He had not paced behind the firs more than ten minutes when Ethelberta appeared from the opposite side. At great inconvenience to herself, she had complied with his request.

Ethelberta was trembling. She took her brother's hand, and said, 'Is father, then, gone?'

'Yes,' said Sol. 'I should have been gone likewise, but I thought you wanted to see me.'

'Of course I did, and him too. Why did you come so mysteriously, and, I must say, unbecomingly? I am afraid I did wrong in not informing you of my intention.'

'To yourself you may have. Father would have liked a word with you before--you did it.'

'You both looked so forbidding that I did not like to stop the carriage when we passed you. I want to see him on an important matter--his leaving Mrs. Doncastle's service at once. I am going to write and beg her to dispense with a notice, which I have no doubt she will do.'

'He's very much upset about you.'

'My secrecy was perhaps an error of judgment,' she said sadly. 'But I had reasons. Why did you and my father come here at all if you did not want to see me?'

'We did want to see you up to a certain time.'

'You did not come to prevent my marriage?'

'We wished to see you before the marriage--I can't say more.'

'I thought you might not approve of what I had done,' said Ethelberta mournfully. 'But a time may come when you will approve.'

'Never.'

'Don't be harsh, Sol. A coronet covers a multitude of sins.'

'A coronet: good Lord--and you my sister! Look at my hand.' Sol extended his hand. 'Look how my thumb stands out at the root, as if it were out of joint, and that hard place inside there. Did you ever see anything so ugly as that hand--a misshaped monster, isn't he? That comes from the jackplane, and my pushing against it day after day and year after year. If I were found drowned or buried, dressed or undressed, in fustian or in broadcloth, folk would look at my hand and say, "That man's a carpenter." Well now, how can a man, branded with work as I be, be

brother to a viscountess without something being wrong? Of course there's something wrong in it, or he wouldn't have married you--something which won't be righted without terrible suffering.'

'No, no,' said she. 'You are mistaken. There is no such wonderful quality in a title in these days. What I really am is second wife to a quiet old country nobleman, who has given up society. What more commonplace? My life will be as simple, even more simple, than it was before.'

'Berta, you have worked to false lines. A creeping up among the useless lumber of our nation that'll be the first to burn if there comes a flare. I never see such a deserter of your own lot as you be! But you were always like it, Berta, and I am ashamed of ye. More than that, a good woman never marries twice.'

'You are too hard, Sol,' said the poor viscountess, almost crying. 'I've done it all for you! Even if I have made a mistake, and given my ambition an ignoble turn, don't tell me so now, or you may do more harm in a minute than you will cure in a lifetime. It is absurd to let republican passions so blind you to fact. A family which can be honourably traced through history for five hundred years, does affect the heart of a person not entirely hardened against romance. Whether you like the peerage or no, they appeal to our historical sense and love of old associations.'

'I don't care for history. Prophecy is the only thing can do poor men any good. When you were a girl, you wouldn't drop a curtsey to 'em, historical or otherwise, and there you were right. But, instead of sticking to such principles, you must needs push up, so as to get girls such as you were once to curtsey to you, not even thinking marriage with a bad man too great a price to pay for't.'

'A bad man? What do you mean by that? Lord Mountclere is rather old, but he's worthy. What did you mean, Sol?'

'Nothing--a mere sommat to say.'

At that moment Picotee emerged from behind a tree, and told her sister that Lord Mountclere was looking for her.

'Well, Sol, I cannot explain all to you now,' she said. 'I will send for you in London.' She wished him goodbye, and they separated, Picotee accompanying Sol a little on his way.

Ethelberta was greatly perturbed by this meeting. After retracing her steps a short distance, she still felt so distressed and unpresentable that she resolved not to allow Lord Mountclere to see her till the clouds had somewhat passed off; it was but a bare act of justice to him to hide from his sight such a bridal mood as this. It was better to keep him waiting than to make him positively unhappy. She turned aside, and went up the valley, where the park merged in miles of wood and copse.

She opened an iron gate and entered the wood, casually interested in the vast variety of colours that the half-fallen leaves of the season wore: more, much more, occupied with personal thought. The path she pursued became gradually involved in bushes as well as trees, giving to the spot the character rather of a coppice than a wood. Perceiving that she had gone far enough, Ethelberta turned back by a path which at this point intersected that by which she had approached, and promised a more direct return towards the Court. She had not gone many steps among the hazels, which here formed a perfect thicket, when she observed a belt of holly-bushes in their midst; towards the outskirts of these an opening on her left hand directly led, thence winding round into a clear space of greensward, which they completely enclosed. On this isolated and mewed-up bit of lawn stood a timber-built cottage, having ornamental barge-boards, balconettes, and porch. It was an erection interesting enough as an experiment, and grand as a toy, but as a building contemptible.

A blue gauze of smoke floated over the chimney, as if somebody was living there; round towards the side some empty hen-coops were piled away; while under the hollies were divers frameworks of wire netting and sticks, showing that birds were kept here at some seasons of the year.

Being lady of all she surveyed, Ethelberta crossed the leafy sward, and knocked at the door. She was interested in knowing the purpose of the peculiar little edifice.

The door was opened by a woman wearing a clean apron upon a not very clean gown. Ethelberta asked who lived in so pretty a place.

'Miss Gruchette,' the servant replied. 'But she is not here now.'

'Does she live here alone?'

'Yes--excepting myself and a fellow-servant.'

'Oh.'

'She lives here to attend to the pheasants and poultry, because she is so clever in managing them. They are brought here from the keeper's over the hill. Her father was a fancier.'

'Miss Gruchette attends to the birds, and two servants attend to Miss Gruchette?'

'Well, to tell the truth, m'm, the servants do almost all of it. Still, that's what Miss Gruchette is here for. Would you like to see the house? It is pretty.' The woman spoke with hesitation, as if in doubt between the desire of earning a shilling and the fear that Ethelberta was not a stranger. That Ethelberta was Lady Mountclere she plainly did not dream.

'I fear I can scarcely stay long enough; yet I will just look in,' said

Ethelberta. And as soon as they had crossed the threshold she was glad of having done so.

The cottage internally may be described as a sort of boudoir extracted from the bulk of a mansion and deposited in a wood. The front room was filled with nicknacks, curious work-tables, filigree baskets, twisted brackets supporting statuettes, in which the grotesque in every case ruled the design; love-birds, in gilt cages; French bronzes, wonderful boxes, needlework of strange patterns, and other attractive objects. The apartment was one of those which seem to laugh in a visitor's face and on closer examination express frivolity more distinctly than by words.

'Miss Gruchette is here to keep the fowls?' said Ethelberta, in a puzzled tone, after a survey.

'Yes. But they don't keep her.'

Ethelberta did not attempt to understand, and ceased to occupy her mind with the matter. They came from the cottage to the door, where she gave the woman a trifling sum, and turned to leave. But footsteps were at that moment to be heard beating among the leaves on the other side of the hollies, and Ethelberta waited till the walkers should have passed. The voices of two men reached herself and the woman as they stood. They were close to the house, yet screened from it by the holly-bushes, when one could be heard to say distinctly, as if with his face turned to the cottage--

'Lady Mountclere gone for good?'

'I suppose so. Ha-ha! So come, so go.'

The speakers passed on, their backs becoming visible through the opening. They appeared to be woodmen.

'What Lady Mountclere do they mean?' said Ethelberta.

The woman blushed. 'They meant Miss Gruchette.'

'Oh--a nickname.'

'Yes.'

'Why?'

The woman whispered why in a story of about two minutes' length. Ethelberta turned pale.

'Is she going to return?' she inquired, in a thin hard voice.

'Yes; next week. You know her, m'm?'

'No. I am a stranger.'

'So much the better. I may tell you, then, that an old tale is flying about the neighbourhood--that Lord Mountclere was privately married to another woman, at Knollsea, this morning early. Can it be true?'

'I believe it to be true.'

'And that she is of no family?'

'Of no family.'

'Indeed. Then the Lord only knows what will become of the poor thing. There will be murder between 'em.'

'Between whom?'

'Her and the lady who lives here. She won't budge an inch--not she!'

Ethelberta moved aside. A shade seemed to overspread the world, the sky, the trees, and the objects in the foreground. She kept her face away from the woman, and, whispering a reply to her Good-morning, passed through the hollies into the leaf-strewn path. As soon as she came to a large trunk she placed her hands against it and rested her face upon them. She drew herself lower down, lower, lower, till she crouched upon the leaves. 'Ay--'tis what father and Sol meant! O Heaven!' she whispered.

She soon arose, and went on her way to the house. Her fair features were firmly set, and she scarcely heeded the path in the concentration which had followed her paroxysm. When she reached the park proper she became aware of an excitement that was in progress there.

Ethelberta's absence had become unaccountable to Lord Mountclere, who could hardly permit her retirement from his sight for a minute. But at first he had made due allowance for her eccentricity as a woman of genius, and would not take notice of the half-hour's desertion, unpardonable as it might have been in other classes of wives. Then he had inquired, searched, been alarmed: he had finally sent men-servants in all directions about the park to look for her. He feared she had fallen out of a window, down a well, or into the lake. The next stage of search was to have been drags and grapnels: but Ethelberta entered the house.

Lord Mountclere rushed forward to meet her, and such was her contrivance that he noticed no change. The searchers were called in, Ethelberta explaining that she had merely obeyed the wish of her brother in going out to meet him. Picotee, who had returned from her walk with Sol, was upstairs in one of the rooms which had been allotted to her. Ethelberta managed to run in there on her way upstairs to her own chamber.

'Picotee, put your things on again,' she said. 'You are the only friend I have in this house, and I want one badly. Go to Sol, and deliver this message to him--that I want to see him at once. You must overtake him,

if you walk all the way to Anglebury. But the train does not leave till four, so that there is plenty of time.'

'What is the matter?' said Picotee. 'I cannot walk all the way.'

'I don't think you will have to do that--I hope not.'

'He is going to stop at Corvsgate to have a bit of lunch: I might overtake him there, if I must!'

'Yes. And tell him to come to the east passage door. It is that door next to the entrance to the stable-yard. There is a little yew-tree outside it. On second thoughts you, dear, must not come back. Wait at Corvsgate in the little inn parlour till Sol comes to you again. You will probably then have to go home to London alone; but do not mind it. The worst part for you will be in going from the station to the Crescent; but nobody will molest you in a four-wheel cab: you have done it before. However, he will tell you if this is necessary when he gets back. I can best fight my battles alone. You shall have a letter from me the day after to-morrow, stating where I am. I shall not be here.'

'But what is it so dreadful?'

'Nothing to frighten you.' But she spoke with a breathlessness that completely nullified the assurance. 'It is merely that I find I must come to an explanation with Lord Mountclere before I can live here

permanently, and I cannot stipulate with him while I am here in his power. Till I write, good-bye. Your things are not unpacked, so let them remain here for the present--they can be sent for.'

Poor Picotee, more agitated than her sister, but never questioning her orders, went downstairs and out of the house. She ran across the shrubberies, into the park, and to the gate whereat Sol had emerged some half-hour earlier. She trotted along upon the turnpike road like a lost doe, crying as she went at the new trouble which had come upon Berta, whatever that trouble might be. Behind her she heard wheels and the stepping of a horse, but she was too concerned to turn her head. The pace of the vehicle slackened, however, when it was abreast of Picotee, and she looked up to see Christopher as the driver.

'Miss Chickerel!' he said, with surprise.

Picotee had quickly looked down again, and she murmured, 'Yes.'

Christopher asked what he could not help asking in the circumstances, 'Would you like to ride?'

'I should be glad,' said she, overcoming her flurry. 'I am anxious to overtake my brother Sol.'

'I have arranged to pick him up at Corvsgate,' said Christopher.

He descended, and assisted her to mount beside him, and drove on again, almost in silence. He was inclined to believe that some supernatural legerdemain had to do with these periodic impacts of Picotee on his path. She sat mute and melancholy till they were within half-a-mile of Corvsgate.

'Thank you,' she said then, perceiving Sol upon the road, 'there is my brother; I will get down now.'

'He was going to ride on to Anglebury with me,' said Julian.

Picotee did not reply, and Sol turned round. Seeing her he instantly exclaimed, 'What's the matter, Picotee?'

She explained to him that he was to go back immediately, and meet her sister at the door by the yew, as Ethelberta had charged her. Christopher, knowing them so well, was too much an interested member of the group to be left out of confidence, and she included him in her audience.

'And what are you to do?' said Sol to her.

'I am to wait at Corvsgate till you come to me.'

'I can't understand it,' Sol muttered, with a gloomy face. 'There's something wrong; and it was only to be expected; that's what I say, Mr.

Julian.'

'If necessary I can take care of Miss Chickerel till you come,' said Christopher.

'Thank you,' said Sol. 'Then I will return to you as soon as I can, at the "Castle" Inn, just ahead. 'Tis very awkward for you to be so burdened by us, Mr. Julian; but we are in a trouble that I don't yet see the bottom of.'

'I know,' said Christopher kindly. 'We will wait for you.'

He then drove on with Picotee to the inn, which was not far off, and Sol returned again to Enckworth. Feeling somewhat like a thief in the night, he zigzagged through the park, behind belts and knots of trees, until he saw the yew, dark and clear, as if drawn in ink upon the fair face of the mansion. The way up to it was in a little cutting between shrubs, the door being a private entrance, sunk below the surface of the lawn, and invisible from other parts of the same front. As soon as he reached it, Ethelberta opened it at once, as if she had listened for his footsteps.

She took him along a passage in the basement, up a flight of steps, and into a huge, solitary, chill apartment. It was the ball-room. Spacious mirrors in gilt frames formed panels in the lower part of the walls, the remainder being toned in sage-green. In a recess between each mirror was a statue. The ceiling rose in a segmental curve, and bore sprawling upon

its face gilt figures of wanton goddesses, cupids, satyrs with tambourines, drums, and trumpets, the whole ceiling seeming alive with them. But the room was very gloomy now, there being little light admitted from without, and the reflections from the mirrors gave a depressing coldness to the scene. It was a place intended to look joyous by night, and whatever it chose to look by day.

'We are safe here,' said she. 'But we must listen for footsteps. I have only five minutes: Lord Mountclere is waiting for me. I mean to leave this place, come what may.'

'Why?' said Sol, in astonishment.

'I cannot tell you--something has occurred. God has got me in his power at last, and is going to scourge me for my bad doings--that's what it seems like. Sol, listen to me, and do exactly what I say. Go to Anglebury, hire a brougham, bring it on as far as Little Enckworth: you will have to meet me with it at one of the park gates later in the evening--probably the west, at half-past seven. Leave it at the village with the man, come on here on foot, and stay under the trees till just before six: it will then be quite dark, and you must stand under the projecting balustrade a little further on than the door you came in by. I will just step upon the balcony over it, and tell you more exactly than I can now the precise time that I shall be able to slip out, and where the carriage is to be waiting. But it may not be safe to speak on account of his closeness to me--I will hand down a note. I find it is impossible to

leave the house by daylight--I am certain to be pursued--he already suspects something. Now I must be going, or he will be here, for he watches my movements because of some accidental words that escaped me.'

'Berta, I shan't have anything to do with this,' said Sol. 'It is not right!'

'I am only going to Rouen, to Aunt Charlotte!' she implored. 'I want to get to Southampton, to be in time for the midnight steamer. When I am at Rouen I can negotiate with Lord Mountclere the terms on which I will return to him. It is the only chance I have of rooting out a scandal and a disgrace which threatens the beginning of my life here! My letters to him, and his to me, can be forwarded through you or through father, and he will not know where I am. Any woman is justified in adopting such a course to bring her husband to a sense of her dignity. If I don't go away now, it will end in a permanent separation. If I leave at once, and stipulate that he gets rid of her, we may be reconciled.'

'I can't help you: you must stick to your husband. I don't like them, or any of their sort, barring about three or four, for the reason that they despise me and all my sort. But, Ethelberta, for all that I'll play fair with them. No half-and-half trimming business. You have joined 'em, and 'rayed yourself against us; and there you'd better bide. You have married your man, and your duty is towards him. I know what he is and so does father; but if I were to help you to run away now, I should scorn myself more than I scorn him.'

'I don't care for that, or for any such politics! The Mountclere line is noble, and how was I to know that this member was not noble, too? As the representative of an illustrious family I was taken with him, but as a man--I must shun him.'

'How can you shun him? You have married him!'

'Nevertheless, I won't stay! Neither law nor gospel demands it of me after what I have learnt. And if law and gospel did demand it, I would not stay. And if you will not help me to escape, I go alone.'

'You had better not try any such wild thing.'

The creaking of a door was heard. 'O Sol,' she said appealingly, 'don't go into the question whether I am right or wrong--only remember that I am very unhappy. Do help me--I have no other person in the world to ask! Be under the balcony at six o'clock. Say you will--I must go--say you will!'

'I'll think,' said Sol, very much disturbed. 'There, don't cry; I'll try to be under the balcony, at any rate. I cannot promise more, but I'll try to be there.'

She opened in the panelling one of the old-fashioned concealed modes of exit known as jib-doors, which it was once the custom to construct

without architraves in the walls of large apartments, so as not to interfere with the general design of the room. Sol found himself in a narrow passage, running down the whole length of the ball-room, and at the same time he heard Lord Mountclere's voice within, talking to Ethelberta. Sol's escape had been marvellous: as it was the viscount might have seen her tears. He passed down some steps, along an area from which he could see into a row of servants' offices, among them a kitchen with a fireplace flaming like an altar of sacrifice. Nobody seemed to be concerned about him; there were workmen upon the premises, and he nearly
matched them. At last he got again into the shrubberies and to the side of the park by which he had entered.

On reaching Corvsgate he found Picotee in the parlour of the little inn, as he had directed. Mr. Julian, she said, had walked up to the ruins, and would be back again in a few minutes. Sol ordered the horse to be put in, and by the time it was ready Christopher came down from the hill. Room was made for Sol by opening the flap of the dogcart, and Christopher drove on.

He was anxious to know the trouble, and Sol was not reluctant to share the burden of it with one whom he believed to be a friend. He told, scrap by scrap, the strange request of Ethelberta. Christopher, though ignorant of Ethelberta's experience that morning, instantly assumed that the discovery of some concealed spectre had led to this precipitancy.

'When does she wish you to meet her with the carriage?'

'Probably at half-past seven, at the west lodge; but that is to be finally fixed by a note she will hand down to me from the balcony.'

'Which balcony?'

'The nearest to the yew-tree.'

'At what time will she hand the note?'

'As the Court clock strikes six, she says. And if I am not there to take her instructions of course she will give up the idea, which is just what I want her to do.'

Christopher begged Sol to go. Whether Ethelberta was right or wrong, he did not stop to inquire. She was in trouble; she was too clear-headed to be in trouble without good reason; and she wanted assistance out of it. But such was Sol's nature that the more he reflected the more determined was he in not giving way to her entreaty. By the time that they reached Anglebury he repented having given way so far as to withhold a direct refusal.

'It can do no good,' he said mournfully. 'It is better to nip her notion in its beginning. She says she wants to fly to Rouen, and from there arrange terms with him. But it can't be done--she should have thought of

terms before.'

Christopher made no further reply. Leaving word at the 'Red Lion' that a man was to be sent to take the horse of him, he drove directly onwards to the station.

'Then you don't mean to help her?' said Julian, when Sol took the tickets--one for himself and one for Picotee.

'I serve her best by leaving her alone!' said Sol.

'I don't think so.'

'She has married him.'

'She is in distress.'

'She has married him.'

Sol and Picotee took their seats, Picotee upbraiding her brother. 'I can go by myself!' she said, in tears. 'Do go back for Berta, Sol. She said I was to go home alone, and I can do it!'

'You must not. It is not right for you to be hiring cabs and driving across London at midnight. Berta should have known better than propose it.'

'She was flurried. Go, Sol!'

But her entreaty was fruitless.

'Have you got your ticket, Mr. Julian?' said Sol. 'I suppose we shall go together till we get near Melchester?'

'I have not got my ticket yet--I'll be back in two minutes.'

The minutes went by, and Christopher did not reappear. The train moved off: Christopher was seen running up the platform, as if in a vain hope to catch it.

'He has missed the train,' said Sol. Picotee looked disappointed, and said nothing. They were soon out of sight.

'God forgive me for such a hollow pretence!' said Christopher to himself. 'But he would have been uneasy had he known I wished to stay behind. I cannot leave her in trouble like this!'

He went back to the 'Red Lion' with the manner and movement of a man who after a lifetime of desultoriness had at last found something to do. It was now getting late in the afternoon. Christopher ordered a one-horse brougham at the inn, and entering it was driven out of the town towards

Enckworth as the evening shades were beginning to fall. They passed into the hamlet of Little Enckworth at half-past five, and drew up at a beer-house at the end. Jumping out here, Julian told the man to wait till he should return.

Thus far he had exactly obeyed her orders to Sol. He hoped to be able to obey them throughout, and supply her with the aid her brother refused. He also hoped that the change in the personality of her confederate would make no difference to her intention. That he was putting himself in a wrong position he allowed, but time and attention were requisite for such analysis: meanwhile Ethelberta was in trouble. On the one hand was she waiting hopefully for Sol; on the other was Sol many miles on his way to town; between them was himself.

He ran with all his might towards Enckworth Park, mounted the lofty stone steps by the lodge, saw the dark bronze figures on the piers through the twilight, and then proceeded to thread the trees. Among these he struck a light for a moment: it was ten minutes to six. In another five minutes he was panting beneath the walls of her house.

Enckworth Court was not unknown to Christopher, for he had frequently explored that spot in his Sandbourne days. He perceived now why she had selected that particular balcony for handing down directions; it was the only one round the house that was low enough to be reached from the outside, the basement here being a little way sunk in the ground.

He went close under, turned his face outwards, and waited. About a foot over his head was the stone floor of the balcony, forming a ceiling to his position. At his back, two or three feet behind, was a blank wall--the wall of the house. In front of him was the misty park, crowned by a sky sparkling with winter stars. This was abruptly cut off upward by the dark edge of the balcony which overhung him.

It was as if some person within the room above had been awaiting his approach. He had scarcely found time to observe his situation when a human hand and portion of a bare arm were thrust between the balusters, descended a little way from the edge of the balcony, and remained hanging across the starlit sky. Something was between the fingers. Christopher lifted his hand, took the scrap, which was paper, and the arm was withdrawn. As it withdrew, a jewel on one of the fingers sparkled in the rays of a large planet that rode in the opposite sky.

Light steps retreated from the balcony, and a window closed. Christopher had almost held his breath lest Ethelberta should discover him at the critical moment to be other than Sol, and mar her deliverance by her alarm. The still silence was anything but silence to him; he felt as if he were listening to the clanging chorus of an oratorio. And then he could fancy he heard words between Ethelberta and the viscount within the room; they were evidently at very close quarters, and dexterity must have been required of her. He went on tiptoe across the gravel to the grass, and once on that he strode in the direction whence he had come. By the thick trunk of one of a group of aged trees he stopped to get a light,

just as the Court clock struck six in loud long tones. The transaction had been carried out, through her impatience possibly, four or five minutes before the time appointed.

The note contained, in a shaken hand, in which, however, the well-known characters were distinguishable, these words in pencil:

'At half-past seven o'clock. Just outside the north lodge; don't fail.'

This was the time she had suggested to Sol as that which would probably best suit her escape, if she could escape at all. She had changed the place from the west to the north lodge--nothing else. The latter was certainly more secluded, though a trifle more remote from the course of the proposed journey; there was just time enough and none to spare for fetching the brougham from Little Enckworth to the lodge, the village being two miles off. The few minutes gained by her readiness at the balcony were useful now. He started at once for the village, diverging somewhat to observe the spot appointed for the meeting. It was excellently chosen; the gate appeared to be little used, the lane outside it was covered with trees, and all around was silent as the grave. After this hasty survey by the wan starlight, he hastened on to Little Enckworth.

An hour and a quarter later a little brougham without lamps was creeping along by the park wall towards this spot. The leaves were so thick upon the unfrequented road that the wheels could not be heard, and the horse's

pacing made scarcely more noise than a rabbit would have done in limping along. The vehicle progressed slowly, for they were in good time. About ten yards from the park entrance it stopped, and Christopher stepped out.

'We may have to wait here ten minutes,' he said to the driver. 'And then shall we be able to reach Anglebury in time for the up mail-train to Southampton?'

'Half-past seven, half-past eight, half-past nine--two hours. O yes, sir, easily. A young lady in the case perhaps, sir?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I hope she'll be done honestly by, even if she is of humble station. 'Tis best, and cheapest too, in the long run.' The coachman was apparently imagining the dove about to flit away to be one of the pretty maid-servants that abounded in Enckworth Court; such escapades as these were not unfrequent among them, a fair face having been deemed a sufficient recommendation to service in that house, without too close an inquiry into character, since the death of the first viscountess.

'Now then, silence; and listen for a footstep at the gate.'

Such calmness as there was in the musician's voice had been produced by considerable effort. For his heart had begun to beat fast and loud as he strained his attentive ear to catch the footfall of a woman who could

only be his illegally.

The obscurity was as great as a starry sky would permit it to be. Beneath the trees where the carriage stood the darkness was total.