Chapter XXXVI

'Rien ne pese tant qu'un secret Le porter loin est difficile aux dames: Et je scais mesme sur ce fait Bon nombre d'hommes qui sont femmes.' - LA FONTAINE.

Meanwhile Deronda had been fastened and led off by Mr Vandernoodt, who wished for a brisker walk, a cigar, and a little gossip. Since we cannot tell a man his own secrets, the restraint of being in his company often breeds a desire to pair off in conversation with some more ignorant person, and Mr Vandernoodt presently said -

'What a washed-out piece of cambric Grandcourt is! But if he is a favorite of yours, I withdraw the remark.'

'Not the least in the world,' said Deronda.

'I thought not. One wonders how he came to have a great passion again; and he must have had - to marry in this way. Though Lush, his old chum, hints that he married this girl out of obstinacy. By George! it was a very accountable obstinacy. A man might make up his mind to marry her without the stimulus of contradiction. But he must have made himself a pretty large drain of money, eh?'

'I know nothing of his affairs.'

'What! not of the other establishment he keeps up?'

'Diplow? Of course. He took that of Sir Hugo. But merely for the year.'

'No, no; not Diplow: Gadsmere. Sir Hugo knows, I'll answer for it.'

Deronda said nothing. He really began to feel some curiosity, but he foresaw that he should hear what Mr Vandernoodt had to tell, without the condescension of asking.

'Lush would not altogether own to it, of course. He's a confident and go- between of Grandcourt's. But I have it on the best authority. The fact is, there's another lady with four children at Gadsmere. She has had the upper hand of him these ten years and more, and by what I can understand has it still - left her husband for him, and used to travel with him everywhere. Her husband's dead now; I found a fellow who was in the same regiment with him, and knew this Mrs. Glasher before she took wing. A fiery dark-eyed woman - a noted beauty at that time - he thought she was dead. They say she has Grandcourt under her thumb still, and it's a wonder he didn't marry her, for there's a very fine boy, and I understand Grandcourt can do

absolutely as he pleases with the estates. Lush told me as much as that.'

'What right had he to marry this girl?' said Deronda, with disgust.

Mr Vandernoodt, adjusting the end of his cigar, shrugged his shoulders and put out his lips.

'*She* can know nothing of it,' said Deronda, emphatically. But that positive statement was immediately followed by an inward query - 'Could she have known anything of it?'

'It's rather a piquant picture,' said Mr Vandernoodt - 'Grandcourt between two fiery women. For depend upon it this light-haired one has plenty of devil in her. I formed that opinion of her at Leubronn. It's a sort of Medea and Creuesa business. Fancy the two meeting! Grandcourt is a new kind of Jason: I wonder what sort of a part he'll make of it. It's a dog's part at best. I think I hear Ristori now, saying, 'Jasone! Jasone!' These fine women generally get hold of a stick.'

'Grandcourt can bite, I fancy,' said Deronda. 'He is no stick.'

'No, no; I meant Jason. I can't quite make out Grandcourt. But he's a keen fellow enough - uncommonly well built too. And if he comes into all this property, the estates will bear dividing. This girl, whose friends had come to beggary, I understand, may think herself lucky to get him. I don't want to be hard on a man because he gets involved in an affair of that sort. But he might make himself more agreeable. I was telling him a capital story last night, and he got up and walked away in the middle. I felt inclined to kick him. Do you suppose that is inattention or insolence, now?'

'Oh, a mixture. He generally observes the forms: but he doesn't listen much,' said Deronda. Then, after a moment's pause, he went on, 'I should think there must be some exaggeration or inaccuracy in what you have heard about this lady at Gadsmere.'

'Not a bit, depend upon it; it has all lain snug of late years. People have forgotten all about it. But there the nest is, and the birds are in it. And I know Grandcourt goes there. I have good evidence that he goes there. However, that's nobody's business but his own. The affair has sunk below the surface.'

'I wonder you could have learned so much about it,' said Deronda, rather drily.

'Oh, there are plenty of people who knew all about it; but such stories get packed away like old letters. They interest me. I like to know the

manners of my time - contemporary gossip, not antediluvian. These Dryasdust fellows get a reputation by raking up some small scandal about Semiramis or Nitocris, and then we have a thousand and one poems written upon it by all the warblers big and little. But I don't care a straw about the *faux pas* of the mummies. You do, though. You are one of the historical men - more interested in a lady when she's got a rag face and skeleton toes peeping out. Does that flatter your imagination?'

'Well, if she had any woes in her love, one has the satisfaction of knowing that she's well out of them.'

'Ah, you are thinking of the Medea, I see.'

Deronda then chose to point to some giant oaks worth looking at in their bareness. He also felt an interest in this piece of contemporary gossip, but he was satisfied that Mr Vandernoodt had no more to tell about it.

Since the early days when he tried to construct the hidden story of his own birth, his mind had perhaps never been so active in weaving probabilities about any private affair as it had now begun to be about Gwendolen's marriage. This unavowed relation of Grandcourt's - could she have gained some knowledge of it, which caused her to shrink from the match - a shrinking finally overcome by the urgence of poverty? He could recall almost every word she had said to him, and in certain of these words he seemed to discern that she was conscious of having done some wrong - inflicted some injury. His own acute experience made him alive to the form of injury which might affect the unavowed children and their mother. Was Mrs. Grandcourt, under all her determined show of satisfaction, gnawed by a double, a treble-headed grief - self-reproach, disappointment, jealousy? He dwelt especially on all the slight signs of self-reproach: he was inclined to judge her tenderly, to excuse, to pity. He thought he had found a key now by which to interpret her more clearly: what magnifying of her misery might not a young creature get into who had wedded her fresh hopes to old secrets! He thought he saw clearly enough now why Sir Hugo had never dropped any hint of this affair to him; and immediately the image of this Mrs. Glasher became painfully associated with his own hidden birth. Gwendolen knowing of that woman and her children, marrying Grandcourt, and showing herself contented, would have been among the most repulsive of beings to him; but Gwendolen tasting the bitterness of remorse for having contributed to their injury was brought very near to his fellow-feeling. If it were so, she had got to a common plane of understanding with him on some difficulties of life which a woman is rarely able to judge of with any justice or generosity; for, according to precedent, Gwendolen's view of her position might easily have been no other than

that her husband's marriage with her was his entrance on the path of virtue, while Mrs. Glasher represented his forsaken sin. And Deronda had naturally some resentment on behalf of the Hagars and Ishmaels.

Undeniably Deronda's growing solicitude about Gwendolen depended chiefly on her peculiar manner toward him; and I suppose neither man nor woman would be the better for an utter insensibility to such appeals. One sign that his interest in her had changed its footing was that he dismissed any caution against her being a coquette setting snares to involve him in a vulgar flirtation, and determined that he would not again evade any opportunity of talking to her. He had shaken off Mr Vandernoodt, and got into a solitary corner in the twilight; but half an hour was long enough to think of those possibilities in Gwendolen's position and state of mind; and on forming the determination not to avoid her, he remembered that she was likely to be at tea with the other ladies in the drawing-room. The conjecture was true; for Gwendolen, after resolving not to go down again for the next four hours, began to feel, at the end of one, that in shutting herself up she missed all chances of seeing and hearing, and that her visit would only last two days more. She adjusted herself, put on her little air of self-possession, and going down, made herself resolutely agreeable. Only ladies were assembled, and Lady Pentreath was amusing them with a description of a drawing-room under the Regency, and the figure that was cut by ladies and gentlemen in 1819, the year she was presented - when Deronda entered.

'Shall I be acceptable?' he said. 'Perhaps I had better go back and look for the others. I suppose they are in the billiard-room.'

'No, no; stay where you are,' said Lady Pentreath. 'They were all getting tired of me; let us hear what *you* have to say.'

'That is rather an embarrassing appeal,' said Deronda, drawing up a chair near Lady Mallinger's elbow at the tea-table. 'I think I had better take the opportunity of mentioning our songstress,' he added, looking at Lady Mallinger - 'unless you have done so.'

'Oh, the little Jewess!' said Lady Mallinger. 'No, I have not mentioned her. It never entered my head that any one here wanted singing lessons.'

'All ladies know some one else who wants singing lessons,' said Deronda. 'I have happened to find an exquisite singer,' - here he turned to Lady Pentreath. 'She is living with some ladies who are friends of mine - the mother and sisters of a man who was my chum at Cambridge. She was on the stage at Vienna; but she wants to leave that life, and maintain herself by teaching.'

‘There are swarms of those people, aren't there?’ said the old lady. ‘Are her lessons to be very cheap or very expensive? Those are the two baits I know of.’

‘There is another bait for those who hear her,’ said Deronda. ‘Her singing is something quite exceptional, I think. She has had such first-rate teaching - or rather first-rate instinct with her teaching - that you might imagine her singing all came by nature.’

‘Why did she leave the stage, then?’ said Lady Pentreath. ‘I'm too old to believe in first-rate people giving up first-rate chances.’

‘Her voice was too weak. It is a delicious voice for a room. You who put up with my singing of Schubert would be enchanted with hers,’ said Deronda, looking at Mrs. Raymond. ‘And I imagine she would not object to sing at private parties or concerts. Her voice is quite equal to that.’

‘I am to have her in my drawing-room when we go up to town,’ said Lady Mallinger. ‘You shall hear her then. I have not heard her myself yet; but I trust Daniel's recommendation. I mean my girls to have lessons of her.’

‘Is it a charitable affair?’ said Lady Pentreath. ‘I can't bear charitable music.’

Lady Mallinger, who was rather helpless in conversation, and felt herself under an engagement not to tell anything of Mirah's story, had an embarrassed smile on her face, and glanced at Deronda.

‘It is a charity to those who want to have a good model of feminine singing,’ said Deronda. ‘I think everybody who has ears would benefit by a little improvement on the ordinary style. If you heard Miss Lapidoth’ - here he looked at Gwendolen - ‘perhaps you would revoke your resolution to give up singing.’

‘I should rather think my resolution would be confirmed,’ said Gwendolen. ‘I don't feel able to follow your advice of enjoying my own middlingness.’

‘For my part,’ said Deronda, ‘people who do anything finely always inspirit me to try. I don't mean that they make me believe I can do it as well. But they make the thing, whatever it may be, seem worthy to be done. I can bear to think my own music not good for much, but the world would be more dismal if I thought music itself not good for much. Excellence encourages one about life generally; it shows the spiritual wealth of the world.’

‘But then, if we can't imitate it, it only makes our own life seem the tamer,’ said Gwendolen, in a mood to resent encouragement founded on her own insignificance.

‘That depends on the point of view, I think,’ said Deronda. ‘We should have a poor life of it if we were reduced for all our pleasure to our own performances. A little private imitation of what is good is a sort of private devotion to it, and most of us ought to practice art only in the light of private study - preparation to understand and enjoy what the few can do for us. I think Miss Lapidoth is one of the few.’

‘She must be a very happy person, don't you think?’ said Gwendolen, with a touch of sarcasm, and a turn of her neck toward Mrs. Raymond.

‘I don't know,’ answered the independent lady; ‘I must hear more of her before I say that.’

‘It may have been a bitter disappointment to her that her voice failed her for the stage,’ said Juliet Fenn, sympathetically.

‘I suppose she's past her best, though,’ said the deep voice of Lady Pentreath.

‘On the contrary, she has not reached it,’ said Deronda. ‘She is barely twenty.’

‘And very pretty,’ interposed Lady Mallinger, with an amiable wish to help Deronda. ‘And she has very good manners. I'm sorry she's a bigoted Jewess; I should not like it for anything else, but it doesn't matter in singing.’

‘Well, since her voice is too weak for her to scream much, I'll tell Lady Clementina to set her on my nine granddaughters,’ said Lady Pentreath; ‘and I hope she'll convince eight of them that they have not voice enough to sing anywhere but at church. My notion is, that many of our girls nowadays want lessons not to sing.’

‘I have had my lessons in that,’ said Gwendolen, looking at Deronda. ‘You see Lady Pentreath is on my side.’

While she was speaking, Sir Hugo entered with some of the other gentlemen, including Grandcourt, and standing against the group at the low tea-table said -

‘What imposition is Deronda putting on you, ladies - slipping in among you by himself?’

‘Wanting to pass off an obscurity on us as better than any celebrity,’ said Lady Pentreath - ‘a pretty singing Jewess who is to astonish these young people. You and I, who heard Catalani in her prime, are not so easily astonished.’

Sir Hugo listened with his good-humored smile as he took a cup of tea from his wife, and then said, ‘Well, you know, a Liberal is bound to think that there have been singers since Catalani's time.’

‘Ah, you are younger than I am. I dare say you are one of the men who ran after Alcharisi. But she married off and left you all in the lurch.’

‘Yes, yes; it's rather too bad when these great singers marry themselves into silence before they have a crack in their voices. And the husband is a public robber. I remember Leroux saying, 'A man might as well take down a fine peal of church bells and carry them off to the steppes,’ said Sir Hugo, setting down his cup and turning away, while Deronda, who had moved from his place to make room for others, and felt that he was not in request, sat down a little apart. Presently he became aware that, in the general dispersion of the group, Gwendolen had extricated herself from the attentions of Mr Vandernoodt and had walked to the piano, where she stood apparently examining the music which lay on the desk. Will any one be surprised at Deronda's concluding that she wished him to join her? Perhaps she wanted to make amends for the unpleasant tone of resistance with which she had met his recommendation of Mirah, for he had noticed that her first impulse often was to say what she afterward wished to retract. He went to her side and said -

‘Are you relenting about the music and looking for something to play or sing?’

‘I am not looking for anything, but I *am* relenting,’ said Gwendolen, speaking in a submissive tone.

‘May I know the reason?’

‘I should like to hear Miss Lapidoth and have lessons from her, since you admire her so much, - that is, of course, when we go to town. I mean lessons in rejoicing at her excellence and my own deficiency,’ said Gwendolen, turning on him a sweet, open smile.

‘I shall be really glad for you to see and hear her,’ said Deronda, returning the smile in kind.

‘Is she as perfect in every thing else as in her music?’

‘I can't vouch for that exactly. I have not seen enough of her. But I have seen nothing in her that I could wish to be different. She has had an unhappy life. Her troubles began in early childhood, and she has grown up among very painful surroundings. But I think you will say that no advantages could have given her more grace and truer refinement.’

‘I wonder what sort of trouble hers were?’

‘I have not any very precise knowledge. But I know that she was on the brink of drowning herself in despair.’

‘And what hindered her?’ said Gwendolen, quickly, looking at Deronda.

‘Some ray or other came - which made her feel that she ought to live - that it was good to live,’ he answered, quietly. ‘She is full of piety, and seems capable of submitting to anything when it takes the form of duty.’

‘Those people are not to be pitied,’ said Gwendolen, impatiently. ‘I have no sympathy with women who are always doing right. I don't believe in their great sufferings.’ Her fingers moved quickly among the edges of the music.

‘It is true,’ said Deronda, ‘that the consciousness of having done wrong is something deeper, more bitter. I suppose we faulty creatures can never feel so much for the irreproachable as for those who are bruised in the struggle with their own faults. It is a very ancient story, that of the lost sheep - but it comes up afresh every day.’

‘That is a way of speaking - it is not acted upon, it is not real,’ said Gwendolen, bitterly. ‘You admire Miss Lapidoth because you think her blameless, perfect. And you know you would despise a woman who had done something you thought very wrong.’

‘That would depend entirely upon her own view of what she had done,’ said Deronda.

‘You would be satisfied if she were very wretched, I suppose,’ said Gwendolen, impetuously.

‘No, not satisfied - full of sorrow for her. It was not a mere way of speaking. I did not mean to say that the finer nature is not more adorable; I meant that those who would be comparatively uninteresting beforehand may become worthier of sympathy when they do something that awakens in them a keen remorse. Lives are enlarged in different ways. I dare say some would never get their eyes

opened if it were not for a violent shock from the consequences of their own actions. And when they are suffering in that way one must care for them more than, for the comfortably self-satisfied.' Deronda forgot everything but his vision of what Gwendolen's experience had probably been, and urged by compassion let his eyes and voice express as much interest as they would.

Gwendolen had slipped on to the music-stool, and looked up at him with pain in her long eyes, like a wounded animal asking for help.

'Are you persuading Mrs. Grandcourt to play to us, Dan?' said Sir Hugo, coming up and putting his hand on Deronda's shoulder with a gentle, admonitory pinch.

'I cannot persuade myself,' said Gwendolen, rising.

Others had followed Sir Hugo's lead, and there was an end of any liability to confidences for that day. But the next was New Year's Eve; and a grand dance, to which the chief tenants were invited, was to be held in the picture-gallery above the cloister - the sort of entertainment in which numbers and general movement may create privacy. When Gwendolen was dressing, she longed, in remembrance of Leubronn, to put on the old turquoise necklace for her sole ornament; but she dared not offend her husband by appearing in that shabby way on an occasion when he would demand her utmost splendor. Determined to wear the memorial necklace somehow, she wound it thrice round her wrist and made a bracelet of it - having gone to her room to put it on just before the time of entering the ball-room.

It was always a beautiful scene, this dance on New Year's Eve, which had been kept up by the family tradition as nearly in the old fashion as inexorable change would allow. Red carpet was laid down for the occasion: hot-house plants and evergreens were arranged in bowers at the extremities and in every recess of the gallery; and the old portraits stretching back through generations, even to the pre-portraying period, made a piquant line of spectators. Some neighboring gentry, major and minor, were invited; and it was certainly an occasion when a prospective master and mistress of Abbott's and King's Topping might see their future glory in an agreeable light, as a picturesque provincial supremacy with a rent-roll personified by the most prosperous-looking tenants. Sir Hugo expected Grandcourt to feel flattered by being asked to the Abbey at a time which included this festival in honor of the family estate; but he also hoped that his own hale appearance might impress his successor with the probable length of time that would elapse before the succession came, and with the wisdom of preferring a good actual sum to a minor property that must be waited for. All present, down to the least important farmer's

daughter, knew that they were to see 'young Grandcourt,' Sir Hugo's nephew, the presumptive heir and future baronet, now visiting the Abbey with his bride after an absence of many years; any coolness between uncle and nephew having, it is understood, given way to a friendly warmth. The bride opening the ball with Sir Hugo was necessarily the cynosure of all eyes; and less than a year before, if some magic mirror could have shown Gwendolen her actual position, she would have imagined herself moving in it with a glow of triumphant pleasure, conscious that she held in her hands a life full of favorable chances which her cleverness and spirit would enable her to make the best of. And now she was wondering that she could get so little joy out of the exultation to which she had been suddenly lifted, away from the distasteful petty empire of her girlhood with its irksome lack of distinction and superfluity of sisters. She would have been glad to be even unreasonably elated, and to forget everything but the flattery of the moment; but she was like one courting sleep, in whom thoughts insist like willful tormentors.

Wondering in this way at her own dullness, and all the while longing for an excitement that would deaden importunate aches, she was passing through files of admiring beholders in the country-dance with which it was traditional to open the ball, and was being generally regarded by her own sex as an enviable woman. It was remarked that she carried herself with a wonderful air, considering that she had been nobody in particular, and without a farthing to her fortune. If she had been a duke's daughter, or one of the royal princesses, she could not have taken the honors of the evening more as a matter of course. Poor Gwendolen! It would by-and-by become a sort of skill in which she was automatically practiced to hear this last great gambling loss with an air of perfect self-possession.

The next couple that passed were also worth looking at. Lady Pentreath had said, 'I shall stand up for one dance, but I shall choose my partner. Mr Deronda, you are the youngest man, I mean to dance with you. Nobody is old enough to make a good pair with me. I must have a contrast.' And the contrast certainly set off the old lady to the utmost. She was one of those women who are never handsome till they are old, and she had had the wisdom to embrace the beauty of age as early as possible. What might have seemed harshness in her features when she was young, had turned now into a satisfactory strength of form and expression which defied wrinkles, and was set off by a crown of white hair; her well-built figure was well covered with black drapery, her ears and neck comfortably caressed with lace, showing none of those withered spaces which one would think it a pitiable condition of poverty to expose. She glided along gracefully enough, her dark eyes still with a mischievous smile in them as she observed the company. Her partner's young richness of tint against the flattened hues and rougher forms of her aged head had an effect

something like that of a fine flower against a lichenous branch. Perhaps the tenants hardly appreciated this pair. Lady Pentreath was nothing more than a straight, active old lady: Mr Deronda was a familiar figure regarded with friendliness; but if he had been the heir, it would have been regretted that his face was not as unmistakably English as Sir Hugo's.

Grandcourt's appearance when he came up with Lady Mallinger was not impeached with foreignness: still the satisfaction in it was not complete. It would have been matter of congratulation if one who had the luck to inherit two old family estates had had move hair, a fresher color, and a look of greater animation; but that fine families dwindled off into females, and estates ran together into the single heirship of a mealy- complexioned male, was a tendency in things which seemed to be accounted for by a citation of other instances. It was agreed that Mr Grandcourt could never be taken for anything but what he was - a born gentleman; and that, in fact, he looked like an heir. Perhaps the person least complacently disposed toward him at that moment was Lady Mallinger, to whom going in procession up this country-dance with Grandcourt was a blazonment of herself as the infelicitous wife who had produced nothing but daughters, little better than no children, poor dear things, except for her own fondness and for Sir Hugo's wonderful goodness to them. But such inward discomfort could not prevent the gentle lady from looking fair and stout to admiration, or her full blue eyes from glancing mildly at her neighbors. All the mothers and fathers held it a thousand pities that she had not had a. fine boy, or even several - which might have been expected, to look at her when she was first married.

The gallery included only three sides of the quadrangle, the fourth being shut off as a lobby or corridor: one side was used for dancing, and the opposite side for the supper-table, while the intermediate part was less brilliantly lit, and fitted with comfortable seats. Later in the evening Gwendolen was in one of these seats, and Grandcourt was standing near her. They were not talking to each other: she was leaning backward in her chair, and he against the wall; and Deronda, happening to observe this, went up to ask her if she had resolved not to dance any more. Having himself been doing hard duty in this way among the guests, he thought he had earned the right to sink for a little while into the background, and he had spoken little to Gwendolen since their conversation at the piano the day before. Grandcourt's presence would only make it the easier to show that pleasure in talking to her even about trivialities which would be a sign of friendliness; and he fancied that her face looked blank. A smile beamed over it as she saw him coming, and she raised herself from her leaning posture. Grandcourt had been grumbling at the *ennui* of staying so long in this stupid dance, and proposing that they should vanish: she had resisted on the ground of politeness - not without

being a little frightened at the probability that he was silently, angry with her. She had her reason for staying, though she had begun to despair of the opportunity for the sake of which she had put the old necklace on her wrist. But now at last Deronda had come.

'Yes; I shall not dance any more. Are you not glad?' she said, with some gayety, 'you might have felt obliged humbly to offer yourself as a partner, and I feel sure you have danced more than you like already.'

'I will not deny that,' said Deronda, 'since you have danced as much as you like.'

'But will you take trouble for me in another way, and fetch me a glass of that fresh water?'

It was but a few steps that Deronda had to go for the water. Gwendolen was wrapped in the lightest, softest of white woolen burnouses, under which her hands were hidden. While he was gone she had drawn off her glove, which was finished with a lace ruffle, and when she put up her hand to take the glass and lifted it to her mouth, the necklace-bracelet, which in its triple winding adapted itself clumsily to her wrist, was necessarily conspicuous. Grandcourt saw it, and saw that it was attracting Deronda's notice.

'What is that hideous thing you have got on your wrist?' said the husband.

'That?' said Gwendolen, composedly, pointing to the turquoises, while she still held the glass; 'it is an old necklace I like to wear. I lost it once, and someone found it for me.'

With that she gave the glass again to Deronda, who immediately carried it away, and on returning said, in order to banish any consciousness about the necklace -

'It is worth while for you to go and look out at one of the windows on that side. You can see the finest possible moonlight on the stone pillars and carving, and shadows waving across it in the wind.'

'I should like to see it. Will you go?' said Gwendolen, looking up at her husband.

He cast his eyes down at her, and saying, 'No, Deronda will take you,' slowly moved from his leaning attitude, and walked away.

Gwendolen's face for a moment showed a fleeting vexation: she resented this show of indifference toward her. Deronda felt annoyed, chiefly for her sake; and with a quick sense, that it would relieve her

most to behave as if nothing peculiar had occurred, he said, 'Will you take my arm and go, while only servants are there?' He thought that he understood well her action in drawing his attention to the necklace: she wished him to infer that she had submitted her mind to rebuke - her speech and manner had from the first fluctuated toward that submission - and that she felt no lingering resentment. Her evident confidence in his interpretation of her appealed to him as a peculiar claim.

When they were walking together, Gwendolen felt as it the annoyance which had just happened had removed another film of reserve from between them, and she had more right than before to be as open as she wished. She did not speak, being filled with the sense of silent confidence, until they were in front of the window looking out on the moonlit court. A sort of bower had been made round the window, turning it into a recess. Quitting his arm, she folded her hands in her burnous, and pressed her brow against the glass. He moved slightly away, and held the lapels of his coat with his thumbs under the collar as his manner was: he had a wonderful power of standing perfectly still, and in that position reminded one sometimes of Dante's *spiriti magni con occhi tardi e gravi*. (Doubtless some of these danced in their youth, doubted of their own vocation, and found their own times too modern.) He abstained from remarking on the scene before them, fearing that any indifferent words might jar on her: already the calm light and shadow, the ancient steadfast forms, and aloofness enough from those inward troubles which he felt sure were agitating her. And he judged aright: she would have been impatient of polite conversation. The incidents of the last minute or two had receded behind former thoughts which she had imagined herself uttering to Deronda, which now urged themselves to her lips. In a subdued voice, she said -

'Suppose I had gambled again, and lost the necklace again, what should you have thought of me?'

'Worse than I do now.'

'Then you are mistaken about me. You wanted me not to do that - not to make my gain out of another's loss in that way - and I have done a great deal worse.'

'I can't imagine temptations,' said Deronda. 'Perhaps I am able to understand what you mean. At least I understand self-reproach.' In spite of preparation he was almost alarmed at Gwendolen's precipitancy of confidence toward him, in contrast with her habitual resolute concealment.

'What should you do if you were like me - feeling that you were wrong and miserable, and dreading everything to come?' It seemed that she was hurrying to make the utmost use of this opportunity to speak as she would.

'That is not to be amended by doing one thing only - but many,' said Deronda, decisively.

'What?' said Gwendolen, hastily, moving her brow from the glass and looking at him.

He looked full at her in return, with what she thought was severity. He felt that it was not a moment in which he must let himself be tender, and flinch from implying a hard opinion.

'I mean there are many thoughts and habits that may help us to bear inevitable sorrow. Multitudes have to bear it.'

She turned her brow to the window again, and said impatiently, 'You must tell me then what to think and what to do; else why did you not let me go on doing as I liked and not minding? If I had gone on gambling I might have won again, and I might have got not to care for anything else. You would not let me do that. Why shouldn't I do as I like, and not mind? Other people do.' Poor Gwendolen's speech expressed nothing very clearly except her irritation.

'I don't believe you would ever get not to mind,' said Deronda, with deep- toned decision. 'If it were true that baseness and cruelty made an escape from pain, what difference would that make to people who can't be quite base or cruel? Idiots escape some pain; but you can't be an idiot. Some may do wrong to another without remorse; but suppose one does feel remorse? I believe you could never lead an injurious life - all reckless lives are injurious, pestilential - without feeling remorse.' Deronda's unconscious fervor had gathered as he went on: he was uttering thoughts which he had used for himself in moments of painful meditation.

'Then tell me what better I can do,' said Gwendolen, insistently.

'Many things. Look on other lives besides your own. See what their troubles are, and how they are borne. Try to care about something in this vast world besides the gratification of small selfish desires. Try to care for what is best in thought and action - something that is good apart from the accidents of your own lot.'

For an instant or two Gwendolen was mute. Then, again moving her brow from the glass, she said -

'You mean that I am selfish and ignorant.'

He met her fixed look in silence before he answered firmly - 'You will not go on being selfish and ignorant!'

She did not turn away her glance or let her eyelids fall, but a change came over her face - that subtle change in nerve and muscle which will sometimes give a childlike expression even to the elderly: it is the subsidence of self-assertion.

'Shall I lead you back?' said Deronda, gently, turning and offering her his arm again. She took it silently, and in that way they came in sight of Grandcourt, who was walking slowly near their former place. Gwendolen went up to him and said, 'I am ready to go now. Mr Deronda will excuse us to Lady Mallinger.'

'Certainly,' said Deronda. 'Lord and Lady Pentreath disappeared some time ago.'

Grandcourt gave his arm in silent compliance, nodding over his shoulder to Deronda, and Gwendolen too only half turned to bow and say, 'Thanks.' The husband and wife left the gallery and paced the corridors in silence. When the door had closed on them in the boudoir, Grandcourt threw himself into a chair and said, with undertoned peremptoriness, 'Sit down.' She, already in the expectation of something unpleasant, had thrown off her burnous with nervous unconsciousness, and immediately obeyed. Turning his eyes toward her, he began -

'Oblige me in future by not showing whims like a mad woman in a play.'

'What do you mean?' said Gwendolen.

'I suppose there is some understanding between you and Deronda about that thing you have on your wrist. If you have anything to say to him, say it. But don't carry on a telegraphing which other people are supposed not to see. It's damnably vulgar.'

'You can know all about the necklace,' said Gwendolen, her angry pride resisting the nightmare of fear.

'I don't want to know. Keep to yourself whatever you like.' Grandcourt paused between each sentence, and in each his speech seemed to become more preternaturally distinct in its inward tones. 'What I care to know I shall know without your telling me. Only you will please to behave as becomes my wife. And not make a spectacle of yourself.'

‘Do you object to my talking to Mr Deronda?’

‘I don't care two straws about Deronda, or any other conceited hanger-on. You may talk to him as much as you like. He is not going to take my place. You are my wife. And you will either fill your place properly - to the world and to me - or you will go to the devil.’

‘I never intended anything but to fill my place properly,’ said Gwendolen, with bitterest mortification in her soul.

‘You put that thing on your wrist, and hid it from me till you wanted him to see it. Only fools go into that deaf and dumb talk, and think they're secret. You will understand that you are not to compromise yourself. Behave with dignity. That's all I have to say.’

With that last word Grandcourt rose, turned his back to the fire and looked down on her. She was mute. There was no reproach that she dared to fling back at him in return for these insulting admonitions, and the very reason she felt them to be insulting was that their purport went with the most absolute dictate of her pride. What she would least like to incur was the making a fool of herself and being compromised. It was futile and irrelevant to try and explain that Deronda too had only been a monitor - the strongest of all monitors. Grandcourt was contemptuous, not jealous; contemptuously certain of all the subjection he cared for. Why could she not rebel and defy him? She longed to do it. But she might as well have tried to defy the texture of her nerves and the palpitation of her heart. Her husband had a ghostly army at his back, that could close round her wherever she might turn. She sat in her splendid attire, like a white image of helplessness, and he seemed to gratify himself with looking at her. She could not even make a passionate exclamation, or throw up her arms, as she would have done in her maiden days. The sense of his scorn kept her still.

‘Shall I ring?’ he said, after what seemed to her a long while. She moved her head in assent, and after ringing he went to his dressing-room.

Certain words were gnawing within her. ‘The wrong you have done me will be your own curse.’ As he closed the door, the bitter tears rose, and the gnawing words provoked an answer: ‘Why did you put your fangs into me and not into him?’ It was uttered in a whisper, as the tears came up silently. But she immediately pressed her handkerchief against her eyes, and checked her tendency to sob.

The next day, recovered from the shuddering fit of this evening scene, she determined to use the charter which Grandcourt had scornfully given her, and to talk as much as she liked with Deronda; but no

opportunities occurred, and any little devices she could imagine for creating them were rejected by her pride, which was now doubly active. Not toward Deronda himself - she was singularly free from alarm lest he should think her openness wanting in dignity: it was part of his power over her that she believed him free from all misunderstanding as to the way in which she appealed to him; or rather, that he should misunderstand her had never entered into her mind. But the last morning came, and still she had never been able to take up the dropped thread of their talk, and she was without devices. She and Grandcourt were to leave at three o'clock. It was too irritating that after a walk in the grounds had been planned in Deronda's hearing, he did not present himself to join in it. Grandcourt was gone with Sir Hugo to King's Topping, to see the old manor-house; others of the gentlemen were shooting; she was condemned to go and see the decoy and the waterfowl, and everything else that she least wanted to see, with the ladies, with old Lord Pentreath and his anecdotes, with Mr Vandernoodt and his admiring manners. The irritation became too strong for her; without premeditation, she took advantage of the winding road to linger a little out of sight, and then set off back to the house, almost running when she was safe from observation. She entered by a side door, and the library was on her left hand; Deronda, she knew, was often there; why might she not turn in there as well as into any other room in the house? She had been taken there expressly to see the illuminated family tree, and other remarkable things - what more natural than that she should like to look in again? The thing most to be feared was that the room would be empty of Deronda, for the door was ajar. She pushed it gently, and looked round it. He was there, writing busily at a distant table, with his back toward the door (in fact, Sir Hugo had asked him to answer some constituents' letters which had become pressing). An enormous log fire, with the scent of Russia from the books, made the great room as warmly odorous as a private chapel in which the censors have been swinging. It seemed too daring to go in - too rude to speak and interrupt him; yet she went in on the noiseless carpet, and stood still for two or three minutes, till Deronda, having finished a letter, pushed it aside for signature, and threw himself back to consider whether there were anything else for him to do, or whether he could walk out for the chance of meeting the party which included Gwendolen, when he heard her voice saying, ‘ Mr Deronda.’

It was certainly startling. He rose hastily, turned round, and pushed away his chair with a strong expression of surprise.

‘Am I wrong to come in?’ said Gwendolen.

‘I thought you were far on your walk,’ said Deronda.

'I turned back,' said Gwendolen. 'Do you intend to go out again? I could join you now, if you would allow me.'

'No; I want to say something, and I can't stay long,' said Gwendolen, speaking quickly in a subdued tone, while she walked forward and rested her arms and muff on the back of the chair he had pushed away from him. 'I want to tell you that it is really so - I can't help feeling remorse for having injured others. That was what I meant when I said that I had done worse than gamble again and pawn the necklace again - something more injurious, as you called it. And I can't alter it. I am punished, but I can't alter it. You said I could do many things. Tell me again. What should you do - what should you feel if you were in my place?'

The hurried directness with which she spoke - the absence of all her little airs, as if she were only concerned to use the time in getting an answer that would guide her, made her appeal unspeakably touching.

Deronda said, - 'I should feel something of what you feel - deep sorrow.'

'But what would you try to do?' said Gwendolen, with urgent quickness.

'Order my life so as to make any possible amends, and keep away from doing any sort of injury again,' said Deronda, catching her sense that the time for speech was brief.

'But I can't - I can't; I must go on,' said Gwendolen, in a passionate loud whisper. 'I have thrust out others - I have made my gain out of their loss - tried to make it - tried. And I must go on. I can't alter it.'

It was impossible to answer this instantaneously. Her words had confirmed his conjecture, and the situation of all concerned rose in swift images before him. His feeling for those who had been thrust out sanctioned her remorse; he could not try to nullify it, yet his heart was full of pity for her. But as soon as he could he answered - taking up her last words -

'That is the bitterest of all - to wear the yoke of our own wrong-doing. But if you submitted to that as men submit to maiming or life-long incurable disease? - and made the unalterable wrong a reason for more effort toward a good, that may do something to counterbalance the evil? One who has committed irremediable errors may be scourged by that consciousness into a higher course than is common. There are many examples. Feeling what it is to have spoiled one life may well make us long to save other lives from being spoiled.'

'But you have not wronged any one, or spoiled their lives,' said Gwendolen, hastily. 'It is only others who have wronged *you*.'

Deronda colored slightly, but said immediately - 'I suppose our keen feeling for ourselves might end in giving us a keen feeling for others, if, when we are suffering acutely, we were to consider that others go through the same sharp experience. That is a sort of remorse before commission. Can't you understand that?'

'I think I do - now,' said Gwendolen. 'But you were right - I *am* selfish. I have never thought much of any one's feelings, except my mother's. I have not been fond of people. But what can I do?' she went on, more quickly. 'I must get up in the morning and do what every one else does. It is all like a dance set beforehand. I seem to see all that can be - and I am tired and sick of it. And the world is all confusion to me' - she made a gesture of disgust. 'You say I am ignorant. But what is the good of trying to know more, unless life were worth more?'

'This good,' said Deronda promptly, with a touch of indignant severity, which he was inclined to encourage as his own safeguard; 'life *would* be worth more to you: some real knowledge would give you an interest in the world beyond the small drama of personal desires. It is the curse of your life - forgive me - of so many lives, that all passion is spent in that narrow round, for want of ideas and sympathies to make a larger home for it. Is there any single occupation of mind that you care about with passionate delight or even independent interest?'

Deronda paused, but Gwendolen, looking startled and thrilled as by an electric shock, said nothing, and he went on more insistently -

'I take what you said of music for a small example - it answers for all larger things - you will not cultivate it for the sake of a private joy in it. What sort of earth or heaven would hold any spiritual wealth in it for souls pauperized by inaction? If one firmament has no stimulus for our attention and awe, I don't see how four would have it. We should stamp every possible world with the flatness of our own inanity - which is necessarily impious, without faith or fellowship. The refuge you are needing from personal trouble is the higher, the religious life, which holds an enthusiasm for something more than our own appetites and vanities. The few may find themselves in it simply by an elevation of feeling; but for us who have to struggle for our wisdom, the higher life must be a region in which the affections are clad with knowledge.'

The half-indignant remonstrance that vibrated in Deronda's voice came, as often happens, from the habit of inward argument with himself rather than from severity toward Gwendolen: but it had a more beneficial effect on her than any soothings. Nothing is feebler

than the indolent rebellion of complaint; and to be roused into self-judgment is comparative activity. For the moment she felt like a shaken child - shaken out of its wailing into awe, and she said humbly -

'I will try. I will think.'

They both stood silent for a minute, as if some third presence had arrested them, - for Deronda, too, was under that sense of pressure which is apt to come when our own winged words seem to be hovering around us, - till Gwendolen began again -

'You said affection was the best thing, and I have hardly any - none about me. If I could, I would have mamma; but that is impossible. Things have changed to me so - in such a short time. What I used not to like I long for now. I think I am almost getting fond of the old things now they are gone.' Her lip trembled.

'Take the present suffering as a painful letting in of light,' said Deronda, more gently. 'You are conscious of more beyond the round of your own inclinations - you know more of the way in which your life presses on others, and their life on yours. I don't think you could have escaped the painful process in some form or other.'

'But it is a very cruel form,' said Gwendolen, beating her foot on the ground with returning agitation. 'I am frightened at everything. I am frightened at myself. When my blood is fired I can do daring things - take any leap; but that makes me frightened at myself.' She was looking at nothing outside her; but her eyes were directed toward the window, away from Deronda, who, with quick comprehension said -

'Turn your fear into a safeguard. Keep your dread fixed on the idea of increasing that remorse which is so bitter to you. Fixed meditation may do a great deal toward defining our longing or dread. We are not always in a state of strong emotion, and when we are calm we can use our memories and gradually change the bias of our fear, as we do our tastes. Take your fear as a safeguard. It is like quickness of hearing. It may make consequences passionately present to you. Try to take hold of your sensibility, and use it as if it were a faculty, like vision.' Deronda uttered each sentence more urgently; he felt as if he were seizing a faint chance of rescuing her from some indefinite danger.

'Yes, I know; I understand what you mean,' said Gwendolen in her loud whisper, not turning her eyes, but lifting up her small gloved hand and waving it in deprecation of the notion that it was easy to obey that advice. 'But if feelings rose - there are some feelings - hatred and anger - how can I be good when they keep rising? And if there came a moment when I felt stifled and could bear it no longer - - ' She

broke off, and with agitated lips looked at Deronda, but the expression on his face pierced her with an entirely new feeling. He was under the baffling difficulty of discerning, that what he had been urging on her was thrown into the pallid distance of mere thought before the outburst of her habitual emotion. It was as if he saw her drowning while his limbs were bound. The pained compassion which was spread over his features as he watched her, affected her with a compunction unlike any she had felt before, and in a changed and imploring tone she said -

'I am grieving you. I am ungrateful. You *can* help me. I will think of everything. I will try. Tell me - it will not be a pain to you that I have dared to speak of my trouble to you? You began it, you know, when you rebuked me.' There was a melancholy smile on her lips as she said that, but she added more entreatingly, 'It will not be a pain to you?'

'Not if it does anything to save you from an evil to come,' said Deronda, with strong emphasis; 'otherwise, it will be a lasting pain.'

'No - no - it shall not be. It may be - it shall be better with me because I have known you.' She turned immediately, and quitted the room.

When she was on the first landing of the staircase, Sir Hugo passed across the hall on his way to the library, and saw her. Grandcourt was not with him.

Deronda, when the baronet entered, was standing in his ordinary attitude, grasping his coat-collar, with his back to the table, and with that indefinable expression by which we judge that a man is still in the shadow of a scene which he has just gone through. He moved, however, and began to arrange the letters.

'Has Mrs. Grandcourt been in here?' said Sir Hugo.

'Yes, she has.'

'Where are the others?'

'I believe she left them somewhere in the grounds.'

After a moment's silence, in which Sir Hugo looked at a letter without reading it, he said 'I hope you are not playing with fire, Dan - you understand me?'

'I believe I do, sir,' said Deronda, after a slight hesitation, which had some repressed anger in it. 'But there is nothing answering to your metaphor - no fire, and therefore no chance of scorching.'

Sir Hugo looked searchingly at him, and then said, ‘So much the better. For, between ourselves, I fancy there may be some hidden gunpowder in that establishment.’