

CHAPTER XV

ONLY GOOD-NIGHT

Five more days passed, all too quickly, and once more Monday came round. It was the 22nd of October, and the Michaelmas Sittings began on the 24th. On the morrow, Tuesday, Geoffrey was to return to London, there to meet Lady Honoria and get to work at Chambers. That very morning, indeed, a brief, the biggest he had yet received--it was marked thirty guineas--had been forwarded to him from his chambers, with a note from his clerk to the effect that the case was expected to be in the special jury list on the first day of the sittings, and that the clerk had made an appointment for him with the solicitors for 5.15 on the Tuesday. The brief was sent to him by his uncle's firm, and marked, "With you the Attorney-General, and Mr. Candleton, Q.C.," the well-known leader of the Probate and Divorce Court Bar. Never before had Geoffrey found himself in such honourable company, that is on the back of a brief, and not a little was he elated thereby.

But when he came to look into the case his joy abated somewhat, for it was one of the most perplexing that he had ever known. The will contested, which was that of a Yorkshire money-lender, disposed of property to the value of over £80,000, and was propounded by a niece of the testator who, when he died, if not actually weak in his mind, was in his dotage, and superstitious to the verge of insanity. The niece to whom all the property was left--to the exclusion of the son and daughter

of the deceased, both married, and living away from home--stayed with the testator and looked after him. Shortly before his death, however, he and this niece had violently quarrelled on account of an intimacy which the latter had formed with a married man of bad repute, who was a discharged lawyer's clerk. So serious had been the quarrel that only three days before his death the testator had sent for a lawyer and formally, by means of a codicil, deprived the niece of a sum of £2,000 which he had left her, all the rest of his property being divided between his son and daughter. Three days afterwards, however, he duly executed a fresh will, in the presence of two servants, by which he left all his property to the niece, to the entire exclusion of his own children. This will, though very short, was in proper form and was written by nobody knew whom. The servants stated that the testator before signing it was perfectly acquainted with its contents, for the niece had made him repeat them in their presence. They also declared, however, that he seemed in a terrible fright, and said twice, "It's behind me; it's behind me!"

Within an hour of the signing of the will the testator was found dead, apparently from the effects of fear, but the niece was not in the room at the time of death. The only other remarkable circumstance in the case was that the disreputable lover of the niece had been seen hanging about the house at dusk, the testator having died at ten o'clock at night. There was also a further fact. The son, on receiving a message from the niece that his father was seriously worse, had hurried with extraordinary speed to the house, passing some one or something--he

could not tell what--that seemed to be running, apparently from the window of the sick man's room, which was on the ground floor, and beneath which footmarks were afterwards found. Of these footmarks two casts had been taken, of which photographs were forwarded with the brief. They had been made by naked feet of small size, and in each case the little joint of the third toe of the right foot seemed to be missing. But all attempts to find the feet that made them had hitherto failed. The will was contested by the next of kin, for whom Geoffrey was one of the counsel, upon the usual grounds of undue influence and fraud; but as it seemed at present with small prospect of success, for, though the circumstances were superstitious enough, there was not the slightest evidence of either. This curious case, of which the outlines are here written, is briefly set out, because it proved to be the foundation of Geoffrey's enormous practice and reputation at the Bar.

He read the brief through twice, thought it over well, and could make little of it. It was perfectly obvious to him that there had been foul play somewhere, but he found himself quite unable to form a workable hypothesis. Was the person who had been seen running away concerned in the matter?--if it was a person. If so, was he the author of the footprints? Of course the ex-lawyer's clerk had something to do with it, but what? In vain did Geoffrey cudgel his brains; every idea that occurred to him broke down somewhere or other.

"We shall lose this," he said aloud in despair; "suspicious circumstances are not enough to upset a will," and then, addressing

Beatrice, who was sitting at the table, working:

"Here, Miss Granger, you have a smattering of law, see if you can make anything of this," and he pushed the heavy brief towards her.

Beatrice took it with a laugh, and for the next three-quarters of an hour her fair brow was puckered up in a way quaint to see. At last she finished and shut the brief up. "Let me look at the photographs," she said.

Geoffrey handed them to her. She very carefully examined first one and then the other, and as she did so a light of intelligence broke out upon her face.

"Well, Portia, have you got it?" he asked.

"I have got something," she answered. "I do not know if it is right. Don't you see, the old man was superstitious; they frightened him first of all by a ghostly voice or some such thing into signing the will, and then to death after he had signed it. The lawyer's clerk prepared the will--he would know how to do it. Then he was smuggled into the room under the bed, or somewhere, dressed up as a ghost perhaps. The sending for the son by the niece was a blind. The thing that was seen running away was a boy--those footprints were made by a boy. I have seen so many thousands on the sands here that I could swear to it. He was attracted to the house from the road, which was quite near, by catching sight

of something unusual through the blind; the brief says there were no curtains or shutters. Now look at the photographs of the footprints. See in No. 1, found outside the window, the toes are pressed down deeply into the mud. The owner of the feet was standing on tip-toe to get a better view. But in No. 2, which was found near where the son thought he saw a person running, the toes are spread out quite wide. That is the footprint of some one who was in a great hurry. Now it is not probable that a boy had anything to do with the testator's death. Why, then, was the boy running so hard? I will tell you: because he was frightened at something he had seen through the blind. So frightened was he, that he will not come forward, or answer the advertisements and inquiries. Find a boy in that town who has a joint missing on the third toe of the right foot, and you will soon know all about it."

"By Jove," said Geoffrey, "what a criminal lawyer you would make! I believe that you have got it. But how are we to find this boy with the missing toe-joint? Every possible inquiry has already been made and failed. Nobody has seen such a boy, whose deficiency would probably be known by his parents, or schoolfellows."

"Yes," said Beatrice, "it has failed because the boy has taken to wearing shoes, which indeed he would always have to do at school. His parents, if he has any, would perhaps not speak of his disfigurement, and no one else might know of it, especially if he were a new-comer in the neighbourhood. It is quite possible that he took off his boots in order to creep up to the window. And now I will tell you how I should

set to work to find him. I should have every bathing-place in the river running through the town--there is a river--carefully watched by detectives. In this weather" (the autumn was an unusually warm one) "boys of that class often paddle and sometimes bathe. If they watch close enough, they will probably find a boy with a missing toe joint among the number."

"What a good idea," said Geoffrey. "I will telegraph to the lawyers at once. I certainly believe that you have got the clue."

And as it turned out afterwards Beatrice had got it; her suppositions were right in almost every particular. The boy, who proved to be the son of a pedlar who had recently come into the town, was found wading, and by a clever trick, which need not be detailed, frightened into telling the truth, as he had previously frightened himself into holding his tongue. He had even, as Beatrice conjectured, taken off his boots to creep up to the window, and as he ran away in his fright, had dropped them into a ditch full of water. There they were found, and went far to convince the jury of the truth of his story. Thus it was that Beatrice's quick wit laid the foundations of Geoffrey's great success.

This particular Monday was a field day at the Vicarage. Jones had proved obdurate; no power on earth could induce him to pay the £34 11s. 4d. due on account of tithe. Therefore Mr. Granger, fortified by a judgment duly

obtained, had announced his intention of distraining upon Jones's hay and cattle. Jones had replied with insolent defiance. If any bailiff, or auctioneer, or such people came to sell his hay he would kill him, or them.

So said Jones, and summoned his supporters, many of whom owed tithe, and

none of whom wished to pay it, to do battle in his cause. For his part, Mr. Granger retained an auctioneer of undoubted courage who was to arrive on this very afternoon, supported by six policemen, and carry out the sale. Beatrice felt nervous about the whole thing, but Elizabeth was very determined, and the old clergyman was now bombastic and now despondent. The auctioneer arrived duly by the one o'clock train. He was a tall able-bodied man, not unlike Geoffrey in appearance, indeed at twenty yards distance it would have been difficult to tell them apart. The sale was fixed for half-past two, and Mr. Johnson--that was the auctioneer's name--went to the inn to get his dinner before proceeding to business. He was informed of the hostile demonstration which awaited him, and that an English member of Parliament had been sent down especially to head the mob, but being a man of mettle pooh-poohed the whole affair.

"All bark, sir," he said to Geoffrey, "all bark and no bite; I'm not afraid of these people. Why, if they won't bid for the stuff, I will buy it in myself."

"All right," said Geoffrey, "but I advise you to look out. I fancy that the old man is a rough customer."

Then Geoffrey went back to his dinner.

As they sat at the meal, through a gap in the fir trees they saw that the great majority of the population of Bryngelly was streaming up towards the scene of the sale, some to agitate, and some to see the fun.

"It is pretty well time to be off," said Geoffrey. "Are you coming, Mr. Granger?"

"Well," answered the old gentleman, "I wished to do so, but Elizabeth thinks that I had better keep away. And after all, you know," he added airily, "perhaps it is as well for a clergyman not to mix himself up too much in these temporal matters. No, I want to go and see about some pigs at the other end of the parish, and I think that I shall take this opportunity."

"You are not going, Mr. Bingham, are you?" asked Beatrice in a voice which betrayed her anxiety.

"Oh, yes," he answered, "of course I am. I would not miss the chance for worlds. Why, Beecham Bones is going to be there, the member of Parliament who has just done his four months for inciting to outrage. We are old friends; I was at school with him. Poor fellow, he was mad even

in those days, and I want to chaff him."

"I think that you had far better not go, Mr. Bingham," said Beatrice; "they are a very rough set."

"Everybody is not so cowardly as you are," put in Elizabeth. "I am going at any rate."

"That's right, Miss Elizabeth," said Geoffrey; "we will protect each other from the revolutionary fury of the mob. Come, it is time to start."

And so they went, leaving Beatrice a prey to melancholy forebodings.

She waited in the house for the best part of an hour, making pretence to play with Effie. Then her anxiety got the better of her; she put on her hat and started, leaving Effie in charge of the servant Betty.

Beatrice walked quickly along the cliff till she came in sight of Jones's farm. From where she stood she could make out a great crowd of men, and even, when the wind turned towards her, catch the noise of shouting. Presently she heard a sound like the report of a gun, saw the crowd break up in violent confusion, and then cluster together again in a dense mass.

"What could it mean?" Beatrice wondered.

As the thought crossed her mind, she perceived two men running towards her with all their speed, followed by a woman. Three minutes more and she saw that the woman was Elizabeth.

The men were passing her now.

"What is it?" she cried.

"Murder!" they answered with one voice, and sped on towards Bryngelly.

Another moment and Elizabeth was at hand, horror written on her pale face.

Beatrice clutched at her. "Who is it?" she cried.

"Mr. Bingham," gasped her sister. "Go and help; he's shot dead!" And she too was gone.

Beatrice's knees loosened, her tongue clave to the roof of her mouth; the solid earth spun round and round. "Geoffrey killed! Geoffrey killed!" she cried in her heart; but though her ears seemed to hear the sound of them, no words came from her lips. "Oh, what should she do? Where should she hide herself in her grief?"

A few yards from the path grew a stunted tree with a large flat stone

at its root. Thither Beatrice staggered and sank upon the stone, while still the solid earth spun round and round.

Presently her mind cleared a little, and a keener pang of pain shot through her soul. She had been stunned at first, now she felt.

"Perhaps it was not true; perhaps Elizabeth had been mistaken or had only said it to torment her." She rose. She flung herself upon her knees, there by the stone, and prayed, this first time for many years--she prayed with all her soul. "Oh, God, if Thou art, spare him his life and me this agony." In her dreadful pangs of grief her faith was thus re-born, and, as all human beings must in their hour of mortal agony, Beatrice realised her dependence on the Unseen. She rose, and weak with emotion sank back on to the stone. The people were streaming past her now, talking excitedly. Somebody came up to her and stood over her.

Oh, Heaven, it was Geoffrey!

"Is it you?" she gasped. "Elizabeth said that you were murdered."

"No, no. It was not I; it is that poor fellow Johnson, the auctioneer. Jones shot him. I was standing next him. I suppose your sister thought that I fell. He was not unlike me, poor fellow."

Beatrice looked at him, went red, went white, then burst into a flood of

tears.

A strange pang seized upon his heart. It thrilled through him, shaking him to the core. Why was this woman so deeply moved? Could it be----? Nonsense; he stifled the thought before it was born.

"Don't cry," Geoffrey said, "the people will see you, Beatrice" (for the first time he called her by her christian name); "pray do not cry. It distresses me. You are upset, and no wonder. That fellow Beecham Bones ought to be hanged, and I told him so. It is his work, though he never meant it to go so far. He's frightened enough now, I can tell you."

Beatrice controlled herself with an effort.

"What happened," he said, "I will tell you as we walk along. No, don't go up to the farm. He is not a pleasant sight, poor fellow. When I got up there, Beecham Bones was spouting away to the mob--his long hair flying about his back--exciting them to resist laws made by brutal thieving landlords, and all that kind of gibberish; telling them that they would be supported by a great party in Parliament, &c., &c. The people, however, took it all good-naturedly enough. They had a beautiful effigy of your father swinging on a pole, with a placard on his breast, on which was written, 'The robber of the widow and the orphan,' and they were singing Welsh songs. Only I saw Jones, who was more than half drunk, cursing and swearing in Welsh and English. When the auctioneer began to sell, Jones went into the house and Bones went with him.

After enough had been sold to pay the debt, and while the mob was still laughing and shouting, suddenly the back door of the house opened and out rushed Jones, now quite drunk, a gun in his hand and Bones hanging on to his coat-tails. I was talking to the auctioneer at the moment, and my belief is that the brute thought that I was Johnson. At any rate, before anything could be done he lifted the gun and fired, at me, as I think. The charge, however, passed my head and hit poor Johnson full in the face, killing him dead. That is all the story."

"And quite enough, too," said Beatrice with a shudder. "What times we live in! I feel quite sick."

Supper that night was a very melancholy affair. Old Mr. Granger was altogether thrown off his balance; and even Elizabeth's iron nerves were shaken.

"It could not be worse, it could not be worse," moaned the old man, rising from the table and walking up and down the room.

"Nonsense, father," said Elizabeth the practical. "He might have been shot before he had sold the hay, and then you would not have got your tithe."

Geoffrey could not help smiling at this way of looking at things, from which, however, Mr. Granger seemed to draw a little comfort. From constantly thinking about it, and the daily pressure of necessity, money

had come to be more to the old man than anything else in the world.

Hardly was the meal done when three reporters arrived and took down Geoffrey's statement of what had occurred, for publication in various papers, while Beatrice went away to see about packing Effie's things. They were to start by a train leaving for London at half-past eight on the following morning. When Beatrice came back it was half-past ten, and in his irritation of mind Mr. Granger insisted upon everybody going to bed. Elizabeth shook hands with Geoffrey, congratulating him on his escape as she did so, and went at once; but Beatrice lingered a little. At last she came forward and held out her hand.

"Good-night, Mr. Bingham," she said.

"Good-night. I hope that this is not good-bye also," he added with some anxiety.

"Of course not," broke in Mr. Granger. "Beatrice will go and see you off. I can't; I have to go and meet the coroner about the inquest, and Elizabeth is always busy in the house. Luckily they won't want you; there were so many witnesses."

"Then it is only good-night," said Beatrice.

She went to her room. Elizabeth, who shared it, was already asleep, or pretending to be asleep. Then Beatrice undressed and got into bed, but

rest she could not. It was "only good-night," a last good-night. He was going away--back to his wife, back to the great rushing world, and to the life in which she had no share. Very soon he would forget her. Other interests would arise, other women would become his friends, and he would forget the Welsh girl who had attracted him for a while, or remember her only as the companion of a rough adventure. What did it mean? Why was her heart so sore? Why had she felt as though she should die when they told her that he was dead?

Then the answer rose in her breast. She loved him; it was useless to deny the truth--she loved him body, and heart and soul, with all her mind and all her strength. She was his, and his alone--to-day, to-morrow, and for ever. He might go from her sight, she might never, never see him more, but love him she always must. And he was married!

Well, it was her misfortune; it could not affect the solemn truth.

What should she do now, how should she endure her life when her eyes no longer saw his eyes, and her ears never heard his voice? She saw the future stretch itself before her as a vision. She saw herself forgotten by this man whom she loved, or from time to time remembered only with a faint regret. She saw herself growing slowly old, her beauty fading yearly from her face and form, companioned only by the love that grows not old. Oh, it was bitter, bitter! and yet she would not have it otherwise. Even in her pain she felt it better to have found this deep and ruinous joy, to have wrestled with the Angel and been worsted, than never to have looked upon his face. If she could only know that what she

gave was given back again, that he loved her as she loved him, she would be content. She was innocent, she had never tried to draw him to her; she had used no touch or look, no woman's arts or lures such as her beauty placed at her command. There had been no word spoken, scarcely a meaning glance had passed between them, nothing but frank and free companionship as of man with man. She knew he did not love his wife and that his wife did not love him--this she could see. But she had never tried to win him from her, and though she sinned in thought, though her heart was guilty--oh, her hands were clean!

Her restlessness overcame her. She could no longer lie in bed.

Elizabeth, watching through her veil of sleep, saw Beatrice rise, put on a wrapper, and, going to the window, throw it wide. At first she thought of interfering, for Elizabeth was a prudent person and did not like draughts; but her sister's movements excited her curiosity, and she refrained. Beatrice sat down on the foot of her bed, and leaning her arm upon the window-sill looked out upon the lovely quiet night. How dark the pine trees massed against the sky; how soft was the whisper of the sea, and how vast the heaven through which the stars sailed on.

What was it, then, this love of hers? Was it mere earthly passion? No, it was more. It was something grander, purer, deeper, and quite undying. Whence came it, then? If she was, as she had thought, only a child of earth, whence came this deep desire which was not of the earth? Had she been wrong, had she a soul--something that could love with the body and through the body and beyond the body--something of which the body with

its yearnings was but the envelope, the hand or instrument? Oh, now it seemed to Beatrice that this was so, and that called into being by her love she and her soul stood face to face acknowledging their unity. Once she had held that it was phantasy: that such spiritual hopes were but exhalations from a heart unsatisfied; that when love escapes us on the earth, in our despair, we swear it is immortal, and that we shall find it in the heavens. Now Beatrice believed this no more. Love had kissed her on the eyes, and at his kiss her sleeping spirit was awakened, and she saw a vision of the truth.

Yes, she loved him, and must always love him! But she could never know on earth that he was hers, and if she had a spirit to be freed after some few years, would not his spirit have forgotten hers in that far hereafter of their meeting?

She dropped her brow upon her arm and softly sobbed. What was there left for her to do except to sob--till her heart broke?

Elizabeth, lying with wide-open ears, heard the sobs. Elizabeth, peering through the moonlight, saw her sister's form tremble in the convulsion of her sorrow, and smiled a smile of malice.

"The thing is done," she thought; "she cries because the man is going. Don't cry, Beatrice, don't cry! We will get your plaything back for you. Oh, with such a bait it will be easy. He is as sweet on you as you on him."

There was something evil, something almost devilish, in this scene of the one watching woman holding a clue to and enjoying the secret tortures of the other, plotting the while to turn them to her innocent rival's destruction and her own advantage. Elizabeth's jealousy was indeed bitter as the grave.

Suddenly Beatrice ceased sobbing. She lifted her head, and by a sudden impulse threw out the passion of her heart with all her concentrated strength of mind towards the man she loved, murmuring as she did so some passionate, despairing words which she knew.

At this moment Geoffrey, sleeping soundly, dreamed that he saw Beatrice seated by her window and looking at him with eyes which no earthly obstacle could blind. She was speaking; her lips moved, but though he could hear no voice the words she spoke floated into his mind--

"Be a god and hold me

With a charm!

Be a man and fold me

With thine arm.

Teach me, only teach, Love!

As I ought

I will speak thy speech, Love,

Think thy thought--

Meet, if thou require it,
Both demands,
Laying flesh and spirit
In thy hands.

That shall be to-morrow
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight.

Must a little weep, Love,
(Foolish me!)
And so fall asleep, Love,
Loved by thee."

Geoffrey heard them in his heart. Then they were gone, the vision of Beatrice was gone, and suddenly he awoke.

Oh, what was this flood of inarticulate, passion-laden thought that beat upon his brain telling of Beatrice? Wave after wave it came, utterly overwhelming him, like the heavy breath of flowers stirred by a night wind--like a message from another world. It was real; it was no dream, no fancy; she was present with him though she was not there; her thought mingled with his thought, her being beat upon his own. His heart throbbed, his limbs trembled, he strove to understand and could not. But

in the mystery of that dread communion, the passion he had trodden down and refused acknowledgment took life and form within him; it grew like the Indian's magic tree, from seed to blade, from blade to bud, and from bud to bloom. In that moment it became clear to him: he knew he loved her, and knowing what such a love must mean, for him if not for her, Geoffrey sank back and groaned.

And Beatrice? Of a sudden she ceased speaking to herself; she felt her thought flung back to her weighted with another's thought. She had broken through the barriers of earth; the quick electric message of her heart had found a path to him she loved and come back answered. But in what tongue was that answer writ? Alas! she could not read it, any more than he could read the message. At first she doubted; surely it was imagination. Then she remembered it was absolutely proved that people dying could send a vision of themselves to others far away; and if that could be, why not this? No, it was truth, a solemn truth; she knew he felt her thought, she knew that his life beat upon her life. Oh, here was mystery, and here was hope, for if this could be, and it was, what might not be? If her blind strength of human love could so overstep the boundaries of human power, and, by the sheer might of its volition, mock the physical barriers that hemmed her in, what had she to fear from distance, from separation, ay, from death itself? She had grasped a clue which might one day, before the seeming end or after--what did it matter?--lay strange secrets open to her gaze. She had heard a whisper in an unknown tongue that could still be learned, answering Life's agonizing cry with a song of glory. If only he loved her, some day all

would be well. Some day the barriers would fall. Crumbling with the flesh, they would fall and set her naked spirit free to seek its other self. And then, having found her love, what more was there to seek? What other answer did she desire to all the problems of her life than this of Unity attained at last--Unity attained in Death!

And if he did not love her, how could he answer her? Surely that message could not pass except along the golden chord of love, which ever makes its sweetest music when Pain strikes it with a hand of fear.

The troubled glory passed--it throbbed itself away; the spiritual gusts of thought grew continually fainter, till, like the echoes of a dying harp, like the breath of a falling gale, they slowly sank to nothingness. Then wearied with an extreme of wild emotion Beatrice sought her bed again and presently was lost in sleep.

When Geoffrey woke on the next morning, after a little reflection, he came to the decision that he had experienced a very curious and moving dream, consequent on the exciting events of the previous day, or on the pain of his impending departure. He rose, packed his bag--everything else was ready--and went in to breakfast. Beatrice did not appear till it was half over. She looked very pale, and said that she had been packing Effie's things. Geoffrey noticed that she barely touched his fingers when he rose to shake hands with her, and that she studiously

avoided his glance. Then he began to wonder if she also had strangely dreamed.

Next came the bustle of departure. Effie was despatched in the fly with the luggage and Betty, the fat Welsh servant, to look after her. Beatrice and Geoffrey were to walk to the station.

"Time for you to be going, Mr. Bingham," said Mr. Granger. "There, good-bye, good-bye! God bless you! Never had such charming lodgers before. Hope you will come back again, I'm sure. By the way, they are certain to summon you as a witness at the trial of that villain Jones."

"Good-bye, Mr. Granger," Geoffrey answered; "you must come and see me in town. A change will do you good."

"Well, perhaps I may. I have not had a change for twenty-five years. Never could afford it. Aren't you going to say good-bye to Elizabeth?"

"Good-bye, Miss Granger," said Geoffrey politely. "Many thanks for all your kindness. I hope we shall meet again."

"Do you?" answered Elizabeth; "so do I. I am sure that we shall meet again, and I am sure that I shall be glad to see you when we do, Mr. Bingham," she added darkly.

In another minute he had left the Vicarage and, with Beatrice at his

side, was walking smartly towards the station.

"This is very melancholy," he said, after a few moments' silence.

"Going away generally is," she answered--"either for those who go or those who stay behind," she added.

"Or for both," he said.

Then came another pause; he broke it.

"Miss Beatrice, may I write to you?"

"Certainly, if you like."

"And will you answer my letters?"

"Yes, I will answer them."

"If I had my way, then, you should spend a good deal of your time in writing," he said. "You don't know," he added earnestly, "what a delight it has been to me to learn to know you. I have had no greater pleasure in my life."

"I am glad," Beatrice answered shortly.

"By the way," Geoffrey said presently, "there is something I want to ask you. You are as good as a reference book for quotations, you know. Some lines have been haunting me for the last twelve hours, and I cannot remember where they come from."

"What are they?" she asked, looking up, and Geoffrey saw, or thought he saw, a strange fear shining in her eyes.

"Here are four of them," he answered unconcernedly; "we have no time for long quotations:

"That shall be to-morrow,
Not to-night:
I must bury sorrow
Out of sight."

Beatrice heard--heard the very lines which had been upon her lips in the wild midnight that had gone. Her heart seemed to stop; she became white as the dead, stumbled, and nearly fell. With a supreme effort she recovered herself.

"I think that you must know the lines, Mr. Bingham," she said in a low voice. "They come from a poem of Browning's, called 'A Woman's Last Word.'"

Geoffrey made no answer; what was he to say? For a while they walked

on in silence. They were getting close to the station now. Separation, perhaps for ever, was very near. An overmastering desire to know the truth took hold of him.

"Miss Beatrice," he said again, "you look pale. Did you sleep well last night?"

"No, Mr. Bingham."

"Did you have curious dreams?"

"Yes, I did," she answered, looking straight before her.

He turned a shade paler. Then it was true!

"Beatrice," he said in a half whisper, "what do they mean?"

"As much as anything else, or as little," she answered.

"What are people to do who dream such dreams?" he said again, in the same constrained voice.

"Forget them," she whispered.

"And if they come back?"

"Forget them again."

"And if they will not be forgotten?"

She turned and looked him full in the eyes.

"Die of them," she said; "then they will be forgotten, or----"

"Or what, Beatrice?"

"Here is the station," said Beatrice, "and Betty is quarrelling with the flyman."

Five minutes more and Geoffrey was gone.