don't have much to do with her personally, stay on for years and years.'

'Has Miss Aldclyffe's family always been rich?' said Cytherea.

'O no. The property, with the name, came from her mother's uncle. Her family is a branch of the old Aldclyffe family on the maternal side. Her mother married a Bradleigh--a mere nobody at that time--and was on that account cut by her relations. But very singularly the other branch of the family died out one by one--three of them, and Miss Aldclyffe's great-uncle then left all his property, including this estate, to Captain Bradleigh and his wife--Miss Aldclyffe's father and mother--on condition that they took the old family name as well. There's all about it in the "Landed Gentry." 'Tis a thing very often done.'

'O, I see. Thank you. Well, now I am going. Good-night.'

VI. THE EVENTS OF TWELVE HOURS

1. AUGUST THE NINTH. ONE TO TWO O'CLOCK A.M.

Cytherea entered her bedroom, and flung herself on the bed, bewildered by a whirl of thought. Only one subject was clear in her mind, and it was that, in spite of family discoveries, that day was to be the first

and last of her experience as a lady's-maid. Starvation itself should not compel her to hold such a humiliating post for another instant. 'Ah,' she thought, with a sigh, at the martyrdom of her last little fragment of self-conceit, 'Owen knows everything better than I.'

She jumped up and began making ready for her departure in the morning, the tears streaming down when she grieved and wondered what practical matter on earth she could turn her hand to next. All these preparations completed, she began to undress, her mind unconsciously drifting away to the contemplation of her late surprises. To look in the glass for an instant at the reflection of her own magnificent resources in face and bosom, and to mark their attractiveness unadorned, was perhaps but the natural action of a young woman who had so lately been chidden whilst passing through the harassing experience of decorating an older beauty of Miss Aldclyffe's temper.

But she directly checked her weakness by sympathizing reflections on the hidden troubles which must have thronged the past years of the solitary lady, to keep her, though so rich and courted, in a mood so repellent and gloomy as that in which Cytherea found her; and then the young girl marvelled again and again, as she had marvelled before, at the strange confluence of circumstances which had brought herself into contact with the one woman in the world whose history was so romantically intertwined with her own. She almost began to wish she were not obliged to go away and leave the lonely being to loneliness still.

In bed and in the dark, Miss Aldclyffe haunted her mind more persistently than ever. Instead of sleeping, she called up staring visions of the possible past of this queenly lady, her mother's rival. Up the long vista of bygone years she saw, behind all, the young girl's flirtation, little or much, with the cousin, that seemed to have been nipped in the bud, or to have terminated hastily in some way. Then the secret meetings between Miss Aldclyffe and the other woman at the little inn at Hammersmith and other places: the commonplace name she adopted: her swoon at some painful news, and the very slight knowledge the elder female had of her partner in mystery. Then, more than a year afterwards, the acquaintanceship of her own father with this his first love; the awakening of the passion, his acts of devotion, the unreasoning heat of his rapture, her tacit acceptance of it, and yet her uneasiness under the delight. Then his declaration amid the evergreens: the utter change produced in her manner thereby, seemingly the result of a rigid determination: and the total concealment of her reason by herself and her parents, whatever it was. Then the lady's course dropped into darkness, and nothing more was visible till she was discovered here at Knapwater, nearly fifty years old, still unmarried and still beautiful, but lonely, embittered, and haughty. Cytherea imagined that her father's image was still warmly cherished in Miss Aldclyffe's heart, and was thankful that she herself had not been betrayed into announcing that she knew many particulars of this page of her father's history, and the chief one, the lady's unaccountable renunciation of him. It would have made her bearing towards the mistress of the mansion more awkward, and would have been no benefit to either.

Thus conjuring up the past, and theorizing on the present, she lay restless, changing her posture from one side to the other and back again. Finally, when courting sleep with all her art, she heard a clock strike two. A minute later, and she fancied she could distinguish a soft rustle in the passage outside her room.

To bury her head in the sheets was her first impulse; then to uncover it, raise herself on her elbow, and stretch her eyes wide open in the darkness; her lips being parted with the intentness of her listening. Whatever the noise was, it had ceased for the time.

It began again and came close to her door, lightly touching the panels. Then there was another stillness; Cytherea made a movement which caused a faint rustling of the bed-clothes.

Before she had time to think another thought a light tap was given. Cytherea breathed: the person outside was evidently bent upon finding her awake, and the rustle she had made had encouraged the hope. The maiden's physical condition shifted from one pole to its opposite. The cold sweat of terror forsook her, and modesty took the alarm. She became hot and red; her door was not locked.

A distinct woman's whisper came to her through the keyhole: 'Cytherea!'

Only one being in the house knew her Christian name, and that was Miss

Aldclyffe. Cytherea stepped out of bed, went to the door, and whispered back, 'Yes?'

'Let me come in, darling.'

The young woman paused in a conflict between judgment and emotion. It was now mistress and maid no longer; woman and woman only. Yes; she must let her come in, poor thing.

She got a light in an instant, opened the door, and raising her eyes and the candle, saw Miss Aldclyffe standing outside in her dressing-gown.

'Now you see that it is really myself; put out the light,' said the visitor. 'I want to stay here with you, Cythie. I came to ask you to come down into my bed, but it is snugger here. But remember that you are mistress in this room, and that I have no business here, and that you may send me away if you choose. Shall I go?'

'O no; you shan't indeed if you don't want to,' said Cythie generously.

The instant they were in bed Miss Aldclyffe freed herself from the last remnant of restraint. She flung her arms round the young girl, and pressed her gently to her heart.

'Now kiss me,' she said.

Cytherea, upon the whole, was rather discomposed at this change of treatment; and, discomposed or no, her passions were not so impetuous as Miss Aldclyffe's. She could not bring her soul to her lips for a moment, try how she would.

'Come, kiss me,' repeated Miss Aldclyffe.

Cytherea gave her a very small one, as soft in touch and in sound as the bursting of a bubble.

'More earnestly than that--come.'

She gave another, a little but not much more expressively.

'I don't deserve a more feeling one, I suppose,' said Miss Aldclyffe, with an emphasis of sad bitterness in her tone. 'I am an ill-tempered woman, you think; half out of my mind. Well, perhaps I am; but I have had grief more than you can think or dream of. But I can't help loving you--your name is the same as mine--isn't it strange?'

Cytherea was inclined to say no, but remained silent.

'Now, don't you think I must love you?' continued the other.

'Yes,' said Cytherea absently. She was still thinking whether duty to

Owen and her father, which asked for silence on her knowledge of her father's unfortunate love, or duty to the woman embracing her, which seemed to ask for confidence, ought to predominate. Here was a solution. She would wait till Miss Aldclyffe referred to her acquaintanceship and attachment to Cytherea's father in past times: then she would tell her all she knew: that would be honour.

'Why can't you kiss me as I can kiss you? Why can't you!' She impressed upon Cytherea's lips a warm motherly salute, given as if in the outburst of strong feeling, long checked, and yearning for something to love and be loved by in return.

'Do you think badly of me for my behaviour this evening, child? I don't know why I am so foolish as to speak to you in this way. I am a very fool, I believe. Yes. How old are you?'

'Eighteen.'

'Eighteen!... Well, why don't you ask me how old I am?'

'Because I don't want to know.'

'Never mind if you don't. I am forty-six; and it gives me greater pleasure to tell you this than it does to you to listen. I have not told my age truly for the last twenty years till now.'

'Why haven't you?'

'I have met deceit by deceit, till I am weary of it--weary, weary--and I long to be what I shall never be again--artless and innocent, like you. But I suppose that you, too, will, prove to be not worth a thought, as every new friend does on more intimate knowledge. Come, why don't you talk to me, child? Have you said your prayers?'

'Yes--no! I forgot them to-night.'

'I suppose you say them every night as a rule?'

'Yes.'

'Why do you do that?'

'Because I have always done so, and it would seem strange if I were not to. Do you?'

'I? A wicked old sinner like me! No, I never do. I have thought all such matters humbug for years--thought so so long that I should be glad to think otherwise from very weariness; and yet, such is the code of the polite world, that I subscribe regularly to Missionary Societies and others of the sort.... Well, say your prayers, dear--you won't omit them now you recollect it. I should like to hear you very much. Will you?'

'It seems hardly--'

'It would seem so like old times to me--when I was young, and nearer--far nearer Heaven than I am now. Do, sweet one,'

Cytherea was embarrassed, and her embarrassment arose from the following conjuncture of affairs. Since she had loved Edward Springrove, she had linked his name with her brother Owen's in her nightly supplications to the Almighty. She wished to keep her love for him a secret, and, above all, a secret from a woman like Miss Aldclyffe; yet her conscience and the honesty of her love would not for an instant allow her to think of omitting his dear name, and so endanger the efficacy of all her previous prayers for his success by an unworthy shame now: it would be wicked of her, she thought, and a grievous wrong to him. Under any worldly circumstances she might have thought the position justified a little finesse, and have skipped him for once; but prayer was too solemn a thing for such trifling.

'I would rather not say them,' she murmured first. It struck her then that this declining altogether was the same cowardice in another dress, and was delivering her poor Edward over to Satan just as unceremoniously as before. 'Yes; I will say my prayers, and you shall hear me,' she added firmly.

She turned her face to the pillow and repeated in low soft tones the

simple words she had used from childhood on such occasions. Owen's name was mentioned without faltering, but in the other case, maidenly shyness was too strong even for religion, and that when supported by excellent intentions. At the name of Edward she stammered, and her voice sank to the faintest whisper in spite of her.

'Thank you, dearest,' said Miss Aldclyffe. 'I have prayed too, I verily believe. You are a good girl, I think.' Then the expected question came.

'"Bless Owen," and whom, did you say?'

There was no help for it now, and out it came. 'Owen and Edward,' said Cytherea.

'Who are Owen and Edward?'

'Owen is my brother, madam,' faltered the maid.

'Ah, I remember. Who is Edward?'

A silence.

'Your brother, too?' continued Miss Aldclyffe.

'No.'

Miss Aldclyffe reflected a moment. 'Don't you want to tell me who Edward is?' she said at last, in a tone of meaning.

'I don't mind telling; only....'

'You would rather not, I suppose?'

'Yes.'

Miss Aldclyffe shifted her ground. 'Were you ever in love?' she inquired suddenly.

Cytherea was surprised to hear how quickly the voice had altered from tenderness to harshness, vexation, and disappointment.

'Yes--I think I was--once,' she murmured.

'Aha! And were you ever kissed by a man?'

A pause.

'Well, were you?' said Miss Aldclyffe, rather sharply.

'Don't press me to tell--I can't--indeed, I won't, madam!'

Miss Aldclyffe removed her arms from Cytherea's neck. ''Tis now with

you as it is always with all girls,' she said, in jealous and gloomy accents. 'You are not, after all, the innocent I took you for. No, no.' She then changed her tone with fitful rapidity. 'Cytherea, try to love me more than you love him--do. I love you more sincerely than any man can. Do, Cythie: don't let any man stand between us. O, I can't bear that!' She clasped Cytherea's neck again.

'I must love him now I have begun,' replied the other.

'Must--yes--must,' said the elder lady reproachfully. 'Yes, women are all alike. I thought I had at last found an artless woman who had not been sullied by a man's lips, and who had not practised or been practised upon by the arts which ruin all the truth and sweetness and goodness in us. Find a girl, if you can, whose mouth and ears have not been made a regular highway of by some man or another! Leave the admittedly notorious spots--the drawing-rooms of society--and look in the villages--leave the villages and search in the schools--and you can hardly find a girl whose heart has not been had--is not an old thing half worn out by some He or another! If men only knew the staleness of the freshest of us! that nine times out of ten the "first love" they think they are winning from a woman is but the hulk of an old wrecked affection, fitted with new sails and re-used. O Cytherea, can it be that you, too, are like the rest?'

'No, no, no,' urged Cytherea, awed by the storm she had raised in the impetuous woman's mind. 'He only kissed me once--twice I mean.'

'He might have done it a thousand times if he had cared to, there's no doubt about that, whoever his lordship is. You are as bad as I--we are all alike; and I--an old fool--have been sipping at your mouth as if it were honey, because I fancied no wasting lover knew the spot. But a minute ago, and you seemed to me like a fresh spring meadow--now you seem a dusty highway.'

'O no, no!' Cytherea was not weak enough to shed tears except on extraordinary occasions, but she was fain to begin sobbing now. She wished Miss Aldclyffe would go to her own room, and leave her and her treasured dreams alone. This vehement imperious affection was in one sense soothing, but yet it was not of the kind that Cytherea's instincts desired. Though it was generous, it seemed somewhat too rank and capricious for endurance.

'Well,' said the lady in continuation, 'who is he?'

Her companion was desperately determined not to tell his name: she too much feared a taunt when Miss Aldclyffe's fiery mood again ruled her tongue.

'Won't you tell me? not tell me after all the affection I have shown?'

'I will, perhaps, another day.'

'Did you wear a hat and white feather in Budmouth for the week or two previous to your coming here?'

'Yes.'

'Then I have seen you and your lover at a distance! He rowed you round the bay with your brother.'

'Yes.'

'And without your brother--fie! There, there, don't let that little heart beat itself to death: throb, throb: it shakes the bed, you silly thing. I didn't mean that there was any harm in going alone with him. I only saw you from the Esplanade, in common with the rest of the people. I often run down to Budmouth. He was a very good figure: now who was he?'

'I--I won't tell, madam--I cannot indeed!'

'Won't tell--very well, don't. You are very foolish to treasure up his name and image as you do. Why, he has had loves before you, trust him for that, whoever he is, and you are but a temporary link in a long chain of others like you: who only have your little day as they have had theirs.'

''Tisn't true! 'tisn't true! 'tisn't true!' cried Cytherea in an agony

of torture. 'He has never loved anybody else, I know--I am sure he hasn't.'

Miss Aldclyffe was as jealous as any man could have been. She continued--

'He sees a beautiful face and thinks he will never forget it, but in a few weeks the feeling passes off, and he wonders how he could have cared for anybody so absurdly much.'

'No, no, he doesn't--What does he do when he has thought that--Come, tell me--tell me!'

'You are as hot as fire, and the throbbing of your heart makes me nervous. I can't tell you if you get in that flustered state.'

'Do, do tell--O, it makes me so miserable! but tell--come tell me!'

'Ah--the tables are turned now, dear!' she continued, in a tone which mingled pity with derision--

'"Love's passions shall rock thee
As the storm rocks the ravens on high,
Bright reason will mock thee
Like the sun from a wintry sky."

'What does he do next?--Why, this is what he does next: ruminate on what he has heard of women's romantic impulses, and how easily men torture them when they have given way to those feelings, and have resigned everything for their hero. It may be that though he loves you heartily now--that is, as heartily as a man can--and you love him in return, your loves may be impracticable and hopeless, and you may be separated for ever. You, as the weary, weary years pass by will fade and fade--bright eyes will fade--and you will perhaps then die early--true to him to your latest breath, and believing him to be true to the latest breath also; whilst he, in some gay and busy spot far away from your last quiet nook, will have married some dashing lady, and not purely oblivious of you, will long have ceased to regret you--will chat about you, as you were in long past years--will say, "Ah, little Cytherea used to tie her hair like that--poor innocent trusting thing; it was a pleasant useless idle dream--that dream of mine for the maid with the bright eyes and simple, silly heart; but I was a foolish lad at that time." Then he will tell the tale of all your little Wills and Wont's and particular ways, and as he speaks, turn to his wife with a placid smile.'

'It is not true! He can't, he c-can't be s-so cruel--and you are cruel to me--you are, you are!' She was at last driven to desperation: her natural common sense and shrewdness had seen all through the piece how imaginary her emotions were--she felt herself to be weak and foolish in permitting them to rise; but even then she could not control them: be agonized she must. She was only eighteen, and the long day's labour, her weariness, her excitement, had completely unnerved her, and worn her

out: she was bent hither and thither by this tyrannical working upon her imagination, as a young rush in the wind. She wept bitterly. 'And now think how much I like you,' resumed Miss Aldclyffe, when Cytherea grew calmer. 'I shall never forget you for anybody else, as men do--never. I will be exactly as a mother to you. Now will you promise to live with me always, and always be taken care of, and never deserted?'

'I cannot. I will not be anybody's maid for another day on any consideration.'

'No, no, no. You shan't be a lady's-maid. You shall be my companion. I will get another maid.'

Companion--that was a new idea. Cytherea could not resist the evidently heartfelt desire of the strange-tempered woman for her presence. But she could not trust to the moment's impulse.

'I will stay, I think. But do not ask for a final answer to-night.'

'Never mind now, then. Put your hair round your mamma's neck, and give me one good long kiss, and I won't talk any more in that way about your lover. After all, some young men are not so fickle as others; but even if he's the ficklest, there is consolation. The love of an inconstant man is ten times more ardent than that of a faithful man--that is, while it lasts.'

Cytherea did as she was told, to escape the punishment of further talk; flung the twining tresses of her long, rich hair over Miss Aldclyffe's shoulders as directed, and the two ceased conversing, making themselves up for sleep. Miss Aldclyffe seemed to give herself over to a luxurious sense of content and quiet, as if the maiden at her side afforded her a protection against dangers which had menaced her for years; she was soon sleeping calmly.

2. TWO TO FIVE A.M.

With Cytherea it was otherwise. Unused to the place and circumstances, she continued wakeful, ill at ease, and mentally distressed. She withdrew herself from her companion's embrace, turned to the other side, and endeavoured to relieve her busy brain by looking at the window-blind, and noticing the light of the rising moon--now in her last quarter--creep round upon it: it was the light of an old waning moon which had but a few days longer to live.

The sight led her to think again of what had happened under the rays of the same month's moon, a little before its full, the ecstatic evening scene with Edward: the kiss, and the shortness of those happy moments--maiden imagination bringing about the apotheosis of a status quo which had had several unpleasantnesses in its earthly reality.

But sounds were in the ascendant that night. Her ears became aware of a strange and gloomy murmur.

She recognized it: it was the gushing of the waterfall, faint and low, brought from its source to the unwonted distance of the House by a faint breeze which made it distinct and recognizable by reason of the utter absence of all disturbing sounds. The groom's melancholy representation lent to the sound a more dismal effect than it would have had of its own nature. She began to fancy what the waterfall must be like at that hour, under the trees in the ghostly moonlight. Black at the head, and over the surface of the deep cold hole into which it fell; white and frothy at the fall; black and white, like a pall and its border; sad everywhere.

She was in the mood for sounds of every kind now, and strained her ears to catch the faintest, in wayward enmity to her quiet of mind. Another soon came.

The second was quite different from the first--a kind of intermittent whistle it seemed primarily: no, a creak, a metallic creak, ever and anon, like a plough, or a rusty wheelbarrow, or at least a wheel of some kind. Yes, it was, a wheel--the water-wheel in the shrubbery by the old manor-house, which the coachman had said would drive him mad.

She determined not to think any more of these gloomy things; but now that she had once noticed the sound there was no sealing her ears to it. She could not help timing its creaks, and putting on a dread expectancy just before the end of each half-minute that brought them. To imagine

the inside of the engine-house, whence these noises proceeded, was now a necessity. No window, but crevices in the door, through which, probably, the moonbeams streamed in the most attenuated and skeleton-like rays, striking sharply upon portions of wet rusty cranks and chains; a glistening wheel, turning incessantly, labouring in the dark like a captive starving in a dungeon; and instead of a floor below, gurgling water, which on account of the darkness could only be heard; water which laboured up dark pipes almost to where she lay.

She shivered. Now she was determined to go to sleep; there could be nothing else left to be heard or to imagine--it was horrid that her imagination should be so restless. Yet just for an instant before going to sleep she would think this--suppose another sound should come--just suppose it should! Before the thought had well passed through her brain, a third sound came.

The third was a very soft gurgle or rattle--of a strange and abnormal kind--yet a sound she had heard before at some past period of her life--when, she could not recollect. To make it the more disturbing, it seemed to be almost close to her--either close outside the window, close under the floor, or close above the ceiling. The accidental fact of its coming so immediately upon the heels of her supposition, told so powerfully upon her excited nerves that she jumped up in the bed. The same instant, a little dog in some room near, having probably heard the same noise, set up a low whine. The watch-dog in the yard, hearing the moan of his associate, began to howl loudly and distinctly. His

melancholy notes were taken up directly afterwards by the dogs in the kennel a long way off, in every variety of wail.

One logical thought alone was able to enter her flurried brain. The little dog that began the whining must have heard the other two sounds even better than herself. He had taken no notice of them, but he had taken notice of the third. The third, then, was an unusual sound.

It was not like water, it was not like wind; it was not the night-jar, it was not a clock, nor a rat, nor a person snoring.

She crept under the clothes, and flung her arms tightly round Miss Aldclyffe, as if for protection. Cytherea perceived that the lady's late peaceful warmth had given place to a sweat. At the maiden's touch, Miss Aldclyffe awoke with a low scream.

She remembered her position instantly. 'O such a terrible dream!' she cried, in a hurried whisper, holding to Cytherea in her turn; 'and your touch was the end of it. It was dreadful. Time, with his wings, hour-glass, and scythe, coming nearer and nearer to me--grinning and mocking: then he seized me, took a piece of me only... But I can't tell you. I can't bear to think of it. How those dogs howl! People say it means death.'

The return of Miss Aldclyffe to consciousness was sufficient to dispel the wild fancies which the loneliness of the night had woven in

Cytherea's mind. She dismissed the third noise as something which in all likelihood could easily be explained, if trouble were taken to inquire into it: large houses had all kinds of strange sounds floating about them. She was ashamed to tell Miss Aldclyffe her terrors.

A silence of five minutes.

'Are you asleep?' said Miss Aldclyffe.

'No,' said Cytherea, in a long-drawn whisper.

'How those dogs howl, don't they?'

'Yes. A little dog in the house began it.'

'Ah, yes: that was Totsy. He sleeps on the mat outside my father's bedroom door. A nervous creature.'

There was a silent interval of nearly half-an-hour. A clock on the landing struck three.

'Are you asleep, Miss Aldclyffe?' whispered Cytherea.

'No,' said Miss Aldclyffe. 'How wretched it is not to be able to sleep, isn't it?'

'Yes,' replied Cytherea, like a docile child.

Another hour passed, and the clock struck four. Miss Aldclyffe was still awake.

'Cytherea,' she said, very softly.

Cytherea made no answer. She was sleeping soundly.

The first glimmer of dawn was now visible. Miss Aldclyffe arose, put on her dressing-gown, and went softly downstairs to her own room.

'I have not told her who I am after all, or found out the particulars of Ambrose's history,' she murmured. 'But her being in love alters everything.'

3. HALF-PAST SEVEN TO TEN O'CLOCK A.M.

Cytherea awoke, quiet in mind and refreshed. A conclusion to remain at Knapwater was already in possession of her.

Finding Miss Aldclyffe gone, she dressed herself and sat down at the window to write an answer to Edward's letter, and an account of her arrival at Knapwater to Owen. The dismal and heart-breaking pictures that Miss Aldclyffe had placed before her the preceding evening, the later terrors of the night, were now but as shadows of shadows, and she

smiled in derision at her own excitability.

But writing Edward's letter was the great consoler, the effect of each word upon him being enacted in her own face as she wrote it. She felt how much she would like to share his trouble--how well she could endure poverty with him--and wondered what his trouble was. But all would be explained at last, she knew.

At the appointed time she went to Miss Aldclyffe's room, intending, with the contradictoriness common in people, to perform with pleasure, as a work of supererogation, what as a duty was simply intolerable.

Miss Aldclyffe was already out of bed. The bright penetrating light of morning made a vast difference in the elder lady's behaviour to her dependent; the day, which had restored Cytherea's judgment, had effected the same for Miss Aldclyffe. Though practical reasons forbade her regretting that she had secured such a companionable creature to read, talk, or play to her whenever her whim required, she was inwardly vexed at the extent to which she had indulged in the womanly luxury of making confidences and giving way to emotions. Few would have supposed that the calm lady sitting aristocratically at the toilet table, seeming scarcely conscious of Cytherea's presence in the room, even when greeting her, was the passionate creature who had asked for kisses a few hours before.

It is both painful and satisfactory to think how often these antitheses are to be observed in the individual most open to our

observation--ourselves. We pass the evening with faces lit up by some flaring illumination or other: we get up the next morning--the fiery jets have all gone out, and nothing confronts us but a few crinkled pipes and sooty wirework, hardly even recalling the outline of the blazing picture that arrested our eyes before bedtime.

Emotions would be half starved if there were no candle-light. Probably nine-tenths of the gushing letters of indiscreet confession are written after nine or ten o'clock in the evening, and sent off before day returns to leer invidiously upon them. Few that remain open to catch our glance as we rise in the morning, survive the frigid criticism of dressing-time.

The subjects uppermost in the minds of the two women who had thus cooled
from their fires, were not the visionary ones of the later hours,
but the hard facts of their earlier conversation. After a remark that Cytherea need not assist her in dressing unless she wished to, Miss Aldclyffe said abruptly--

'I can tell that young man's name.' She looked keenly at Cytherea. 'It is Edward Springrove, my tenant's son.'

The inundation of colour upon the younger lady at hearing a name which to her was a world, handled as if it were only an atom, told Miss Aldclyffe that she had divined the truth at last.

'Ah--it is he, is it?' she continued. 'Well, I wanted to know for practical reasons. His example shows that I was not so far wrong in my estimate of men after all, though I only generalized, and had no thought of him.' This was perfectly true.

'What do you mean?' said Cytherea, visibly alarmed.

'Mean? Why that all the world knows him to be engaged to be married, and that the wedding is soon to take place.' She made the remark bluntly and superciliously, as if to obtain absolution at the hands of her family pride for the weak confidences of the night.

But even the frigidity of Miss Aldclyffe's morning mood was overcome by the look of sick and blank despair which the carelessly uttered words had produced upon Cytherea's face. She sank back into a chair, and buried her face in her hands.

'Don't be so foolish,' said Miss Aldclyffe. 'Come, make the best of it. I cannot upset the fact I have told you of, unfortunately. But I believe the match can be broken off.'

'O no, no.'

'Nonsense. I liked him much as a youth, and I like him now. I'll help you to captivate and chain him down. I have got over my absurd feeling

of last night in not wanting you ever to go away from me--of course, I could not expect such a thing as that. There, now I have said I'll help you, and that's enough. He's tired of his first choice now that he's been away from home for a while. The love that no outer attack can frighten away quails before its idol's own homely ways; it is always so.... Come, finish what you are doing if you are going to, and don't be a little goose about such a trumpery affair as that.'

'Who--is he engaged to?' Cytherea inquired by a movement of her lips but no sound of her voice. But Miss Aldclyffe did not answer. It mattered not, Cytherea thought. Another woman--that was enough for her: curiosity was stunned.

She applied herself to the work of dressing, scarcely knowing how. Miss Aldclyffe went on:--

'You were too easily won. I'd have made him or anybody else speak out before he should have kissed my face for his pleasure. But you are one of those precipitantly fond things who are yearning to throw away their hearts upon the first worthless fellow who says good-morning. In the first place, you shouldn't have loved him so quickly: in the next, if you must have loved him off-hand, you should have concealed it. It tickled his vanity: "By Jove, that girl's in love with me already!" he thought.'

To hasten away at the end of the toilet, to tell Mrs. Morris--who

stood waiting in a little room prepared for her, with tea poured out, bread-and-butter cut into diaphanous slices, and eggs arranged--that she wanted no breakfast: then to shut herself alone in her bedroom, was her only thought. She was followed thither by the well-intentioned matron with a cup of tea and one piece of bread-and-butter on a tray, cheerfully insisting that she should eat it.

To those who grieve, innocent cheerfulness seems heartless levity. 'No, thank you, Mrs. Morris,' she said, keeping the door closed. Despite the incivility of the action, Cytherea could not bear to let a pleasant person see her face then.

Immediate revocation--even if revocation would be more effective by postponement--is the impulse of young wounded natures. Cytherea went to her blotting-book, took out the long letter so carefully written, so full of gushing remarks and tender hints, and sealed up so neatly with a little seal bearing 'Good Faith' as its motto, tore the missive into fifty pieces, and threw them into the grate. It was then the bitterest of anguishes to look upon some of the words she had so lovingly written, and see them existing only in mutilated forms without meaning--to feel that his eye would never read them, nobody ever know how ardently she had penned them.

Pity for one's self for being wasted is mostly present in these moods of abnegation.

The meaning of all his allusions, his abruptness in telling her of his love, his constraint at first, then his desperate manner of speaking, was clear. They must have been the last flickerings of a conscience not quite dead to all sense of perfidiousness and fickleness. Now he had gone to London: she would be dismissed from his memory, in the same way as Miss Aldclyffe had said. And here she was in Edward's own parish, reminded continually of him by what she saw and heard. The landscape, yesterday so much and so bright to her, was now but as the banquet-hall deserted--all gone but herself.

Miss Aldclyffe had wormed her secret out of her, and would now be continually mocking her for her trusting simplicity in believing him. It was altogether unbearable: she would not stay there.

She went downstairs and found Miss Aldclyffe had gone into the breakfast-room, but that Captain Aldclyffe, who rose later with increasing infirmities, had not yet made his appearance. Cytherea entered. Miss Aldclyffe was looking out of the window, watching a trail of white smoke along the distant landscape--signifying a passing train. At Cytherea's entry she turned and looked inquiry.

'I must tell you now,' began Cytherea, in a tremulous voice.

'Well, what?' Miss Aldclyffe said.

'I am not going to stay with you. I must go away--a very long way. I am

very sorry, but indeed I can't remain!'

'Pooh--what shall we hear next?' Miss Aldclyffe surveyed Cytherea's face with leisurely criticism. 'You are breaking your heart again about that worthless young Springrove. I knew how it would be. It is as Hallam says of Juliet--what little reason you may have possessed originally has all been whirled away by this love. I shan't take this notice, mind.'

'Do let me go!'

Miss Aldclyffe took her new pet's hand, and said with severity, 'As to hindering you, if you are determined to go, of course that's absurd. But you are not now in a state of mind fit for deciding upon any such proceeding, and I shall not listen to what you have to say. Now, Cythie, come with me; we'll let this volcano burst and spend itself, and after that we'll see what had better be done.' She took Cytherea into her workroom, opened a drawer, and drew forth a roll of linen.

'This is some embroidery I began one day, and now I should like it finished.'

She then preceded the maiden upstairs to Cytherea's own room. 'There,' she said, 'now sit down here, go on with this work, and remember one thing--that you are not to leave the room on any pretext whatever for two hours unless I send for you--I insist kindly, dear. Whilst you stitch--you are to stitch, recollect, and not go mooning out of the

window--think over the whole matter, and get cooled; don't let the foolish love-affair prevent your thinking as a woman of the world. If at the end of that time you still say you must leave me, you may. I will have no more to say in the matter. Come, sit down, and promise to sit here the time I name.'

To hearts in a despairing mood, compulsion seems a relief; and docility was at all times natural to Cytherea. She promised, and sat down. Miss Aldclyffe shut the door upon her and retreated.

She sewed, stopped to think, shed a tear or two, recollected the articles of the treaty, and sewed again; and at length fell into a reverie which took no account whatever of the lapse of time.

4. TEN TO TWELVE O'CLOCK A.M.

A quarter of an hour might have passed when her thoughts became attracted from the past to the present by unwonted movements downstairs. She opened the door and listened.

There were hurryings along passages, opening and shutting of doors, trampling in the stable-yard. She went across into another bedroom, from which a view of the stable-yard could be obtained, and arrived there just in time to see the figure of the man who had driven her from the station vanishing down the coach-road on a black horse--galloping at the top of the animal's speed.

Another man went off in the direction of the village.

Whatever had occurred, it did not seem to be her duty to inquire or meddle with it, stranger and dependent as she was, unless she were requested to, especially after Miss Aldclyffe's strict charge to her. She sat down again, determined to let no idle curiosity influence her movements.

Her window commanded the front of the house; and the next thing she saw was a clergyman walk up and enter the door.

All was silent again till, a long time after the first man had left, he returned again on the same horse, now matted with sweat and trotting behind a carriage in which sat an elderly gentleman driven by a lad in livery. These came to the house, entered, and all was again the same as before.

The whole household--master, mistress, and servants--appeared to have forgotten the very existence of such a being as Cytherea. She almost wished she had not vowed to have no idle curiosity.

Half-an-hour later, the carriage drove off with the elderly gentleman, and two or three messengers left the house, speeding in various directions. Rustics in smock-frocks began to hang about the road opposite the house, or lean against trees, looking idly at the windows

and chimneys.

A tap came to Cytherea's door. She opened it to a young maid-servant.

'Miss Aldclyffe wishes to see you, ma'am.' Cytherea hastened down.

Miss Aldclyffe was standing on the hearthrug, her elbow on the mantel, her hand to her temples, her eyes on the ground; perfectly calm, but very pale.

'Cytherea,' she said in a whisper, 'come here.'

Cytherea went close.

'Something very serious has taken place,' she said again, and then paused, with a tremulous movement of her mouth.

'Yes,' said Cytherea.

'My father. He was found dead in his bed this morning.'

'Dead!' echoed the younger woman. It seemed impossible that the announcement could be true; that knowledge of so great a fact could be contained in a statement so small.

'Yes, dead,' murmured Miss Aldclyffe solemnly. 'He died alone, though

within a few feet of me. The room we slept in is exactly over his own.'

Cytherea said hurriedly, 'Do they know at what hour?'

'The doctor says it must have been between two and three o'clock this morning.'

'Then I heard him!'

'Heard him?'

'Heard him die!'

'You heard him die? What did you hear?'

'A sound I heard once before in my life--at the deathbed of my mother. I could not identify it--though I recognized it. Then the dog howled: you remarked it. I did not think it worth while to tell you what I had heard a little earlier.' She looked agonized.

'It would have been useless,' said Miss Aldclyffe. 'All was over by that time.' She addressed herself as much as Cytherea when she continued, 'Is it a Providence who sent you here at this juncture that I might not be left entirely alone?'

Till this instant Miss Aldclyffe had forgotten the reason of Cytherea's

seclusion in her own room. So had Cytherea herself. The fact now recurred to both in one moment.

'Do you still wish to go?' said Miss Aldclyffe anxiously.

'I don't want to go now,' Cytherea had remarked simultaneously with the other's question. She was pondering on the strange likeness which Miss Aldclyffe's bereavement bore to her own; it had the appearance of being still another call to her not to forsake this woman so linked to her life, for the sake of any trivial vexation.

Miss Aldclyffe held her almost as a lover would have held her, and said musingly--

'We get more and more into one groove. I now am left fatherless and motherless as you were.' Other ties lay behind in her thoughts, but she did not mention them.

'You loved your father, Cytherea, and wept for him?'

'Yes, I did. Poor papa!'

'I was always at variance with mine, and can't weep for him now! But you must stay here always, and make a better woman of me.'

The compact was thus sealed, and Cytherea, in spite of the failure of

her advertisements, was installed as a veritable Companion. And, once more in the history of human endeavour, a position which it was impossible to reach by any direct attempt, was come to by the seeker's swerving from the path, and regarding the original object as one of secondary importance.