the present and the distant, the flash of a little river is seen, which curves about the old priory lands. A somewhat doubtful sunlight is struggling over it all; casting a stray beam on the grass, and a light on the ivy of the old tower.

"What a queer old place it must have been," said Eleanor.

"How old is it?"

"O I don't know – ages! Do you mean really how old? I am sure I can't tell; I never can keep those things in my head. If Dr. Cairnes would come out, he could tell you all about it, and more."

"Dr. Cairnes, the rector?"

"Yes. He keeps it all in *his* head, I know. The ruins are instead of a family to him."

"They must date back pretty far, judging by those Norman arches."

"Norman arches? – what, those round ones? O, they do. The priory was founded by some old courtier or soldier in the time of Henry the First, who got disgusted with the world. That is the beginning of all these places, isn't it?"

"Do you mean, that it is the beginning of all religious feeling?"

"I really think it is. I wouldn't tell Dr. Cairnes so however. How sweet these violets are. Dear little blue things!"

"Do you suppose," said the young man, stooping to pick one or two, "that they are less sweet to me than to you?"

"Why should they be?"

"Because, religion is the most precious thing in the world to me; and by your rule, I must be disgusted with the world, and all sweet things have lost their savour."

He spoke with quiet gravity, and Eleanor's eye went to his face with a bright glance of inquiry. It came back with no change of opinion.

"You don't convert me," she said. "I do not know what you have given up for religion, so I cannot judge. But all the other people I ever saw, grew religious only because they had lost all care about everything else."

"I wonder how that discontented old soldier found himself, when he got into these solitudes?" said the young man, with a smile of his own then. It was sweet, and a little arch, and withal harmonised completely with the ordinary gravity of his face, not denying it at all. Eleanor looked, once and again, with some curiosity, but the smile passed away as quietly as it had come.

"The solitude was not *this* solitude then."

"O no, it was very wild."

"These were Augustine canons, were they not?"

"Who?"

"The monks of this priory."

"I am sure I don't know. I forget. What was the difference?"

"You know there were many orders of religious houses. The Augustines were less severe in their rule, and more genial in their allowed way of life, than most of the others?"

"What was their rule?"

"Beginning with discontent of the world, you know, they went on with the principle that nothing worldly was good."

"Well, isn't that the principle of all religious people now?"

"I like violets" – said the young man, smiling again.

"But do tell me, what did those old monks do? What was their 'rule?' I don't know anything about it, nor about them."

"Another old discontented soldier, who founded an abbey in Wales, is said by the historian to have dismissed all his former companions, and devoted himself to God. For his military belt, he tied a rope about his waist; instead of fine linen he put on haircloth. And it is recorded of him, that the massive suit of armour which he had been used to wear in battle, to protect him against the arrows and spears and axes of the enemy, he put on now and wore as a defence against the wiles and assaults of the devil – and wore it till it rusted away with age."

"Poor old soul!" said Eleanor.

"Does that meet your ideas of a religious life?"

Eleanor laughed, but answered by another question. "Was *that* the rule of all the Augustine monks?"

"It gives the key to it. Is that your notion of a religious life? You don't answer me."

"Well," said Eleanor laughing again, "*it gives the key to it*, as you say. I do not suppose you wear a suit of armour to protect yourself."

"I beg your pardon. I do."

"*Armour?*" said Eleanor, looking incredulous. But her friend fairly burst into a little laugh at that.

"Are you rested?" said he.

And Eleanor got up, feeling a little indignant and a little curious. Strolling towards the ruins, however, there was too much to start conversation and too much to give delight, to permit either silence or pique to last.

"Isn't it beautiful!" burst from both at once.

"How exquisite that ivy is, climbing up that old tower!"

"And what a pity it is crumbling away so!" said Eleanor. "See that nearer angle – it is breaking down fast. I wish it would stay as it is."

"Nothing will do that for you. What is all that collection of rubbish yonder?"

"That is where Mr. Carlisle is going to build a cottage for one of his people – somebody to take care of the ruins, I believe."

"And he takes the ruins to build it with, and the old priory grounds too!"

Eleanor looked again at her companion.

"I think it is better than to have the broken stones lying all over – don't you?"

"I do not."

"Mr. Carlisle thinks so. Now here we are in the body of the church – there you see where the roof went, by the slanting lines on the tower wall; and we are standing where the congregation used to assemble."

"Not much of a congregation," said her companion. "The neighbouring country furnished few attendants, I fancy; the old monks and their retainers were about all. The choir would hold most of them; the nave, where we are standing, would have been of little use except for processions."

"Processions?" said Eleanor.

"On particular days there were processions of the brotherhood, with lighted candles – round and round in the church. In the church at York twelve rounds made a mile, and there were twelve holes at the great door, with a little peg, so that any one curious about the matter might reckon the miles."

"And so they used to go up and down here, burning their fingers with melted tallow!" said Eleanor. "Poor creatures! What a melancholy existence! Are you preparing to renounce the world yourself, Mr. Rhys?"

He smiled, but it was a compound smile, light and earnest both at once, which Eleanor did not comprehend.

"Why do you suspect me?" he asked.

"You seem to be studying the thing. Are you going to be a white or a black monk – or a grey friar?"

"There is a prior question. It is coming on to rain, Miss Powle."

"Rain! It is beginning this minute! And all the umbrellas are nobody knows where – only that it is where we ought to be. I was glad just now that the old roof is gone – but I think I would like a piece of it back."

"You can take shelter at the parsonage."

"No, I cannot – they have got fever there."

"Then come with me. I believe I can find you a piece of roof somewhere."

Eleanor smiled to herself that he should think so, as all traces of beam and rafter had long since disappeared from the priory and its dependencies. However she followed her conductor, who strode along among the ruins at a pace which it taxed her powers to keep up with. Presently he plunged down into a wilderness of bushes and wild thorn and piled up stones which the crumbling walls had left in confusion strewn over the ground. It was difficult walking. Eleanor had never been there; for in that quarter the decay of the buildings was more entire, and the growth of shrubs and brambles had been allowed to mask the disorder. As they went on, the footing grew very rough; they were obliged to go over heaps and layers of the crumbling, moss-grown ruins. Eleanor's conductor turned and gave her his hand to help; it was a strong hand and quickened her progress. Presently turning a sharp corner, through a thicket of thorn and holly bushes, with young larches and beeches, a small space of clearance was gained, bounded on the other side by a thick wall, one angle of which was standing. On this clear spot the rain drops were falling fast. The hand that held Eleanor's hurried her across it, to where an old window remained sunk in the wall. The arch over the window was still entire, and as the wall was one of the outer walls and very thick, the shelter of a "piece of roof" was literally afforded. Eleanor's conductor seated her on the deep window sill, where she was perfectly screened from the rain; and apologising for the necessity of the occasion, took his place beside her. The window was narrow as well as deep; and the two, who hardly knew each other, were brought into very familiar neighbourhood. Eleanor would have been privately amused, if the first passing consciousness of amusement had not been immediately chased away by one or two other thoughts. The first was the extreme beauty of her position as a point of view.

The ruins were all behind them. As they looked out of the window, nothing was seen but the most exquisite order and the most dainty perfection of nature. The ground, shaven and smooth, sloped away down to a fringe of young wood, amidst which peeped out a pretty cottage and above which a curl of smoke floated. The cottage stood so low, and the trees were so open, that above and beyond appeared the receding slopes and hills of the river valley, in their various shades of colour, grass and foliage. There was no sun on all this now, but a beautiful light under the rain cloud from the distant horizon. And the dark old stone window was the frame for this picture. It was very perfect. It was very rare. Eleanor exclaimed in delight.

"But I never was here – I never saw this before! How did you know of it, Mr. Rhys?"

"I have studied the ruins," he said lightly.

"But you have been at Wiglands only a few months."

"I come here very often," he answered. "Happily for you."

He might add that well enough, for the clouds poured down their rain now in torrents, or in sheets; the light which had come from the horizon a few minutes before was hidden, and the grey gloom of a summer storm was over everything. The little window seemed dark, with the two people sitting there. Then there came a blinding flash of lightning. Eleanor started and cowered, and the thunder rolled its deep tones over them, and under them, for the earth shook. She raised

her head again, but only to shrink back the second time, when the lightning and the thunder were repeated. This time her head was not raised again, and she kept her hand covered over her eyes. Yet whenever the sound of the thunder came, Eleanor's frame answered it by a start. She said nothing; it was merely the involuntary answer of the nerves. The storm was a severe one, and when the severity of it passed a little further off, the torrents of rain still fell.

"You do not like thunder storms" – Mr. Rhys remarked, when the lightnings had ceased to be so vivid or so near.

"Does anybody like them?"

"Yes. I like everything."

"You are happy" – said Eleanor.

"Why are not you?"

"I can't help it," said the girl, lifting up her head, though she did not let her eyes go out of the window. "I cannot bear to see the lightning. It is foolish, but I cannot help it."

"Are you sure it is foolish? Is there not some reason at the bottom of it?"

"I think there is a reason, though still it is foolish. There was a man killed by lightning just by our door, once – when I was a child. I saw him – I never can forget it, never!"

And a sort of shudder ran over Eleanor's shoulders as she spoke.

"You want my armour," said her companion. The tone of voice was not only grave but sympathising. Eleanor looked up at him.

"Your armour?"

"You charged me with wearing armour – and I confessed it," he said with something of a smile. "It is a sort of armour that makes people safe in all circumstances."

He looked so quiet, so grave, so cool, and his eye had such a light in it, that Eleanor could not throw off his words. He *looked* like a man in armour. But no mail of brass was to be seen.

"What *do* you mean?" she said.

"Did you never hear of the helmet of salvation?"

"I don't know," said Eleanor wonderingly. "I think I have heard the words. I do not think I ever attached any meaning to them."

"Did you never feel," he said, speaking with a peculiar deliberation of manner, "that you were exposed to danger – and to death – from which no effort of yours could free you; and that after death, there is a great white throne to meet, for which you are not ready?"

While he spoke slowly, his eyes were fixed upon Eleanor with a clear piercing glance which she felt read her through and through; but she was fascinated instead of angered, and submitted her own eyes to the reading without wishing to turn them away. Carrying on two trains of thought at the same time, as the mind will, her inward reflection was, "I had no idea that you were so good-looking!" – the answer in words was a sober, "I have felt so."

"Was the feeling a happy one?"

Eleanor's lip suddenly trembled; then she put down that involuntary natural answer, and said evasively, looking out of the window, "I suppose everybody has such feelings sometimes."

"Not with that helmet on" – said her companion.

With all the quietness of his speech, and it was very unimpassioned, his accent had a clear ring to it, which came from some unsounded spirit-depth of power; and Eleanor's heart for a moment sunk before it in a secret convulsion of pain. She concealed this feeling, as she thought, successfully; but that single ray of light had shewed her the darkness; it was keen as an arrow, and the arrow rankled. And her neighbour's next words made her feel that her heart lay bare; so quietly they touched it.

"You feel that you want something, Miss Powle."

Eleanor's head drooped, as well as her heart. She wondered at herself; but there was a spell of power upon her, and she could by no means lift up either. It was not only that his words were true, but that he knew them to be so.

"Do you know *what* you want?" her friend went on, in tones that were tender, along with that deliberate utterance that carried so much force with it. "You know yourself an offender before the Lord – and you want the sense of forgiveness in your heart. You know yourself inclined to be an offender again – and you want the renewing grace of God to make your heart clean, and set it free from the power of sin. Then you want also something to make you happy; and the love of Jesus alone can do that."

"What is the use of telling over the things one has not got?" – said Eleanor in somewhat smothered tones. The words of her companion came again clear as a bell —

"Because you may have them if you want them."

Eleanor struggled with herself, for her self-possession was endangered, and she was angry at herself for being such a fool; but she could not help it; yet she would not let her agitation come any more to the surface. She waited for clearness of voice, and then could not forbear the question, "How, Mr. Rhys?"

"Jesus said, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' There is all fulness in him. Go to him for light – go to him for strength – go to him for forgiveness, for healing, for sanctification. 'Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.'"

"Go to him?" repeated Eleanor vaguely.

"Ask him."

Ask *Him*! It was such a far-off, strange idea to her a heart, there seemed such a universe of distance between, Eleanor's face grew visibly shadowed with the thought. *She*? She could not. She did not know how. She was silent a little while. The subject was getting unmanageable.

"I never had anybody talk to me so before, Mr. Rhys," she said, thinking to let it pass.

"Perhaps you never will again," he said. "Hear it now. The Lord Jesus is not far off – as you think – he is very near; he can hear the faintest whisper of a petition that you send to him. It is his message I bring you to-day – a message to *you*. I am his servant, and he has given me this charge for you to-day – to tell you that he loves you – that he has given his life for yours – and that he calls Eleanor Powle to give him her heart, and then to give him her life, in all the obedience his service may require."

Eleanor felt her heart strangely bowed, subdued, bent to his words. "I will" – was the secret language of her thoughts – "but I must not let this man see all I am feeling, if I can help it." She held herself still, looking out of the window, where the rain fell in torrents yet, though the thunder and the lightning were no longer near. So did he; he added no more to his last words, and a silence lasted in the old ruined window as if its chance occupants were gone again. As the silence lasted, Eleanor felt it grow awkward. She was at a loss how to break it. It was broken for her then.

"What will you do, Miss Powle?"

"I will think about it" – she answered, startled and hesitating.

"How long, before you decide?"

"How can I tell?" she said.

"You are shrinking from a decision already formed. The answer is given in your secret thoughts, and something is rising up in the midst of them to thwart it. Shall I tell my Master that his message is refused?"

"Mr. Rhys!" said Eleanor looking up, "I never heard any one talk so in all my life! You speak as if –"

"As if, what?"

"You speak as if – I never heard any one speak as you do."

"I speak as if I were in the habit of telling my Master how his message is received? I often do that."

"But it seems superfluous to tell what is known already," said Eleanor, wondering secretly much more than she dared to say at her companion's talk.

"Do you never, in speaking to those you love, tell them what is no information?"

Eleanor was now dumb. There was too great a gulf of difference between her companion and herself, to try to frame any words or thoughts that might bridge it over. She must remain on one side and he on the other; yet she went on wondering.

"Are you a clergyman, Mr. Rhys?" she said after a pause.

"I am not what you would call such."

"Do you not think the rain is over?"

"Nearly, for the present; but the grass is as wet as possible."

"O, I don't mind that. There is somebody now in the shrubbery yonder, looking for me."

"He will not find you here," said Mr. Rhys. "I have this window all to myself. But we will find him."

The rain-drops fell now but scatteringly, the last of the shower; the sun was breaking out, and the green world was all in a glitter of wet leaves. Wet as they were, Eleanor and Mr. Rhys pushed through the thick bramble and holly bushes, which with honeysuckles, eglantine, and broom, and bryony, made a sweet wild wilderness. They got plentifully besprinkled in their way, shook that off as well as they could, and with quick steps sought to rejoin their companions. The person Eleanor had seen in the shrubbery was the first one found, as Mr. Rhys had said. It was Mr. Carlisle. He at once took charge of Eleanor.

"What has become of you?"

"What has become of *you*, Mr. Carlisle?" Eleanor's gleaming smile was as bright as ever.

"Despair, nearly," said he; "for I feared business would hold me all day; but I broke away. Not time enough to protect you from this shower."

"Water will wet," said Eleanor, laughing; for the politeness of this speech was more evident than its plausibility. She was on the point of speaking of the protection that had been actually found for her, but thought better of it. Meantime they were joined by a little girl, bright and rather wild looking, who addressed Eleanor as her sister.

"O come!" she said, – "where have you been? We can't go on till you come. We are going to lunch at Barton's Tower – and mamma says she will make Mr. Carlisle build a fire, so that we may all dry ourselves."

"Julia! – how you speak!"

"She did say so," repeated the child. "Come – make haste."

Eleanor glanced at her companion, who met the glance with a smile. "I hope Mrs. Powle will always command me," he said, somewhat meaningly; and Eleanor hurried on.

She was destined to long *tête-à-têtes* that day; for as soon as her little party was seen in the distance, the larger company took up their line of march again. Julia and Mr. Rhys had fallen behind; and the long walk to Barton's Tower was made with Mr. Carlisle alone, who was in no haste to abridge it, and seemed to enjoy himself very well. Eleanor once or twice looked back, and saw her little sister, hand in hand with her companion of the old window, walking and talking in very eager and gay style; to judge by Julia's lively movements.

"Who is that Mr. Rhys?" said Eleanor.

"I have hardly the honour to know him. May I ask, why you ask?"

"He is peculiar," said Eleanor.

"He can hardly be worthy your study." And the question was dismissed with a coolness which reminded Eleanor of Mr. Rhys's own words, that he was not what she would call a clergyman. She would have asked another question, but the slight disdain which spoke in Mr. Carlisle's eye and

voice deterred her. She only noticed how well the object of it and her sister were getting along. However, Eleanor's own walk was pleasant enough to drive Mr. Rhys out of her head. Mr. Carlisle was polished, educated, spirited, and had the great additional advantage of being a known and ascertained somebody; as he was in fact the heir of all the fine domain whose beauties they were admiring. And a beautiful heirdom it was. The way taken by the party led up the course of a valley which followed the windings of a small stream; its sides most romantic and woody in some places; in others taking the very mould of gentle beauty, and covered with rich grass, and sweet with broom; in others again, drawing near together, and assuming a picturesque wildness, rocky and broken. Sweet flowers grew by the way in profusion, on the banks and along the sides of the stream; and the birds were very jocund in their solitudes. Through all this it was very pleasant wandering with the heir of the land; and neither wet shoes nor wet shoulders were much remembered by Eleanor till they reached Barton's Tower.

This was a ruin of a different character; one of the old strongholds of the rough time when men lived by the might of hand. No delicate arches and graceful mouldings had ever been here; all was, or had been, grim, stern strength and massiveness. The strength was broken long ago; and grace, in the shape of clustering ivy, had mantled so much of the harsh outlines that their original impression was lost. It could be recalled only by a little abstraction. Within the enclosure of the thick walls, which in some places gave a sort of crypt-like shelter, the whole rambling party was now collected.

"Shall we have a fire?" Mr. Carlisle had asked Eleanor, just before they entered. And Eleanor could not find in her heart to deny that it would be good, though not quite prepared to have it made to *her* order. However, the word was given. Wood was brought, and presently a roaring blaze went up within the old walls; not where the old chimney used to be, for there were no traces of such a thing. The sun had not shined bright enough to do away the mischief the shower had done; and now the ladies gathered about the blaze, and declared it was very comfortable. Eleanor sat down on a stone by the side of the fire, willing to be less in the foreground for a little while; as well as to dry her wet shoes. From there she had a view of the scene that would have pleased a painter.

The blazing fire threw a warm light and colour of its own upon the dark walls and on the various groups collected within them, and touched mosses and ferns and greensward with its gypsy glare. The groups were not all of one character. There was a light-hued gay company of muslins and scarfs around the burning pile; in a corner a medley of servants and baskets and hampers; and in another corner Eleanor watched Julia and Mr. Rhys; the latter of whom was executing some adventurous climbing, after a flower probably, or a fern, while Julia stood below eagerly following his progress. Mr. Carlisle was all about. It was a singularly pretty scene, and to Eleanor's eye it had the sharp painting which is given by a little secret interest at work. That interest gave particular relief to the figures of the two gentlemen whose names have been mentioned; the other figures, the dark walls and ivy, the servants and the preparing collation, were only a rich mosaic of background for those two.

There was Mr. Powle, a sturdy, well-to-do, country gentleman; looking it, and looking besides good-natured, which he was if not crossed. There was Eleanor's mother, good-natured under all circumstances; fair and handsome; every inch of her, from the close fair curls on each side of her temples, to the tips of her neat walking shoes, shewing the ample perfection of abundant means and indulgent living. There were some friends that formed part of their household just then, and the young people of a neighbouring family; with the Miss Broadus's; two elderly ladies from the village who were always in everything. There was Dr. Cairnes the rector, and his sister, a widow lady who spent part of every year with him. All these Eleanor's eye passed over with slight heed, and busied itself furtively with the remaining two; the great man of the party, and the other, the one certainly of least consideration in it. Why did she look at him, Eleanor asked herself? Mr. Carlisle was a mark for everybody's eyes; a very handsome man, the future lord of the manor, knowing and

using gracefully his advantages of many kinds. What had the other, – that tall, quiet man, gathering flowers with Julia in the angle of the old tower? He could not be called handsome; a dark thick head of hair, and somewhat marked features alone distinguished him; except a pair of very clear keen eyes, the penetrating quality of which Eleanor had felt that morning. "He has a good figure, though," she said to herself, "a very good figure – and he moves well and easily; but what is there about him to make me think of him? What is the difference between his face and that other face?"

"That other face" made frequent appeals for her attention; yet Eleanor could not forget the group in the corner, where her sister seemed to be having a time of more lively enjoyment than any one else of the company. No other person paid them any attention, even in thought; and when the collation was spread, Eleanor half wondered that her morning's friend neither came forward nor was for some moments asked to do so. She thought indeed she heard Julia ask him, but if so it was without effect. Mr. Rhys remained in the distant angle, studying the stones there; till Mr. Powle shouted to him and brought him into the company. Having done this good action, the squire felt benevolently disposed towards the object of his care, and entered into conversation with him. It grew so satisfactory to Mr. Powle, that it absorbed his attention from all but the meats and wines which were offered him, the enjoyment of which it probably heightened; the talk was prolonged, and seemed to grow more interesting as it went on. Eleanor could not hear what it was about, her own ear was so much engaged with business nearer at hand. The whole play had not escaped her, however; and between question and answer of the rattling gaiety going on about her ears, and indeed on her own tongue, she found time to wonder whether Mr. Rhys were shy, or kept back by a feeling of inferiority; so marked his conduct was by the absence of all voluntary self-assertion. She could not determine that he was either. No look or word favoured the one or the other supposition. And Eleanor could not look at those keen eyes, without feeling that it was extremely unlikely they would quail before anybody or anything. Very different from those fine hazel irids that were flashing fun and gallantry into hers with every glance. Very different; but what was the difference? It was something deeper than colour and contour. Eleanor had no chance to make further discoveries; for her father engrossed his new acquaintance all the way home, and only did not bring him to Ivy Lodge to tea because Mr. Rhys refused it; for the invitation was given.

CHAPTER II. AT THE GARDEN-DOOR

"To die – to sleep.
To sleep! perchance to dream; ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come" —

The family at Ivy Lodge gathered round the tea-table with spirits rather whetted, apparently for both talking and eating. Certainly the one exercise had been intermitted for some hours; the other however had gone on without cessation. It went on still. The party was now reduced to the home party, with the addition of Miss Broadus; which lady, with her sister, was at home at Ivy Lodge, as she was everywhere else. Elderly, respectable and respected old ladies they were; and though they dealt in gossip, would not willingly have hurt a fly. They dealt in receipts and in jellies too; in fashions, and in many kindnesses, both received and given by all the neighbourhood. They were daughters of a former rector of the parish, and poor, and asked nobody to help them; which indeed they had no need to ask.

"You seemed to like your afternoon's acquaintance, papa?" said Eleanor.

"He is a fine fellow," said the squire. "He's a fine fellow. Knows something. My dear, he teaches a small school at Wiglands, I hear."

"Does he. I wonder who goes to it," said Mrs. Powle.

"I don't know," said the squire; "but I mean to send Alfred."

"My dear Mr. Powle! to such a school as that? Nobody can go to it but some of the farmers' children around – there is no one else."

"It won't hurt him, for a little while," said the squire. "I like the master, and that's of more importance than the children. Don't you worry."

"My dear Mr. Powle! But I never heard of such a thing in my life. I do not believe Dr. Cairnes will like it at all. He will think it very strange, your sending your boy to a man that is not a Churchman, and is not anything, that anybody knows of."

"Dr. Cairnes be hanged!" said the squire, – "and mind his own affairs.

He wouldn't want me to send Alfred to *him*."

"My dear Mrs. Powle," said Miss Broadus, "I can tell you this for your comfort – there are two sons of Mr. Churchill, the Independent minister of Eastcombe – that come over to him; besides one or two more that are quite respectable."

"Why does not Mr. Churchill send his boys to school at Eastcombe?"

"O well, it doesn't suit him, I suppose; and like goes to like, you know, my dear."

"That is what I think," said Mrs. Powle, looking at her husband, – "and I wonder Mr. Powle does not think so too."

"If you mean me," said the squire, "I am not 'like' anybody – that I can tell you. A good schoolmaster is a good schoolmaster – I don't care what else he calls himself."

"And Mr. Rhys is a good schoolmaster, I have no doubt," said Miss Broadus.

"I know what he is," said Julia; "he is a nice man, I like him."

"I saw he kept you quiet," said Eleanor. "How did he manage it?"

"He didn't manage it. He told me about things," said Julia; "and he got flowers for me, and told me about ferns. You never saw such lovely ferns as we found; and you would not know where to look for them, either. I never saw such a nice man as Mr. Rhys in my life."

"There, my dear," said her mother, "do not encourage Julia in talking.

She is always too ready."

"I am going to walk with him again, to get flowers," said the child.

"I shall invite him to the Lodge," said the squire. "He is a very sensible man, and knows what he is about."

"Do you know anything more about him, Mr. Powle?"

"He does more than teach three or four boys," said Miss Broadus. "He serves a little Dissenting Chapel of some sort, over at Lily Vale."

"Why does he not live there then?" said Mrs. Powle. "Lily Vale is two and a half miles off. Not very convenient, I should think."

"I don't know, my dear. Perhaps he finds living cheap at Wiglands, and I am sure he may. Do you know, I get butter for less than one-half what I paid when I was in Leicester?"

"It is summer time now, Miss Broadus," said the squire.

"Yes, I know, but still – I am sure Wiglands is the nicest, easiest place for poor people to live, that ever was."

"Why you are not poor, Miss Broadus," said the squire.

Miss Broadus chuckled. The fact was, that the Miss Broadus's not being poor was a standing pleasant joke with them; it being well known that they were not largely supplied with means, but contrived to make a little do the apparent work of much more than they had. A way of achieving respectability upon which they prided themselves.

"Eleanor," said her mother as they left the table, "you look pale. Did you get your feet wet?"

"Yes, mamma – there was no helping that."

"Then you'll be laid up!"

"She must not, just now, my dear," said Miss Broadus smilingly.

Eleanor could not laugh off the prophecy, which an internal warning told her was well founded. She went to bed thinking of Mr. Rhys's helmet. She did not know why; she was not given to such thoughts; neither did she comprehend exactly what the helmet might be; yet now the thought came uneasily across her mind, that just such a cold as she had taken had been many a one's death; and with that came a strange feeling of unprotectedness – of want of defence. It was very uncomfortable to go to bed with that slight sensation of sore throat and feverishness, and to remember that the beginning of multitudes of last sicknesses had been no other and no greater; and it was most unlike Eleanor to have such a cause make her uncomfortable. She charged it upon the conversation of the morning, and supposed herself nervous or feverish; but this, if an explanation, was no cure; and through the frequent wakings of a disturbed night, the thought of that piece of armour which made one of her fellow creatures so blessedly calm, came up again and again to her mind.

"I am feverish – this is nightmare," said Eleanor to herself. But it must be good to have no such nightmare. And when the broad daylight had come, and she was pronounced to be very ill, and the doctor was sent for, Eleanor found her night's visions would not take their departure. She could not get up; she was a prisoner; would she ever be free?

She was very ill; the fever gained head; and the old doctor, who was a friend of the family, looked very grave at her. Eleanor saw it. She knew that a battle was to be fought between the powers of life and death; and the thought that no one could tell how the victory would be, came like an ice wind upon flowers. Her spirit shrank and cowered before it. Hopes and pleasures and plans, of which she was so full yesterday, were chilled to the ground; and across the cleared pathway of vision, what appeared? Eleanor would not look.

But the battle must be fought; and it had to be fought amid pain and fever and weariness and the anxious looks of friends; and it was not soon decided. And the wish for that helmet of shelter, whatever it might be, came at times bitterly strong over Eleanor's heart. Many a heavily drawn sigh, which her mother charged to the body's weariness, came from the mind's longing. And in the

solitude of the night, when her breath was quick and her pulse was high and she knew everything was going wrong, the thought came with a sting of agony, – if there was such a helmet, and she could not have it. O to be well and strong, and need none! – or while lying before death's door to see if it would open, O to have that talisman that would make its opening peace! It was not at Eleanor's hand, and she did not know where to find it. And when the daylight came again, and the doctor looked grave, and her mother turned away the anxious face she did not wish Eleanor to read, the cold chill of fear crept over Eleanor's heart. She hid it there. No creature in the house, she knew, could meet or quiet it; if indeed her explanation of it could have been understood. She banished it as often as it was possible; but during many days that Eleanor lay on a sick bed, it was so frequent a visiter that her heart grew sore for its coming.

There were June roses and summer sunshine outside; and sweet breaths came in at the open windows, telling the time of year. Julia reported how fine the strawberries were, and went and came with words about walks and flowers and joyous doings; while Eleanor's room was darkened, and phials of medicine and glasses stood on the table, and the doctor went and came, and Mrs. Powle hardly left her by day, and at night the nurse slept, and Eleanor tossed and turned on her pillow and thought of another "night" that "cometh."

The struggle with fever and pain was over at last. Then came weakness; and though hope revived, fear would not die. Besides, Eleanor said to herself, though she should get entirely well of this sickness, who would guaranty her that another would not come? And must not one come – some time – that must be final? And how should that be met? Nay, though getting well again and out of present danger, she would have liked to have that armour of shelter still!

"What are you crying for?" said her little sister coming suddenly into her room one day. Eleanor was so far recovered as to be up.

"I am weak and nervous, – foolish."

"I wouldn't be foolish," said Julia.

"I do not think I am foolish," said Eleanor slowly.

"Then why do you say you are? But what is the matter with you?"

"Like all the rest of the world, child, – I want something I cannot get.

What have you there?"

"Ferns," said Julia. "Do you know what ferns are?"

"I suppose I do – when I see them."

"No, but when you *don't* see them; that's the thing."

"Do you, pray."

"Yes! A fern is a plant which has its seeds come on the back of the leaf, and no flower; and it comes up curled like a caterpillar. Aren't those pretty?"

"Where did you learn all that?"

"I know more than that. This leaf is called a *frond*."

"Who told you?"

"Mr. Rhys."

"Did you learn it from Mr. Rhys?"

"Yes, to be sure I did, and a great deal more. He is going to teach me all about ferns."

"Where do you see Mr. Rhys?"

"Why! wherever I have a mind. Alfred goes walking with him, and the other boys, and I go too; and he tells us things. I always go along with Mr. Rhys, and he takes care of me."

"Does mamma know?"

"Yes, but papa lets Mr. Rhys do just what he pleases. Papa says Mr. Rhys is a wonderful man."

"What is he wonderful for?" said Eleanor languidly.

"Well, *I* think, because he is making Alfred a good boy."

"I wonder how he has done it," said Eleanor.

"So do I. He knows how. What do you think – he punished Alfred one day right before papa."

"Where?" said Eleanor, in astonishment.

"Down at the school. Papa was there. Papa told about it. Alfred thought he wouldn't dare, when papa was there; and Alfred took the opportunity to be impudent; and Mr. Rhys just took him up by his waistband and laid him down on the floor at his feet; and Alfred has behaved himself ever since."

"Was not papa angry?"

"He said he was at first, and I think it is likely; but after that, he said Mr. Rhys was a great man, and he would not interfere with him."

"And how does Alfred like Mr. Rhys?"

"He likes him – " said Julia, turning over her ferns. "I like him. Mr. Rhys said he was sorry you were sick. Now, *that* is a frond. That is what it is called. Do you see, those are the seeds."

Eleanor sighed. She would have liked to take lessons of Mr. Rhys on another subject. She half envied Julia's liberty. There seemed a great wall built up between her and the knowledge she wanted. Must it be so always?

"Julia, when are you going to take a walk with Mr. Rhys again?"

"To-morrow," was the quick answer.

"I will give you something to ask him about."

"I don't want it. I always have enough to ask him. We are going after ferns; we always have enough to talk about."

"But there is a question I would like you to ask."

"What is it? Why don't you ask him yourself?"

Eleanor was silent, watching Julia's uncompromising business-like air as she turned over her bunch of ferns. The little one was full of her own affairs; her long locks of hair waving with every turn of her busy head. Suddenly she looked up.

"What is your question, Eleanor?"

"You must not ask it as if from me."

"How then?"

"Just ask it – as if you wanted to know yourself; without saying anything."

"As if I wanted to know what?"

Eleanor hesitated, and Mrs. Powle came into the room.

"What, Eleanor – what?" Julia repeated.

"Nothing. Study your ferns."

"I *have* studied them. This is the rachis – and down here below this, is the rhizoma; and the little seed places that come on the back of the frond, are thecae. I forget what Mr. Rhys called the seeds now. I'll ask him."

"What nonsense is that you are talking, Julia?"

"Sense, mamma. Or rather, it is knowledge."

"Mamma, how do *you* like Mr. Rhys? Julia says he is often here."

"He is a pleasant man," said Mrs. Powle. "I have nothing against him – except that your father and the children are crazy about him. I see nothing in him to be crazy about."

"Alfred is a good deal less crazy than he used to be," remarked Julia; "and I think papa hasn't lost anything."

"You are a saucy girl," said her mother. "Mr. Carlisle is very anxious to know when you will be down stairs again, Eleanor."

Julia ran off with her ferns; Eleanor went into a muse; and the conversation ceased.

It happened a few days after this, that the event about which Mr. Carlisle was anxious came to pass. Eleanor was able to leave her room. However, feeling yet very wanting in strength, and

not quite ready to face a company of gay talkers, she shunned the drawing-room where such a company was gathered, and betook herself to a small summer-parlour in another part of the house. This room she had somewhat appropriated to her own use. It had once been a school-room. Since the misbehaviour of one governess, years ago, Mr. Powle had vowed that he would never have another in the house, come what would. Julia might run wild at home; he should be satisfied if she learned to read, to ride, and to walk; and when she was old enough, he would send her to boarding-school. What the squire considered old enough, did not appear. Julia was a fine child of eleven, and still practising her accomplishments of riding and walking to her heart's content at home; with little progress made in the other branches to which reading is the door. The old schoolroom had long forgotten even its name, and had been fitted up simply and pleasantly for summer occupation. It opened on one side by a glass door upon a gay flower-garden; Eleanor's special pet and concern; where she did a great deal of work herself. It was after an elaborate geometrical pattern; and beds of all sorts of angles were filled and bright with different coloured verbenas, phloxes, geraniums, heliotrope, and other flowers fit for such work; making a brilliant mosaic of scarlet, purple and gold, in Eastern gorgeousness, as the whole was seen from the glass door. Eleanor sat down there to look at it and realise the fact that she was getting well again; with the dreamy realization that goes along with present weakness and remembered past pain.

On another side the room opened to a small lawn; it was quite shut off by its situation and by the plantations of shrubbery, from the other part of the house; and very rarely visited by the chance comers who were frequent there. So Eleanor was a good deal surprised this evening to see a tall strange figure appear at the further side of her flower garden; then not at all surprised to see that it was Mr. Rhys accompanied by her sister, Julia. Julia flitted about through the garden, in very irregular fashion, followed by her friend; till their wanderings brought them near the open door within which Eleanor sat. To the door Julia immediately darted, drawing her companion with her; and as soon as she came up exclaimed, as if she had been armed with a search warrant and had brought her man, —

"Here's Mr. Rhys, Eleanor. Now you can ask him yourself whatever you like."

Eleanor felt startled. But it was with such a pleasant face that Mr. Rhys came up, such a cordial grasp of the hand greeted her, that the feeling vanished immediately. Perhaps that hand-clasp was all the warmer for Eleanor's changed appearance. She was very unlike the girl of superb health who had wandered over the old priory grounds a few weeks before. Eleanor's colour was gone; the blue veins shewed distinctly on the temples; the full lips, instead of their brilliant gay smile, had a languid and much soberer line. She made quite a different impression now, of a fair delicate young creature, who had lost and felt she had lost the proud strength in which she had been so luxuriant a little while before. Mr. Rhys looked at her attentively.

"You have been very ill, Miss Powle."

"I suppose I have – some of the time."

"I am rejoiced to see you well again."

"Thank you."

"Julia has been leading me over the garden and grounds. I did not know where she was bringing me."

"How do you like my garden?"

"For a garden of that sort – it seems to me well arranged."

He was very cool, certainly, in giving his opinion, Eleanor thought.

Her gardening pride was touched. This was a pet of her own.

"Then you do not fancy gardens of this sort."

"I believe I think Nature is the best artist of all."

"But would you let Nature have her own way entirely?"

"No more in the vegetable than I would in the moral world. She would grow weeds."

The quick clear sense and decision, in the eye and accent, were just what Eleanor did not want to cope with. She was silent. So were her two companions; for Julia was busy with a nosegay she was making up. Then Mr. Rhys turned to Eleanor, "Julia said you had a question to ask of me, Miss Powle."

"Yes, I had," – said Eleanor, colouring slightly and hesitating. "But you cannot answer it standing – will you come in, Mr. Rhys?"

"Thank you – if you will allow me, I will take this instead," said he, sitting down on one of the steps before the glass door. "What was the question?"

"That was the other day, when she brought in her ferns – it was a wish I had. But she ought not to have troubled you with it."

"It will give me great pleasure to answer you – if I can."

Eleanor half fancied he knew what the question was; and she hesitated again, feeling a good deal confused. But when should she have another chance? She made a bold push.

"I felt a curiosity to ask you – I did not know any one else who could tell me – what that 'helmet' was, you spoke of one day; – that day at the old priory?"

Eleanor could not look up. She felt as if the clear eyes opposite her were reading down in the depth of her heart. They were very unflinching about it. It was curiously disagreeable and agreeable both at once.

"Have you wanted it, these weeks past?" said he.

The question was unexpected. It was put with a penetrating sympathy. Eleanor felt if she opened her lips to speak she could not command their steadiness. She gave no answer but silence.

"A helmet?" said Julia looking up. "What is a helmet?"

"The warriors of old time," said Mr. Rhys, "used to wear a helmet to protect their heads from danger. It was a covering of leather and steel. With this head-piece on, they felt safe; where their lives would not have been worth a penny without it."

"But Eleanor – what does Eleanor want of a helmet?" said Julia. And she went off into a shout of ringing laughter.

"Perhaps you want one," said Mr. Rhys composedly.

"No, I don't. What should I want it for? What should I cover my head with leather and steel for, Mr. Rhys?"

"You want something stronger than that."

"Something stronger? What do I want, Mr. Rhys?"

"To know that, you must find out first what the danger is."

"I am not in any danger."

"How do you know that?"

"Am I, Mr. Rhys?"

"Let us see. Do you know what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us all?"

"No."

"Do you know whether God has given us any commandments?"

"Yes; I know the ten commandments. I have learned them once, but I don't remember them."

"Have you obeyed them?"

"Me?"

"Yes. You."

"I never thought about it."

"Have you disobeyed them then?"

Eleanor breathed more freely, and listened. It was curious to her to see the wayward, giddy child stand and look into the eyes of her questioner as if fascinated. The ordinary answer from Julia would have been a toss and a fling. Now she stood and said sedately, "I don't know."

"We can soon tell," said her friend. "One of the commandments is, to remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy. Have you always done that?"

"No," said Julia bluntly. "I don't think anybody else does."

"Never mind anybody else. Have you always honoured the word and wish of your father and mother? That is another command."

"I have done it more than Alfred has."

"Let Alfred alone. Have *you* always done it?"

"No, sir."

"Have you loved the good God all your life, with all your heart?"

"No."

"You have loved to please yourself, rather than anything else?"

The nod with which Julia answered this, if not polite, was at least significant, accompanied with an emphatic "Always!" Mr. Rhys could not help smiling at her, but he went on gravely enough.

"What is to keep you then from being afraid?"

"From being afraid?"

"Yes. You want a helmet."

"Afraid?" said Julia.

"Yes. Afraid of the justice of God. He never lets a sin go unpunished.

He is *perfectly* just."

"But I can't help it," said Julia.

"Then what is to become of you? You need a helmet."

"A helmet?" said Julia again. "What sort of a helmet?"

"You want to know that God has forgiven you; that he is not angry with you; that he loves you, and has made you his child."

"How can I?" said the child, pressing closer to the speaker where he sat on the step of the door. And no wonder, for the words were given with a sweet earnest utterance which drew the hearts of both bearers. He went on without looking at Eleanor; or without seeming to look that way.

"How can you what?"

"How can I have that?"

"That helmet? There is only one way."

"What is it, Mr. Rhys?"

They were silent a minute, looking at each other, the man and the child; the child with her eyes bent on his.

"Suppose somebody had taken your punishment for you? borne the displeasure of God for your sins?"

"Who would?" said Julia. "Nobody would."

"One has."

"Who, Mr. Rhys?"

"One that loved you, and that loved all of us, well enough to pay the price of saving us."

"What price did he pay?"

"His own life. He gave it up cruelly – that ours might be redeemed."

"What for, Mr. Rhys? what made him?"

"Because he loved us. There was no other reason."

"Then people will be saved" – said Julia.

"Every one who will take the conditions. It depends upon that. There are conditions."

"What conditions, Mr. Rhys?"

"Do you know who did this for you?"

"No."

"It is the Lord himself – the Lord Jesus Christ – the Lord of glory. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death – even the death of the cross. So now he is exalted a Prince and a Saviour – able to save all who will accept his conditions."

"What are the conditions, Mr. Rhys?"

"You must be his servant. And you must trust all your little heart and life to him."

"I must be his servant?" said Julia.

"Yes, heart and soul, to obey him. And you must trust him to forgive you and save you for his blood's sake."

Doubtless there had been something in the speaker himself that had held the child's attention so fast all this while. Her eyes had never wandered from his face; she had stood in docile wise looking at him and answering his questions and listening, won by the commentary she read in his face on what her friend was saying. A strange light kindled in it as he spoke; there were lines of affection and tenderness that came in the play of lips and eyes; and when he named his Master, there had shined in his face as it were the reflection of the glory he alluded to. Julia's eyes were not the only ones that had been held; though it was only Julia's tongue that said anything in reply. Standing now and looking still into the face she had been reading, her words were an unconscious rendering of what she found there.

"Mr. Rhys, I think he was very good."

The water filled those clear eyes at that, but he only returned the child's gaze and said nothing.

"I will take the conditions, Mr. Rhys," Julia went on.

"The Lord make it so!" he said gravely.

"But what is the helmet, Mr. Rhys?"

"When you have taken the conditions, little one, you will know." He rose up.

"Mr. Rhys," said Eleanor rising also, "I have listened to you, but I do not quite understand you."

"I recommend you to ask better teaching, Miss Powle."

"But I would like to know exactly what you mean, and what you meant, by that 'helmet' you speak of so often?"

He looked steadily now at the fair young face beside him, which told so plainly of the danger lately passed through. Eleanor could not return, though she suffered the examination. His answer was delayed while he made it.

"Do you ask from a sense of need?" he said.

Eleanor looked up then and answered, "Yes."

"To say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth' – that is it," he said. "Then the head is covered – even from fear of evil."

It was impossible that Eleanor ever should forget the look that went with the words, and which had prevented her own gaze from seeking the ground again. The look of inward rejoicing and outward fearlessness; the fire and the softness that at once overspread his face. "He was looking at his Master then" – was the secret conclusion of Eleanor's mind. Even while she thought it, he had turned and was gone again with Julia. She stood still some minutes, weak as she was. She was not sure that she perfectly comprehended what that helmet might be, but of its reality there could be no questioning. She had seen its plumes wave over one brow!

"I know that my Redeemer liveth" – Eleanor sat down and mused over the words. She had heard them before; they were an expression of somebody's faith, she was not sure whose; but what faith was it? Faith that the Redeemer lived? Eleanor did not question that. She had repeated the Apostle's Creed many a time. Yet a vague feeling from the words she could not analyze – or arising perhaps from the look that had interpreted them – floated over her mind, disturbing it with an

exceeding sense of want. She felt desolate and forlorn. What was to be done? Julia and Mr. Rhys were gone. The garden was empty. There was no more chance of counsel-taking to-night. Eleanor felt in no mood for gay gossip, and slowly mounted the stairs to her own room, from whence she declined to come down again that night. She would like to find the settlement of this question, before she went back into the business of the world and was swallowed up by it, as she would soon be. Eleanor locked the door, and took up a Bible, and tried to find some good by reading in it. Her eyes and head were tired before her mind received any light. She was weak yet. She found the Bible very unsatisfactory; and gave it up.

CHAPTER III. IN THE DRAWING-ROOM

"Why, all the souls that were were forfeit once;
And he that might the vantage best have took,
Found out the remedy."

"You can come down stairs to-night, Eleanor," said Mrs. Powle the next morning.

"I was down stairs last night – in the afternoon, I mean – mamma."

"Yes, but you did not stay. I want you in the drawing-room this evening. You can bear it now."

"I am in no hurry, mamma."

"Other people are, however. If you wear a white dress, do put a rose or some pink ribbands somewhere, to give yourself a little colour."

"Have you invited any one for this evening?"

"No, but people have promised themselves without being asked. Dr. Cairnes wants to see you; he said he would bring Mrs. Wycherly. Miss Broadus will be here of course; she declared she would; both of them. And Mr. Carlisle desired my permission to present himself."

"Mr. Rhys is coming," said Julia.

"I dare say. Mr. Powle wants him here all the time. It is a mercy the man has a little consideration – or some business to keep him at home – or he would be the sauce to every dish. As it is, he really is not obtrusive."

"Are all these people coming with the hope and intent of seeing me, mamma?"

"I can only guess at people's hopes, Eleanor. I am guiltless of anything but confessing that you were to make your appearance."

"Mr. Rhys is not coming to see you," said Julia. "He wants to see the books – that is what he wants."

There was some promise for Eleanor in the company announced for the evening. If anybody could be useful to her in the matter of her late doubts and wishes, it ought to be Dr. Cairnes, the rector. He at least was the only one she knew whom she could talk to about them; the only friend. Mr. Rhys was a stranger and her brother's tutor; that was all; a chance of speaking to him again was possible, but not to be depended on. Dr. Cairnes was her pastor and old friend; it is true, she knew him best, out of the pulpit, as an antiquarian; then she had never tried him on religious questions. Nor he her, she remembered; it was a doubtful hope altogether; nevertheless the evening offered what another evening might not in many a day. So Eleanor dressed, and with her slow languid step made her way down stairs to the scene of the social gayeties which had been so long interrupted for her.

Ivy Lodge was a respectable, comfortable, old house; pretty by the combination of those advantages; and pleasant by the fact of making no pretensions beyond what it was worth. It was not disturbed by the rage after new fashions, nor the race after distant greatness. Quiet respectability was the characteristic of the family; Mrs. Powle alone being burdened with the consciousness of higher birth than belonged to the name of Powle generally. She fell into her husband's ways, however, outwardly, well enough; did not dislodge the old furniture, nor introduce new extravagances; and the Lodge was a pleasant place. "A most enjoyable house, my dear," – as Miss Broadus expressed it. So the gentry of the neighbourhood found it universally.

The drawing-room was a pretty, spacious apartment; light and bright; opening upon the lawn directly without intervention of piazza or terrace. Windows, or rather glass doors, in deep recesses,

stood open; the company seemed to be half in and half out. Dr. Cairnes was there, talking with the squire. In another place Mrs. Powle was engaged with Mr. Carlisle. Further than those two groups, Eleanor's eye had no chance to go; those who composed the latter greeted her instantly. Mrs. Powle's exclamation was of doubtful pleasure at Eleanor's appearance; there was no question of her companion's gratification. He came forward to Eleanor, gave her his chair; brought her a cup of tea, and then sat down to see her drink it; with a manner which bespoke pleasure in every step of the proceedings. A manner which had rather the effect of a barrier to Eleanor's vision. It was gratifying certainly; Eleanor felt it; only she felt it a little too gratifying. Mr. Carlisle was getting on somewhat too fast for her. She drank her tea and kept very quiet; while Mrs. Powle sat by and fanned herself, as contentedly as a mother duck swims that sees all her young ones taking to the water kindly.

Now and then Eleanor's eyes went out of the window. On the lawn at a little distance was a group of people, sitting close together and seeming very busy. They were Mr. Rhys, Miss Broadus, Alfred and Julia. Something interesting was going forward; they were talking and listening, and looking at something they seemed to be turning over. Eleanor would have liked to join them; but here was Mr. Carlisle; and remembering the expression which had once crossed his face at the mention of Mr. Rhys's name, she would not draw attention to the group even by her eyes; though they wandered that way stealthily whenever they could. What a good time those people were having there on the grass; and she sitting fenced in by Mr. Carlisle. Other members of the party who had not seen Eleanor, came up one after another to congratulate and welcome her; but Mr. Carlisle kept his place. Dr. Cairnes came, and Eleanor wanted a chance to talk to him. None was given her. Mr. Carlisle left his place for a moment to carry Eleanor's cup away, and Dr. Cairnes thoughtlessly took the vacated chair; but Mr. Carlisle stationed himself on the other side in the window; and she was as far from her opportunity as ever.

"Well my dear," said the doctor, "you have had a hard time, eh? We are glad to have you amongst us again."

"Hardly," put in Mrs. Powle. "She looks like a ghost."

"Rather a substantial kind of a ghost," said the doctor, pinching Eleanor's cheek; "some flesh and blood here yet – flesh at least; – and now the blood speaks for itself! That's right, my dear – you are better so."

Mr. Carlisle's smile said so too, as the doctor glanced at him. But the momentary colour faded again. Eleanor remembered how near she had come to being a ghost actually. Just then Mr. Carlisle's attention was forcibly claimed, and Mrs. Powle moved away. Eleanor seized her chance.

"Dr. Cairnes, I want your instruction in something."

"Well, my dear," said the doctor, lowering his tone in imitation of Eleanor's – "I shall be happy to be your instructor. I have been that, in some sort, ever since you were five years old – a little tot down in your mother's pew, sitting under my ministrations. What is it, Miss Eleanor?"

"I am afraid I did not receive much in those days, sir."

"Probably not. Hardly to be expected. I have no doubt you received as much as a child could, from the mysteries which were above its comprehension. What is it now, Miss Eleanor?"

"Something in your line, sir. Dr. Cairnes, you remember the helmet spoken of in the Bible?"

"Helmet?" said the doctor. "Goliath's? He had a helmet of brass upon his head. Must have been heavy, but I suppose he could carry it. The same thing essentially as those worn by our ancestors – a little variation in form. What about it, my dear? I am glad to see you smiling again."

"Nothing about that. I am speaking of another sort of helmet – do you not remember? – it is called somewhere the helmet of salvation."

"*That?* O! – um! *That* helmet! Yes – it is in, let me see – it is in the description of Christian armour, in a fine passage in Ephesians, I think. What about that, Miss Eleanor?"

"I want to know, sir, what shape that helmet takes."

It was odd, with what difficulty Eleanor brought out her questions. It was touching, the concealed earnestness which lingered behind her glance and smile.

"Shape?" said the doctor, descending into his cravat; – "um! a fair question; easier asked than answered. Why my dear, you should read a commentary."

"I like living commentaries, Dr. Cairnes."

"Do you? Ha, ha! – well. Living commentaries, eh? and shapes of helmets. Well. What shape does it take? Why, my dear, you know of course that those expressions are figurative. I think it takes the shape of a certain composure and peace of mind which the Christian soul feels, and justly feels, in regarding the provision made for its welfare in the gospel. It is spoken of as the helmet of salvation; and there is the shield of faith; and so forth."

Eleanor felt utterly worried, and did not in the least know how to frame her next question.

"What has put you upon thinking of helmets, Miss Eleanor?"

"I was curious – " said Eleanor.

"You had some serious thoughts in your illness?" said the doctor. "Well, my dear – I am glad of it. Serious thoughts do not in the least interfere with all proper present enjoyments; and with improper ones you would not wish to have anything to do."

"May we not say that serious thoughts are the *foundation* of all true present enjoyment?" said another voice. It was Mr. Rhys who spoke.

Eleanor started to hear him, and to see him suddenly in the place where Mr. Carlisle had been, standing in the window.

"Eh? Well – no, – not just that," said Dr. Cairnes coolly. "I have a good deal of enjoyment in various things – this fair day and this fair company, for example, and Mrs. Powle's excellent cup of tea – with which I apprehend, serious thoughts have nothing to do."

"But we are commanded to do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."

"Well – um! That is to be taken of course in its rational significance. A cup of tea is a cup of tea – and nothing more. There is nothing at the bottom of it – ha, ha! – but a little sugar. Nothing more serious."

Mr. Rhys's figure standing in the window certainly hindered a part of the light. To judge by the doctor's face, he was keeping out the whole.

"What do you suppose the apostle means, sir, when he says, 'Henceforward know I no man after the flesh?'"

"Hum! – Ah, – well, he was an apostle. I am not. Perhaps you are?"

There was a degree of covert disdain in this speech, which Eleanor wondered at in so well-bred a man as Dr. Cairnes. Mr. Rhys answered with perfect steadiness, with no change of tone or manner.

"Without being inspired – I think, in the sense of *messenger*, every minister of Christ is his apostle."

"Ah! Well! – I am not even apostolic," said the doctor, with one or two contented and discontented grunts. Eleanor understood them; the content was his own, the discontent referred to the speaker whose words were so inopportune. The doctor rose and left the ground. Mr. Rhys had gone even before him; and Eleanor wondered anew whether this man were indeed shy or not. He was so little seen and heard; yet spoke, when he spoke, with such clearness and self-possession. He was gone now, and Mr. Carlisle was still busy. Up came Miss Broadus and took the vacant seat.

It is impossible to describe Miss Broadus's face. It was in a certain sense fair, and fat, and fresh-coloured; but the "windows of her soul" shewed very little light from within; they let out nothing but a little gleam now and then. However, her tongue was fluent, and matter for speech never wanting. She was kindly too, in manner at least; and extremely sociable with all her neighbours, low as well as high; none of whose affairs wanted interest for her. It was in fact owing to Miss Broadus's good offices with Mrs. Powle, that Mr. Rhys had been invited to join the pleasure

party with which the adventures of this book begin. The good lady was as neat as a pink in her dress; and very fond of being as shewy, in a modest way.

"Among us again, Eleanor?" she said. "We are glad to see you. So is Mr. Carlisle, I should judge. We have missed you badly. You have been terribly ill, haven't you? Yes, you shew it. But *that* will soon pass away, my dear. I longed to get in to do something for you – but Mrs. Powle would not let me; and I knew you had the best of everything all the while. Only I thought I would bring you a pot of my grape jelly; for Mrs. Powle don't make it; and it is so refreshing."

"It was very nice, thank you."

"O it was nothing, my dear; only we wanted to do something. I have been having such an interesting time out there; didn't you see us sitting on the grass? Mr. Rhys is quite a botanist – or a naturalist – or something; and he was quite the centre of our entertainment. He was shewing us ferns – fern leaves, my dear; and talking about them. Do you know, as I told him, I never looked at a fern leaf before; but now really it's quite curious; and he has almost made me believe I could see a certain kind of beauty in them. You know there is a sort of beauty which some people think they find in a great many things; and when they are enthusiastic, they almost make you think as they do. I think there is great power in enthusiasm."

"Is Mr. Rhys enthusiastic?"

"O I don't know, my dear, – I don't know what you would call it; I am not a philosopher; but he is very fond of ferns himself. He is a very fine man. He is a great deal too good to go and throw himself away."

"Is that what he is going to do?"

"Why yes, my dear; that is what I should call it. It is a great deal more than that. I never can remember the place; but it is the most dreadful place, I do suppose, that ever was heard of. I never heard of such a place. They do every horrible thing there – my dear, the accounts make your blood creep. I think Mr. Rhys is a great deal too valuable a man to be lost there, among such a set of creatures – they are more like devils than men. And Eleanor," said Miss Broadus, looking round to see that nobody was within hearing of her communication, – "you have no idea what a pleasant man he is. I asked him to tea with Juliana and me – you know one must be kind and neighbourly at any rate – and he has no friends here; I sometimes wonder if he has any anywhere; but he came to tea, and he was as agreeable as possible. He was really excellent company, and very well behaved. I think Juliana quite fell in love with him; but I tell her it's no use; she never would go off to that dreadful place with him."

And Miss Broadus laughed a laugh of simple amusement; Miss Juliana being, though younger than herself, still very near the age of an old lady. They kept the light-hearted simplicity of young years, however, in a remarkable degree; and so had contrived to dispense with wrinkles on their fresh old faces.

"Where is that place, Miss Broadus?"

"My dear, I never can remember the name of it. They do say the country is beautiful, and the fruit, and all that; it is described to be a beautiful place, where, as Heber's hymn says, 'only man is vile.' But he is as vile as he can be, there. And I am sure Mr. Rhys would be a great loss at Wiglands. My dear, how pleasant it would be, I said to Juliana this morning, how pleasant it would be, if Mr. Rhys were only in the Church, and could help good Dr. Cairnes. 'Tisn't likely they will let him live long out there, if he goes."

"When is he going?"

"O I don't know when, my dear; he is waiting for something. And I never can remember the name of the place; if a word has many syllables I cannot keep them together in my memory; only I know the vegetables there grow to an enormous size, and as if that wasn't enough, men devour each other. It seems like an abusing the gifts of providence, don't it? But there is nothing they do not abuse. I am afraid they will abuse poor Mr. Rhys. And his boys would miss him very much, and

I am sure we all should. I have got quite acquainted with him, seeing him here; and now Juliana has taken a fancy to ask him to our cottage – and I have come to quite like him. What a different looking man he is from Mr. Carlisle – now look at them talking together! – "

"Where did you learn all this, Miss Broadus? did Mr. Rhys tell you?"

"No, my dear; he never will talk about it or about himself. He lent me a pamphlet or something. – Mr. Rhys is the tallest – but Mr. Carlisle is a splendid looking man, – don't you think so, Eleanor?"

Miss Broadus's energetic whisper Eleanor thought fit to ignore, though she did not fail to note the contrast which a moment's colloquy between the two men presented. There was little in common between them; between the marked features and grave keen expression of the one face, and the cool, bright, somewhat supercilious eye and smile of the other. There was power in both faces, Eleanor thought, of different kinds; and power is attractive. Her eye was held till they parted from each other. Two very different walks in life claimed the two men; so much Eleanor could see. For some time after she was obliged to attend exclusively to that walk of life which Mr. Carlisle represented, and to look at the views he brought forward for her notice.

They were not so engrossing, however, that Eleanor entirely forgot the earlier conversation of the afternoon or the question which had troubled her. The evening had been baffling. She had not had a word with Mr. Rhys, and he had disappeared long since from the party. So had Dr. Cairnes. There was no more chance of talk upon that subject to-night; and Eleanor feeling very feeble still, thought best to cut short Mr. Carlisle's enjoyment of other subjects for the evening. She left the company, and slowly passed through the house, from room to room, to get to her own. In the course of this progress she came to the library. There, seated at one of the tables and bending over a volume, was Mr. Rhys. He jumped up as she passed through, and came forward with extended hand and a word of kindly inquiry. His "good night" was so genial, his clasp of her hand so frank and friendly, that instead of going on, Eleanor stood still.

"Are you studying?"

"Your father has kindly given me liberty to avail myself of his treasures here. My time is very scanty – I was tempted to seize the moment that offered itself. It is a very precious privilege to me, and one which I shall not abuse."

"Pray do not speak of abusing," said Eleanor; "nobody minds the books here; I am glad they are good to anybody else. – I am interrupting you."

"Not at all!" said he, bringing up a great chair for her, – "or only agreeably. Pray sit down – you are not fit to stand."

Eleanor however remained standing, and hesitating, for a moment.

"I wish you would tell me a little more about what we were talking of," she said with some effort.

"Do you feel your want of the helmet?" he said gravely.

"I feel that I haven't it," said Eleanor.

"What is it that you are conscious of wanting?"

She hesitated; it was a home question; and very unaccustomed to speak of her secret thoughts and feelings to any one, especially on religious subjects, which however had never occupied her before, Eleanor was hardly ready to answer. Yet in the tones of the question there was a certain quiet assurance and simplicity before which she yielded.

"I felt – a little while ago – when I was sick – that I was not exactly safe."

Eleanor spoke, hesitating between every few words, looking down, and falling her voice at the end. So she did not see the keen intentness of the look that was fixed upon her.

"You felt that there was something wanting between you and God?"

"I believe so."

His accent was as deliberately clear as her's was hesitating. Every word went into Eleanor's soul.

"Then you can understand now, that when one can say, joyfully, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth'; – when he is no vague abstraction, but felt to be a *Redeemer*; – when one can say assuredly, he is *my* Redeemer; I know he has bought back my soul from sin and from the punishment of sin, which is death; I feel I am forgiven; and I know he liveth – my Redeemer – and according to his promise lives to deliver me from every evil and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; – do you see, now, that one who can say this has on his head the covering of an infinite protection – an infinite shelter from both danger and fear? – a helmet, placed on his head by his Lord's own hand, and of such heavenly temper that no blows can break through it."

Eleanor was a little time silent, with downcast eyes.

"You do not mean to say, that this protection is against *all* evil; do you? sickness and pain are evils are they not?"

"Not to him."

"Not to him?"

"No. The evil of them is gone. They can do him no harm; if they come, they will do good. He that wears this helmet has absolutely no evil to fear. All things shall work good to him. There shall no evil happen to the just. Blessed be the Lord, who only doeth wondrous things!"

Eleanor stood silenced, humbled, convinced; till she recollected she must not stand there so, and she lifted her eyes to bid good-night. Then the face she met gave a new turn to her thoughts. It was a changed face; such a light of pure joy and deep triumph shone over it, not hiding nor hindering the loving care with which those penetrating eyes were reading herself. It gave Eleanor a strange compression of heart; it told her more than his words had done; it shewed her the very reality of which he spoke. Eleanor went away overwhelmed.

"Mr. Rhys is a happy man!" she said to herself; – "happy, happy! I wish, – I wish, I were as happy as he!"

CHAPTER IV. IN THE SADDLE

"She has two eyes, so soft and brown,
Take care!
She gives a side-glance and looks down,
Beware! beware!"

A few days more saw Eleanor restored to all the strength and beauty of health which she had been accustomed to consider her natural possession. And then – it is likely to be so – she was so happy in what mind and body had, that she forgot her wish for what the spirit had not. Or almost forgot it. Eleanor lived a very full life. It was no dull languid existence that she dragged on from day to day; time counted out none but golden pennies into her hand. Every minute was filled with business or play, both heartily entered into, and pursued with all the energy of a very energetic nature. Study, when she touched it, was sweet to her; but Eleanor did not study much. Nature was an enchanted palace of light and perfume. Bodily exertion, riding and walking, was as pleasant to her as it is to a bird to use its wings. Family intercourse, and neighbourly society, were nothing but pleasure. Benevolent kindness, if it came in her way, was a labour of love; and a hundred home occupations were greatly delighted in. They were not generally of an exalted character; Eleanor's training and associations had not led her into any very dignified path of human action; she had led only a butterfly's life of content and pleasure, and her character was not at all matured; but the capabilities were there; and the energy and will that might have done greater things, wrought beautiful embroidery, made endless fancy work, ordered well such part of the household economy as was committed to her, carried her bright smile into every circle, and made Eleanor's foot familiar with all the country where she could go alone, and her pony's trot well known in every lane and roadway where she could go with his company.

All these enjoyments of her life were taken with new relish and zeal after her weeks of illness had laid her aside from them. Eleanor's world was brighter than ever. And round about all of these various enjoyments now, circling them with a kind of halo of expectancy or possibility, was the consciousness of a prospect that Eleanor knew was opening before her – a brilliant life-possession that she saw Fortune offering to her with a gracious hand. Would Eleanor take it? That Eleanor did not quite know. Meanwhile her eyes could not help looking that way; and her feet, consciously or unconsciously, now and then made a step towards it.

She and her mother were sitting at work one morning – that is to say, Eleanor was drawing and Mrs. Powle cutting tissue paper in some very elaborate way, for some unknown use or purpose; when Julia dashed in.

She threw a bunch of bright blue flowers on the table before her sister.

"There," she said – "do you know what that is?"

"Why certainly," said Eleanor. "It is borage."

"Well, do you know what it means?"

"What it *means*? No. What does any flower mean?"

"I'll tell you what *this* means" – said Julia.

"I, borage Bring courage."

"That is what people used to think it meant."

"How do you know that."

"Mr. Rhys says so. This borage grew in Mrs. Williams's garden; and I dare say she believes it."

"Who is Mrs. Williams?"

"Why! – she's the old woman where Mr. Rhys lives; he lives in her cottage; that's where he has his school. He has a nice little room in her cottage, and there's nobody else in the cottage but Mrs. Williams."

"Do, Julia, carry your flowers off, and do not be so hoydenish," said Mrs. Powle.

"We have not seen Mr. Rhys here in a great while, mamma," said Eleanor.

"I wonder what has become of him."

"I'll tell you," said Julia – "he has become not well. I know Mr. Rhys is sick, because he is so pale and weak. And I know he is weak, because he cannot walk as he used to do. We used to walk all over the hills; and he says he can't go now."

"Mamma, it would be right to send down and see what is the matter with him. There must be something. It is a long time – mamma, I think it is weeks – since he was at the Lodge."

"Your father will send, I dare say," said Mrs. Powle, cutting her tissue paper.

"Mamma, did you hear," said Eleanor as Julia ran off, "that Mr. Rhys was going to leave Wiglands and bury himself in some dreadful place, somewhere?"

"I heard so."

"What place is it?"

"I can't tell, I am sure. It is somewhere in the South Seas, I believe – that region of horrors."

"Is it true he is going there, mamma?"

"I am sure I can't tell. Miss Broadus says so; and she says, I believe, he told her so himself. If he did, I suppose it is true."

"Mamma, I think Mr. Rhys is a great deal too fine a man to go and lose his life in such a place. Miss Broadus says it is horrible. Do you know anything about it?"

"I have no taste for horrors," said Mrs. Powle.

"I think it is a great pity," Eleanor repeated. "I am sorry. There is enough in England for such a man to do, without going to the South Seas. I wonder how anybody can leave England!"

Mrs. Powle looked up at her daughter and laughed. Eleanor had suspended her drawing and was sending a loving gaze out of the open window, where nature and summer were revelling in their conjoined riches. Art shewed her hand too, stealthily, having drawn out of the way of the others whatever might encumber the revel. Across a wide stretch of wooded and cultivated country, the eye caught the umbrageous heights on the further side of the valley of the Ryth. Eleanor's gaze was fixed. Mrs. Powle's glance was sly.

"I should like to ask your opinion of another place," she said, – "which, being in England, is not horrible. You see that bit of brown mason-work, high away there, peeping out above the trees in the distance? – You know what house that is?"

"Certainly."

"What is it?"

"It is the Priory. The new Priory, it ought to be called; I am sure the old one is down there in the valley yet – beneath it." But Eleanor's colour rose.

"What do you think of that place?"

"Considering that the old priory and its grounds belong to it, I think it must be one of the loveliest places in England."

"I should like to see it in your possession – " Mrs. Powle remarked, going on with her tissue paper.

Eleanor also went on assiduously with her drawing, and her colour remained a rich tint. But she went on frankly with her words too.

"I am not sure, mamma, that I like the owner of it well enough to receive such a valuable gift from him."

"He likes you, quite well enough to bestow it on you, without asking any questions," said Mrs. Powle. "He hardly thinks it is worth having, unless you have it too."

"That is inconvenient," said Eleanor.

"It strikes me the other way," said her mother.

"How do you know this, which you affirm so securely, mamma?"

"How should I know it? The person in question told me himself."

"Told you in so many words?"

"No, in a great many more," said Mrs. Powle laughing. "I have merely presented a statement. He had a great deal more to do than that."

The tissue paper rustled quietly for some time after this, and Eleanor's pencil could be heard making quick marks. Neither lady interrupted the other.

"Well, Eleanor, – how does it seem to you?" began the elder lady, in a tone of quiet satisfaction.

"Inconvenient, mamma, – as I said."

"How?"

But Eleanor did not say how.

"Mr. Carlisle will be here for his answer this evening."

"I like him very well, mamma," said Eleanor, after another pause, – "but I do not like him enough."

"Nonsense! You would like to be Lady Rythdale, wouldn't you?"

The silence which followed this was longer than that which had been before. Knife and pencil pursued their work, but Mrs. Powle glancing up furtively from her tissue paper saw that Eleanor's brow was knitted and that her pencil was moving under the influence of something besides Art. So she let her alone for a long time. And Eleanor's fancy saw a vision of fairy beauty and baronial dignity before her. They lay in the wide domains and stately appendages of Rythdale Priory. How could she help seeing it? The vision floated before her with point after point of entrancing loveliness, old history, present luxury, hereditary rank and splendour, and modern power. It was like nothing in Eleanor's own home. Her father, though a comfortable country gentleman, boasted nothing and had nothing to boast in the way of ancestry, beyond a respectable descent of several generations. His means, though ample enough for comfort and reasonable indulgence, could make no pretensions to more. And Ivy Lodge was indeed a pleasant home, and every field and hedgerow belonging to it was lovely to Eleanor; but the broad manors of Rythdale Priory for extent would swallow up many such, and for beauty and dignity were as a damask rose to a bit of eglantine. Would Eleanor be Lady Rythdale?

"He will be here this evening for his answer, Eleanor – " Mrs. Powle remarked in a quiet voice the second time.

"Then you must give it to him, mamma."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. You must see him yourself. I will have no such shifting of your work upon my shoulders."

"I do not wish to see him to-night, mamma."

"I choose that you should. Don't talk any nonsense to me, Eleanor."

"But, mamma, if I am to give the answer, I am not ready with any answer to give."

"Tell Mr. Carlisle so; and he will draw his own conclusions, and make you sign them."

"I do not want to be made to sign anything."

"Do it of free-will then," said Mrs. Powle laughing. "It is coming, Eleanor – one way or the other. If I were you, I would do it gracefully."

Is it a hard thing to be Lady Rythdale?"

Eleanor did not say, and nothing further passed on the subject; till as both parties were leaving the room together, Mrs. Powle said significantly, "You must give your own answer, Eleanor, and to-night. I will have no skulking."

It was beyond Mrs. Powle's power, however, to prevent skulking of a certain sort. Eleanor did not hide herself in her room, but she left it late in the afternoon, when she knew the company consisted of more than one, and entered a tolerably well filled drawing-room. Mrs. Powle had not wished to have it so, but these things do not arrange themselves for our wishes. Miss Broadus was there, and Dr. Cairnes, and friends who had come to make him and his sister a visit; and one or two other neighbours. Eleanor came in without making much use of her eyes, and sheltered herself immediately under the wing of Miss Broadus, who was the first person she fell in with. Two pairs of eyes saw her entrance; with oddly enough the same thought and comment. "She will make a lovely Lady Rythdale." All the baronesses of that house had been famous for their beauty, and the heir of the house remarked to himself that *this* would prove not the least lovely of the race. However, Eleanor did not even feel sure that he was there, he kept at such a distance; and she engaged Miss Broadus in a conversation that seemed of interminable resources. The sole thing that Eleanor was conscious of concerning it, was its lasting quality; and to maintain that was her only care.

Would Eleanor be Lady Rythdale? she had made up her mind to nothing, except, that it would be very difficult for her to say either yes or no. Naturally enough, she dreaded the being obliged to say anything; and was ready to seize every expedient to stave off the moment of emergency. As long as she was talking to Miss Broadus, she was safe; but conversations cannot last always, even when they flow in a stream so full and copious as that in which the words always poured from that lady's lips. Eleanor saw signs at last that the fountain was getting exhausted; and as the next resort proposed a game of chess. Now a game of chess was the special delight of Miss Broadus; and as it was the detestation of her sister, Miss Juliana, the delight was seldom realized. The two sisters were harmonious in everything except a few tastes, and perhaps their want of harmony in those points gave their life the variety it needed. At any rate, such an offer as Eleanor's was rarely refused by the elder sister; and the two ladies were soon deep in their business. One really, the other seemingly. Though indeed it is true that Eleanor was heartily engaged to prevent the game coming to a termination, and therefore played in good earnest, not for conquest but for time. This had gone on a good while, before she was aware that a footstep was drawing near the chess table, and then that Mr. Carlisle, stood beside her chair.

"Now don't *you* come to help!" said Miss Broadus, with a thoughtful face and a piece between her finger and thumb.

"Why not?"

"I know!" said Miss Broadus, never taking her eyes from the board which held them as by a charm, – "I can play a sort of a game; but if you take part against me, I shall be vanquished directly."

"Why should I take part against you?"

Miss Broadus at that laughed a good-humoured little simple laugh. "Well" – she said, "it's the course of events, I suppose. I never find anybody taking my part now-a-days. There! I am afraid you have made me place that piece wrong, Mr. Carlisle. I wish you would be still. I cannot fight against two such clever people."

"Do you find Miss Powle clever?"

"I didn't know she was, so much, before," said Miss Broadus, "but she has been playing like a witch this evening. There Eleanor – you are in check."

Eleanor was equal to that emergency, and relieved her king from danger with a very skilful move. She could keep her wits, though her cheek was high-coloured and her hand had a secret desire to be nervous. Eleanor would not let it; and Mr. Carlisle admired the very pretty fingers which paused quietly upon the chess-men.

"Do not forget a proper regard for the interests of the church, Miss Broadus," he remarked.

"Why, I never do!" said Miss Broadus. "What do you mean? Oh, my bishop! – Thank you, Mr. Carlisle."

Eleanor did not thank him, for the bishop's move shut up her play in a corner. She did her best, but her king's resources were cut off; and after a little shuffling she was obliged to surrender at discretion. Miss Broadus arose, pleased, and reiterating her thanks to Mr. Carlisle, and walked away; as conscious that her presence was no more needed in that quarter.

"Will you play with me?" said Mr. Carlisle, taking the chair Miss Broadus had quitted.

"Yes," said Eleanor, glad of anything to stave off what she dreaded; "but I am not –"

"I am no match for you," she was going to say. She stopped suddenly and coloured more deeply.

"What are you not?" asked the gentleman, slowly setting his pawns.

"I am not a very good player. I shall hardly give you amusement."

"I am not sorry for that – supposing it true. I do not like to see women good chess-players."

"Pray why do you not like it?"

"Chess is a game of planning – scheming – contriving – calculating. Women ought not to be adepts in those arts. I hate women that are."

He glanced up as he spoke, at the fair, frank lines of the face opposite him. No art to scheme was shewn in them; there might be resolution; he liked that. He liked it too that the fringe of the eyes drooped over them, and that the tint of the cheek was so very rich.

"But they say, no one can equal a woman in scheming and planning, if she takes to it," said Eleanor.

"Try your skill," said he. "It is your move."

The game began, and Eleanor tried to make good play; but she could not bring to it the same coolness or the same acumen that had fought with Miss Broadus. The well-formed, well-knit hand with the coat sleeve belonging to it, which was all of her adversary that came under her observation, distracted Eleanor's thoughts; she could not forget whose it was. Very different from the weak flexile fingers of Miss Broadus, with their hesitating movement and doubtful pauses, these did their work and disappeared; with no doubt or hesitancy of action, and with agile firmness in every line of muscle and play. Eleanor shewed very poor skill for her part, at planning and contriving on this occasion; and she had a feeling that her opponent might have ended the game many a time if he had chosen it. Still the game did not end. It was a very silent one.

"You are playing with me, Mr. Carlisle," she said at length.

"What are you doing with me?"

"Making no fight at all; but that is because I cannot. Why don't you conquer me and end the game?"

"How can I?"

"I am sure I don't know; but I believe you do. It is all a muddle to me; and not a very interesting piece of confusion to you, I should think."

He did not answer that, but moved a piece; Eleanor made the answering move; and the next step created a lock. The game could go no further. Eleanor began to put up the pieces, feeling worsted in more ways than one. She had not dared to raise her eyes higher than that coat-sleeve; and she knew at the same time that she herself had been thoroughly overlooked. Those same fingers came now helping her to lay the chess-men in the box, ordering them better than she did.

"I want to shew you some cottages I have been building beyond Rythdale tower," said the owner of the fingers. "Will you ride with me to-morrow to look at them?"

He waited for her answer, which Eleanor hesitated to give. But she could not say no, and finally she gave a low yes. Her yes was so low, it was significant; Eleanor knew it; but Mr. Carlisle went on in the same tone.

"At what hour? At eleven?"

"That will do," said Eleanor, after hesitating again.

"Thank you."

He went on, taking the chess-men from her fingers as fast as she gathered them up, and bestowing them in the box after a leisurely manner; then rose and bowed and took his departure. Eleanor saw that he did not hold any communication with her mother on his way out; and in dread of Mrs. Powle's visitation of curiosity upon herself, she too made as quick and as quiet an escape as possible to her own room. There locked the door and walked the floor to think.

In effect she had given her answer, by agreeing to ride; she knew it. She knew that Mr. Carlisle had taken it so, even by the slight freedom with which his fingers touched hers in taking the chess-men from them. It was a very little thing; and yet Eleanor could never recall the willing contact of those fingers, repeated and repeated, without a thrill of feeling that she had committed herself; that she had given the end of the clue into Mr. Carlisle's hand, which duly wound up would land her safe enough, mistress of Rythdale Priory. And was she unwilling to be that? No – not exactly. And did she dislike Rythdale Priory's master, or future master? No, not at all; nevertheless, Eleanor did not feel quite willing to have him hers just yet; she was not ready for that; and she chafed at feeling that the end of that clue was in the hand of her chess-playing antagonist, and alternatives pretty well out of her power. An alternative Eleanor would have liked. She would have liked the play to have gone on for some time longer, leaving her her liberty in all kinds; liberty to make up her mind at leisure, among other things. She was not just now eager to be mistress of anything but herself.

Eleanor watched for her mother's coming, but Mrs. Powle was wiser. She had marked the air of both parties on quitting the drawing-room; and though doubtless she would have liked a little word revelation of what she desired to know, she was content to leave things in train. She judged that Mr. Carlisle could manage his own affairs, and went to bed well satisfied; while Eleanor, finding that her mother was not coming, at last laid herself also down to rest, with a mixed feeling of pleasure and pain in her heart, but vexation towering above all. It would have been vexation still better grown, if she had known the hint her mother had given Mr. Carlisle, when that evening he had applied to her for what news she had for him? Mrs. Powle referred him very smilingly to Eleanor to learn it; at the same time telling him that Eleanor had been allowed to run wild – like her sister Julia – till now she was a little wilful and needed taming.

She looked the character sufficiently well when she came down the next morning. The colour on her cheek was raised yet, and rich; and Eleanor's beautiful lips did not unbend to their brilliant mischievous smile. She was somewhat quick and nervous too about her household arrangements and orders, which yet Eleanor did not neglect. It was time then to dress for her ride; and Eleanor dressed, not hurriedly but carefully, between pleasure and irritation. By what impulse she could not have told, she pulled the feather from her riding cap. It was a long, jaunty black feather, that somewhat shaded and softened her face in riding with its floating play. Her cap now, and her whole dress, was simplicity itself; but if Eleanor had meant to cheat Mr. Carlisle of some pleasure, she had misjudged and lost her aim; the close little unadorned cap but shewed the better her beautiful hair and a face and features which nobody that loved them could wish even shaded from view.

Mrs. Powle had maintained a discreet silence all the morning; nevertheless Eleanor was still afraid that she might come to ask questions, and not enduring to answer them, as soon as her toilet was finished she fled from her room into the garden. This garden, into which the old schoolroom opened, was Eleanor's particular property. No other of the family were ever to be found in it. She had arranged its gay curves and angles, and worked in it and kept it in great part herself. The dew still hung on the leaves; the air of a glorious summer morning was sweet with the varied fragrance of the flowers. Eleanor's heart sprung for the dear old liberty she and the garden had had together; she went lingeringly and thoughtfully among her petunias and carnations, remembering how joyous that liberty had been; and yet – she was not willing to say the word that would secure it to her. She

roved about among the walks, picking carnations in one hand and gathering up her habit with the other. So her little sister found her.

"Why Eleanor! – are you going to ride with Mr. Carlisle?"

"Yes."

"Well he has come – he is waiting for you. He has brought the most *splendid* black horse for you that you ever saw; papa says she is magnificent."

"I ordered my pony" – said Eleanor.

"Well the pony is there, and so is the black horse. O such a beauty, Eleanor! Come."

Eleanor would not go through the house, to see her mother and father by the way. Instinctively she sheered off by the shrubbery paths, which turning and winding at last brought her out upon the front lawn. On the whole a more marked entrance upon the scene the young lady could not have contrived. From the green setting of the shrubbery her excellent figure came out to view, in its dark riding drapery; and carnations in one hand, her habit in the other, she was a pleasant object to several pairs of eyes that were watching her; Julia having done them the kind office to say which way she was coming.

Of them all, however, Eleanor only saw Mr. Carlisle, who was on the ground to meet her. Perhaps he had as great an objection to eyes as she had; for his removal of his cap in greeting was as cool as if she had been a stranger; and so were his words.

"I have brought Black Maggie for you – will you do me the honour to try her?"

Eleanor did not say she would not, and did not say anything. Hesitation and embarrassment were the two pleasant feelings which possessed her and forbade her to speak. She stood before the superb animal, which shewed blood in every line of its head and beautiful frame; and looked at it, and looked at the ground. Mr. Carlisle gently removed the carnations from her hand, taking them into his own, then gave her the reins of Black Maggie and put her into the saddle. In another minute they were off, and out of the reach of observation. But Eleanor had felt again, even in that instant or giving into her fingers the reins which he had taken from the groom, the same thing that she had felt last night – the expression of something new between them. She was in a very divided state of mind. She had not told him he might take that tone with her.

"There are two ways to the head of the valley," said the subject of her thoughts. "Shall we take the circuit by the old priory, or go by the moor?"

"By the moor," said Eleanor.

There, for miles, was a level plain road; they could ride any pace, and she could stave off talking. Accordingly, as soon as they got quit of human habitations, Eleanor gave Black Maggie secretly to understand that she might go as fast as she liked. Black Maggie apparently relished the intimation, for she sprang forward at a rate Eleanor by experience knew nothing of. She had never been quite so well mounted before. As swiftly and as easily as if Black Maggie's feet had been wings, they flew over the common. The air was fresh, the motion was quite sufficient to make it breezy; Eleanor felt exhilarated. All the more because she felt rebellious, and the stopping Mr. Carlisle's mouth was at least a gratification, though she could not leave him behind. He had not mounted her better than himself. Fly as Black Maggie would, her brown companion was precisely at her side. Eleanor had a constant sense of that; but however, the ride was so capital, the moor so wild, the summer air so delicious, that by degrees she began to grow soothed and come down from rebellion to good humour. By and by, Black Maggie got excited. It was with nothing but her own spirits and motion; quite enough though to make hoofs still more emulous of wings. Now she flew indeed. Eleanor's bridle rein was not sufficient to hold her in, or make any impression. She could hardly see how they went.

"Is not this too much for you?" the voice of Mr. Carlisle said quietly.

"Rather – but I can't check her," said Eleanor; vexed to make the admission, and vexed again when a word or two from the rider at her side, who at the same moment leaned forward and touched

Maggie's bridle, brought the wild creature instantly not only from her mad gallop but back to a very demure and easy trot. So demure, that there was no longer any bar to conversation; but then Eleanor reflected she could not gallop always, and they were almost off the plain road of the moor. How beautiful the moor had been to her that morning! Now Eleanor looked at Black Maggie's ears.

"How do you like her?" said Mr. Carlisle.

"Charming! She is perfection. She is delightful."

"She must learn to know her mistress," he rejoined, leaning forward again and drawing Maggie's reins through his fingers. "Take her up a little shorter – and speak to her the next time she does not obey you."

The flush rose to Eleanor's cheeks, and over her brow, and reddened her very temples. She made no sort of answer, yet she knew silence was answer, and that her blood was speaking for her. It was pretty speaking, but extremely inconvenient. And what business had Mr. Carlisle to take things for granted in that way? Eleanor began to feel rebellious again.

"Do you always ride with so loose a rein?" began Mr. Carlisle again.

"I don't know – I never think about it. My pony is perfectly safe."

"So is Maggie – as to her feet; but in general, it is well to let everything under you feel your hand."

"That is what you do, I have no doubt," thought Eleanor, and bit her lip. She would have started into another gallop; but they were entering upon a narrow and rough way where galloping was inadmissible. It descended gradually and winding among rocks and broken ground, to a lower level, the upper part of the valley of the Ryth; a beautiful clear little stream flowing brightly in a rich meadow ground, with gently shelving, softly broken sides; the initiation of the wilder scenery further down the valley. Here were the cottages Mr. Carlisle had spoken of. They looked very picturesque and very inviting too; standing on either side the stream, across which a rude rustic bridge was thrown. Each cottage had its paling enclosure, and built of grey rough stone, with deep sloping roofs and bright little casements, they looked the very ideal of humble homes. No smoke rose from the chimneys, and nobody was visible without or within.

"I want some help of you here," said Mr. Carlisle. "Do you like the situation?"

"Most beautiful!" said Eleanor heartily. "And the houses are just the thing."

"Will you dismount and look a little closer? We will cross the bridge first."

They drew bridle before one of the cottages. Eleanor had all the mind in the world to have thrown herself from Black Maggie's back, as she was accustomed to do from her own pony; but she did not dare. Yesterday she would have dared; to-day there was a slight indefinable change in the manner of Mr. Carlisle towards herself, which cast a spell over her. He stood beside Black Maggie, the carnations making a rosy spot in the buttonhole of his white jacket, while he gave some order to the groom – Eleanor did not hear what, for her mind was on something else; then turned to her and took her down, that same indescribable quality of manner and handling saying to all her senses that he regarded the horse and the lady with the same ownership. Eleanor felt proud, and vexed, and ashamed, and pleased; her mind divided between different feelings; but Mr. Carlisle directed her attention now to the cottages.

It was impossible not to admire and be pleased with them. The exterior was exceedingly homelike and pretty; within, there was yet more to excite admiration. Nicely arranged, neatly and thoroughly furnished, even to little details, they looked most desirable homes for any persons of humble means, even though the tastes had not been equally humble. From one to another Mr. Carlisle took Eleanor; displaying his arrangements to a very silent observer; for though she thought all this admiration, she hardly said anything. Between irritation, and pleasure, and a pretty well-grown shyness, she felt very tongue-tied. At last, after shewing her the view from the lattice of a nice little cottage kitchen, Mr. Carlisle asked for her judgment upon what had been done.

"It is thoroughly excellent," said Eleanor. "They leave nothing to wish. I have never seen such nice cottages. There is nobody in them yet?"

"Is there any improvement to be made?"

"None to be desired, I think," said Eleanor. "They are just perfect little homes. They only want the people now."

"And that is where I want your help. Do you think of any good families, or poor people you approve of, that you would like to put in some of these?"

Eleanor's thought flew instantly to two or three such families among her poor friends; for she was a good deal of a Lady Bountiful, as far as moderate means and large sympathy could go; and knew many of the lower classes in her neighbourhood; but again she struggled with two feelings, for the question had been put not in tone of compliment but with a manner of simple consultation. She flushed and hesitated, until it was put again.

"I know several, I think, that you would not dislike to have here, and that would be very glad to come, Mr. Carlisle."

"Who are they?"

"One is Mrs. Benson, who lives on nothing with her family of eight children, and brings them up well."

Mr. Carlisle took out his note-book.

"Another is Joe Shepherd and his wife; but they are an old couple; perhaps you do not want old people here?"

He looked up from his note-book with a little smile, which brought the blood tingling to Eleanor's brow again, and effectually drove away all her ideas. She was very vexed with herself; she was never used to be so troubled with blushing. She turned away.

"Suppose you sit down," said he, taking her hands and placing her in a chair by the window. "You must have some refreshment, I think, before we go any further." He left the cottage, and Eleanor looked out of the open casement, biting her lips. The air came in with such a sweet breath from the heathery moor, it seemed to blow vexation away. Yet Eleanor was vexed. Here she was making admissions with every breath, when she would fain have not made any. She wanted her old liberty, and to dispose of it at her leisure if at all; and at least not to have it taken from her. But here was Mr. Carlisle at her elbow again, and one of his servants bringing dishes and glasses. The meats were spread on the little table before which Eleanor sat, and Mr. Carlisle took another chair.

"We will honour the house for once," he said smiling; "the future shall be as the occupants deserve. Is this one to belong to some of your protégés?"

"I have not the gift of foresight," said Eleanor.

"You have another sort of gift which will do quite as well. If you have any choice, choose the houses in which Joe Shepherd, and Mrs. Benson, and anybody else, shall thank you – and I will order the doors marked. Which do you prefer?"

Eleanor was forced to speak. "I think this is one of the pleasantest situations," she said flushing deeply again; "but the house highest up the valley –"

"What of it?" said Mr. Carlisle, smiling at her.

"That would be best for Joe Shepherd, because of his business. It is nearer the common."

"Joe Shepherd shall have it. Now will you do me the favour to eat that," said he putting a piece of cold game on her plate. "Do not look at it, but eat it. Your day's labour is by no means over."

It was easier to eat than to do nothing; and easier to look at her plate than where her carnations gleamed on that white breast-ground. So Eleanor eat obediently.

"The day is so uncommonly fine, how would you like to walk down the valley as far as the old priory, and let the horses meet us there?"

"I am willing" – said Eleanor. Which she was, only because she was ashamed or afraid to say that she wanted to gallop back by the moor, the same way she had come. A long walk down the

valley would give fine opportunity for all that she dreaded in the way of conversation. However, the order was given about the horses, and the walk began.

The way was at first a continuation of the valley in which the cottages were situated; uncultivated, sweet, and wild. They were a good distance beyond Barton's tower. The stream of the Ryth, not so large as it became further down, sparkled along in a narrow meadow, beset with flowers. Here and there a rude bridge crossed it; and the walkers passed as they listed from side to side, wandering down the valley at great leisure, remarking upon all sorts of things except what Eleanor was dreading. The walk and talk went on without anything formidable. Mr. Carlisle seemed to have nothing on his mind; and Eleanor, full of what was on hers, only felt through his quiet demeanour that he was taking things for granted in a very cool way. She was vexed and irritated, and at the same time subdued. And then an opposite feeling would stir, of pleasure and pride, at the place she was taking and the relations she was assuming to the beautiful domain through which they wandered. As they went down the valley it grew more and more lovely. Luxuriant growths of ash and oak mingled with larches, crowned the rising borders of the valley and crept down their sides, hanging a most exquisite clothing of vegetation over the banks which had hitherto been mostly bare. As they went, from point to point and in one after another region of beauty, her companion's talk, quietly flowing on, called her attention to one and another observation suggested by what they were looking at; not as if it were a foreign matter, but with a tacit intimation that it concerned her or had a right to her interest. It was a long walk. They were some time before reaching the old tower; then a long stretch of beautiful scenes lay between them and the old priory ruins. This part of the valley was in the highest degree picturesque. The sides drew together, close and rocky and overshadowed with a thicket of trees. The path of the river became steep and encumbered; the way along its banks grew comparatively rough and difficult. The day was delicious, without even a threatening of rain; yet the sun in some places was completely shut out from the water by the overgrown, overhanging sides of rock and wood which shut in the dell. Conversation was broken here, by the pleasant difficulty of pursuing the way. Here too flowers were sweet and the birds busy. The way was enough to delight any lover of nature; and it was impossible not to be delighted. Nevertheless Eleanor hailed for a sake not its own, every bit of broken ground and rough walking that made connected conversation impossible; and then was glad to see the grey walls of the priory, where the horses were to meet them. Once in the saddle again – she would be glad to be there!

The horses were not in sight yet; they strolled into the ruin. It was lovely to-day; the sunlight adding its brightening touch to all that moss and ivy and lichen and fern had done. They sauntered up what had been an aisle of the church; carpeted now with soft shaven turf, close and smooth.

"The priory was founded a great while ago," said Mr. Carlisle, "by one of the first Lords of Rythdale, on account of the fact that he had slain his own brother in mortal combat. It troubled his mind, I suppose, even in those rough times."

"And he built the church to soothe it."

"Built the church and founded the establishment; gave it all the lands we have passed through to-day, and much more; and great rights on hill and dale and moor. We have them nearly all back again – by one happy chance and another."

"What was this?" said Eleanor, seating herself on a great block of stone, the surface of which was rough with decay.

"This was a tombstone – tradition says, of that same slain Lord of Rythdale – but I think it very hypothetical. However, your fancy can conjure back his image, if you like, lying where you sit; covered with the armour he lived his life in, and probably with hands joined to make the prayers his life had rendered desirable."

"He had not the helmet – " thought Eleanor. She got up to look at the stone; but it was worn away; no trace of the knight in armour who had lain there was any longer to be seen. What long ago times those were!

"And then the old monks did nothing else but pray," she remarked.

"A few other things," said her companion; "if report is true. But they said a great many prayers, it is certain. It was what they were specially put here for – to do masses for that old stone figure that used to lie there. They were paid well for doing it. I hope they did it."

The wind stirred gently through the ruin, bringing a sweet scent of herbs and flowers, and a fern or an ivy leaf here and there just moved lightly on its stalk.

"They must have lived a pleasant sort of life," said Eleanor musingly, – "in this beautiful place!"

"Are you thinking of entering a monastery?" said her companion smiling.

It brought back Eleanor's consciousness, which had been for a moment forgotten, and the deep colour flashed to her face. She stood confused.

Mr. Carlisle did not let her go this time; he took both her hands.

"Do you think I am going to be satisfied with only negative answers from you?" said he changing his tone. "What have you got to say to me?"

Eleanor struggled with herself. "Nothing, Mr. Carlisle."

"Your mother has conveyed to you my wishes?"

"Yes," said Eleanor softly.

"What are yours?"

She hesitated, held at bay, but he waited; and at last with a little of her frank daring breaking out, she said, still in her former soft voice, "I would let things alone."

"Suppose that could not be, – would you send me away, or let me come near to you?"

Eleanor could not send him away; but he would not come near. He stood keeping her hands in a light firm grasp; she felt that he knew his hold of her; her head bowed in confusion.

"Speak, darling," he said. "Are you mine?"

Eleanor shrank lower and lower from his observation; but she answered in a whisper, – "I suppose so."

Her hands were released then, only to have herself taken into more secure possession. She had given herself up; and Mr. Carlisle's manner said that to touch her cheek was his right as well as his pleasure. Eleanor could not dispute it; she knew that Mr. Carlisle loved her, but the certainly thought the sense of power had great charms for him: so, she presently thought, had the exercise of it.

"You are mine now," he said, – "you are mine. You are Eleanor Carlisle.

But you have not said a word to me. What is my name?"

"Your name!" stammered Eleanor, – "Carlisle."

"Yes, but the rest?"

"I know it," said Eleanor.

"Speak it, darling?"

Now Eleanor had no mind to speak that or anything else upon compulsion; it should be a grace from her lips, not the compliance with a requisition; her spirit of resistance sprung up. A frank refusal was on her tongue, and her head, which had been drooping, was thrown back with an infinitely pretty air of defiance, to give it. Thus she met Mr. Carlisle's look; met the bright hazel eyes that were bent upon her, full of affection and smiling, but with something else in them as well; there was a calm power of exaction. Eleanor read it, even in the half-glance which took in incongruously the graceful figure and easy attitude; she did not feel ready for contention with Mr. Carlisle; the man's nature was dominant over the woman's. Eleanor's head stooped again; she spoke obediently the required words.

"Robert Macintosh."

The kisses which met her lips before the words were well out, seemed to seal the whole transaction. Perhaps it was Eleanor's fancy, but to her they spoke unqualified content both with her

opposition and her yielding. She was chafed with the consciousness that she had been obliged to yield; vexed to feel that she was not her own mistress; even while the kisses that stopped her lips told her how much love mingled with her captor's power. There was no questioning that fact; it only half soothed Eleanor.

Mr. Carlisle bade her sit down and rest, while he went to see if the horses were there. Eleanor sat down dreamily on the old tombstone, and in the space of three minutes went over whole fields of thought. Her mind was in a perverse state. Before her the old tower of the ruined priory rose in its time-worn beauty, with the young honours of the ivy clinging all about it; on either side of her stretched the grey, ivied and mossy, crumbling walls. It was a magnificent place; if not her own mistress, it was a pleasant thing to be mistress of such as that; and a vision of gay grandeur floated over her mind. Still, in contrast with that vision, the quiet, ruined priory tower spoke of a different life – brought up a separate vision; of unworldly possessions, aims, hopes, and occupations; it was not familiar to Eleanor's mind, yet now somehow it rose upon her, with the feeling of that once-wanted, still desired, – only she had forgotten it – armour of security. Why did she think of it now? was it because Eleanor's mind was in that disordered state which lets everything come to the surface by turns; or because she was still suffering, from vexation, and her spirit chose contraries with a natural readiness and relish? It was not more than three minutes, but Eleanor travelled far in dream-land; so far that the sudden feeling of two hands upon her shoulders, brought her back with even a visible start. She was rallied and laughed at; then her hand was put upon Mr. Carlisle's arm and so Eleanor was walked out to where Black Maggie stood waiting for her. Of course she felt that her engagement was to be made known to all the world immediately. Mr. Carlisle's servant must know it now. It seemed to Eleanor that fine bands of cobwebs had been cast round her, binding her hands and feet, which loved their liberty. The feeling made one little imprudent burst. As Mr. Carlisle put Maggie's reins into her hand, he repeated what he had before said, that Eleanor should use her voice if the bridle failed to win obedience.

"She is not of a rebellious disposition," he added.

"Do you read dispositions?" said Eleanor, gathering up the reins. He stood at her saddle-bow.

"Sometimes."

"Do you know mine?"

"Partially."

"It is what you say Black Maggie's is not."

"Is it? Take the reins a little shorter, Eleanor."

It is difficult to say how much there may be in two short words; but as Mr. Carlisle went round to the other side and mounted, he left his little lady in a state of fume. Those two words said so plainly to Eleanor's ear, that her announcement was neither denied nor disliked. Nay, they expressed pleasure; the sort of pleasure that a man has in a spirited horse of which he is master. It threw Eleanor's mind into a tumult, so great that for a minute or two she hardly knew what she was about. But for the sound, sweet good temper, which in spite of Eleanor's self-characterising was part of her nature, she would have been in a rage. As it was, she only handled Black Maggie in a more stately style than she had cared about at the beginning of the ride; putting her upon her paces; and so rode through all the village, in a way that certainly pleased Mr. Carlisle, though he said nothing about it. He contrived however to aid in the soothing work done by Black Maggie's steps, so that long before Ivy Lodge was reached Eleanor's smile came free and sweet again, and her lip lost its ominous curve.

"You are a darling!" Mr. Carlisle whispered as he took her down from her horse.

Eleanor went on into the drawing-room. He followed her. Nobody was there.

"What have you to say to me, Eleanor?" he said as he held her hand before parting.

"Nothing whatever, Mr. Carlisle." Eleanor's frank brilliant smile gleamed mischievously upon him.

"Will you not give me a word of kindness before I go?"

"No! Mr. Carlisle, if I had my own way," said Eleanor switching her riding-whip nervously about her habit, – "I would be my own mistress for a good while longer."

"Shall I give you back your liberty?" said he, drawing her into his arms. Eleanor was silent. Their touch manifested no such intention. He bent his head lower and said softly, "Kiss me, Eleanor."

There was, as before, just that mingling of affection and exaction which conquered her. She knew all she was giving, but she half dared not and half cared not to refuse.

"You little witch – " said he as he took possession of the just permitted lips, – "I will punish you for your naughtiness, by taking you home very soon – into my own management."

Mrs. Powle was in Eleanor's room when she entered; waiting there for her.

"Well Eleanor," she began, – "is it settled? Are you to be Lady Rythdale?"

"If Mr. Carlisle has his will, ma'am."

"And what is *your* will?"

"I have none any longer. But if you and he try to hurry on the day, mamma, it shall never come, – never!"

Mrs. Powle thought she would leave that matter in more skilful hands; and went away well satisfied.

CHAPTER V. AT THE COTTAGE

"This floating life hath but this port of rest,
A heart prepared, that fears no ill to come."

The matter was in skilful hands; for the days rolled on, after that eventful excursion, with great smoothness. Mr. Carlisle kept Eleanor busy, with some pleasant little excitement, every day varied. She was made to taste the sweets of her new position, and to depend more and more upon the hand that introduced her to them. Mr. Carlisle ministered carefully to her tastes. Eleanor daily was well mounted, generally on Maggie; and enjoyed her heart's delight of a gallop over the moor, or a more moderate pace through a more rewarding scenery. Mr. Carlisle entered into the spirit of her gardening pursuits; took her to his mother's conservatory; and found that he never pleased Eleanor better than when he plunged her into the midst of flowers. He took good care to advance his own interests all the time; and advanced them fast and surely. He had Eleanor's liking before; and her nature was too sweet and rich not to incline towards the person whom she had given such a position with herself, yielding to him more and more of faith and affection. And that in spite of what sometimes chafed her; the quiet sway she felt Mr. Carlisle had over her, beneath which she was powerless. Or rather, perhaps she inclined towards him secretly the more on account of it; for to women of rich natures there is something attractive in being obliged to look up; and to women of all natures it is imposing. So Mr. Carlisle's threat, by Eleanor so stoutly resisted and resented, was extremely likely to come to pass. Mrs. Powle was too wise to touch her finger to the game.

Several weeks went by, during which Eleanor had no chance to think of anything but Mr. Carlisle and the matters he presented for her notice. At the end of that time he was obliged to go up to London on sudden business. It made a great lull in the house; and Eleanor began to sit in her garden parlour again and dream. While dreaming one day, she heard the voice of her little sister sobbing at the door-step. She had not observed before that she was sitting there.

"Julia!" said Eleanor – "What is the matter?"

Julia would not immediately say, but then faltered out, "Mr. Rhys."

"Mr. Rhys! What of him?"

"He's sick. He's going to die, I know."

"How do you know he is sick? Come, stop crying, Julia, and speak. What makes you think he is sick?"

"Because he just lies on the sofa, and looks so white, and he can't keep school. He sent away the boys yesterday."

"Does he see the doctor?"

"No. I don't know. No, I know he don't," said Julia; "because the old woman said he ought to see him."

"What old woman, child?"

"His old woman – Mrs. Williams. And mamma said I might have some jelly and some sago for him – and there is nobody to take it. Foster is out of the way, and Jack is busy, and I can't get anybody."

Julia's tears were very sincere.

"Stop crying, child, and I will go with you myself. I have not had a walk to-day, or a ride, or anything. Come, get ready, and you and I will take it."

Julia did not wait even for thanks; she was never given to be ceremonious; but sprang away to do as her sister had said. In a few minutes they were off, going through the garden, each with a little basket in her hand. Julia's tears were exchanged for the most sunshiny gladness.

It was a sunshiny day altogether, in the end of summer, and the heat was sultry. Neither sister minded weather of any sort; nevertheless they chose the shady side of the road and went very leisurely, along by the hedgerows and under the elms and beeches with which all the way to the village was more or less shaded. It was a long walk, even to the village. The cottage where Mr. Rhys had his abode was yet further on. The village must be passed on the way to it.

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