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crisis; and finally despatching the trusty Charlotte to attend to the patient, she did not even indulge herself by returning to the boudoir, but betook herself off to her own room, as was her habit at that hour. There we will leave the kind soul, and see for ourselves the scene to her mortal vision denied.

Hartland on being admitted to his cousin's presence was inexpressibly startled at the change which a few days' illness had wrought in her. He had not realized that this change had begun some time before; that the fragile form now before him had been drooping and wasting for some weeks past, and that the strength had been by swift degrees also waning. Accustomed as he had been to seeing Rosamund almost daily, the gradual alteration had been invisible; it had been obliterated by the feverish flush upon her cheek, the fire in her eye, the agitated voice and restless movements—there had been a false brilliancy thrown over all—and it was not till he perceived her divested of all stimulus, and every motive for effort and exertion, that he was convinced that Lady Julia's demonstrative anxiety had not been overdone.

At the first sight, indeed, he felt as if his aunt had scarce been anxious enough. His step involuntarily slackened, and his accents grew tremulous as he drew near the large arm-chair in which the invalid reclined, and made the inquiry, "Are you better, Rosamund?"

"I think so, Hartland." He sat down. "Tell me if I am in the way, you know." "Oh yes, I'll tell you." She smiled, then flushed and paled, and a sense of embarrassment began to creep in. Was it to be an interview of ordinary commonplaces and small-talk, or one fraught with the deepest significance and purport? Each seemed to know that if nothing were now to be breathed of that which was causing alike each heart to beat, one would be as grievously discontented as the other: and yet, who was to speak? who was to begin it?

"I hope you do not feel this room too warm," murmured she at last.

"Oh no; it is very comfortable."

"Aunt Julia would have the fire made up before she left." "She was quite right. We need large fires now;" and he shivered slightly, looked out of the window at the gathering mists, looked again at the brightly blazing fire, and finally looked at her. The last glance was hurried, and almost stealthy—and she knew it was so.

"What have you been doing since I have been up here?"

It seemed as if something must be said by one or other to prevent a blank, awkward silence; and, as usual, the woman was the quicker.

"Nothing that I know of—nothing at all, that I can think of."

"Have you seen anybody? Have you been anywhere?"

"I have not been anywhere, except to King's Common."

"Well?"

He was silent.

"I must say you are not a lively companion," observed poor Rosamund, at her wits' end; and, moreover, a little exasperated that all the task of taking the initiative should be laid upon her.

"Come, think of something to say—something to tell me; and let it be amusing and interesting, if you please. Exert yourself for my entertainment. You were sent here to entertain me; and now, when—" then she suddenly met his eyes, and broke off.

He was looking her full in the face; and struck afresh by her paleness, her feebleness, the dark rims round her eyes, the poor attempt at gaiety—he whole so touching in its pitiful appeal—he could no longer repress evidence of the emotion with which his breast was charged.

"I see," she said, in an altered voice. "I see. You are sorry for me."

He nodded.

"If I thought I could speak about it, and—be—a little kind," continued the speaker, her own breath beginning to come and go, "I should like to say something. Could you come a little nearer?—no, not so near as that," smiling, as he instantly placed a chair at her side; "now you frighten me. It is only that I—I am not very strong, and my voice goes away sometimes, so that I cannot make people hear. Ther., that will do," as he moved a pace or two farther off. "Hartland, I daresay you can guess what it is that I want to say I was very angry with you that night."

"So I saw, Rosamund."

"And I want you first of all to forgive me."

"You mean you wish to forgive me, dear,"—the word slipped out before he knew it, he did not know when he said it.

"I mean nothing of the kind," said Rosamund, firmly. "I mean that I know now that I was wrong, and that I knew it then—though my proud, miserable heart would not acknowledge it; and that it was right and true of you to speak as you did, if it was a little—a little hard to bear;" and her lip quivered. "I have been very wicked. I have been acting a cruel part; and I am frightened and ashamed when I look back upon it," continued she. "It was worse, worse than even you know, Hartland. You don't know what a dreadful, dreadful temptation I had, and how I gave way to it when we two, Major Gilbert and I, were alone together; and I

thought, I fancied no one would ever know how it had come about if we separated, nor whose fault it was. If you had seen how odious I sought to make myself! How I would repel his kindest advances, and refuse his most trifling requests—why need I go into it all? No other man would have borne it for an hour; and you—you would never have come near me again."

He murmured something, she could not catch what.

"You know nothing of this," she repeated, mournfully.

"I saw enough to—to—" stammered he.

"I had fancied no one about me saw anything, till you spoke. Oh, how astonished I was! Well," after a pause,—"well, it is past. I have had time to think of it all;" she covered her face with her hand. "I have thought, and I have tried—to pray. God will help me now to do what is right. I think I see my way clear. I hope it is—I will try to love him—"

Hartland started.

"I will do my best to make up for all these weeks of unkindness, and he will learn to forget them," continued the speaker, endeavouring to be calm. "And you, dear cousin, must learn to forget them too, and that you ever had to give me that evening's warning. It ought to have opened my eyes. I think it did. Only I was so unhappy. But I am happier now—my mind is clearer; I wish to do my duty; and surely to be the wife of a kind, good man like Major Gilbert is no great punishment for all that I have been, and done. I deserve that my self-will and stubbornness should have brought a far, far greater one upon me. If I can only make up to him for all—be to him all that he thinks me—" here again voice failed.

"You mean this, Rosamund?" He spoke at last.

"Indeed I do, Hartland. I have thought it all out, as I have lain in there hour after hour, by night and by day,—you don't know what long, sleepless nights I have had, hearing the hours chime one after another,—and even when I have been sleeping I have had the one thought working in and out of my dreams, till sometimes I could scarcely bear any more. I shall see Frederick to-morrow, if—if I am well enough," and again her faltering accents betrayed the effort,—and when he comes, I shall beg him to overlook all my foolish petulance and coldness. I hope he will put it down to illness—I think he will. It would be best, because I could not explain—"

"Why not?" said Hartland, in a deep, abrupt tone.

"Tell him that I had—had—"

"Ceased to care for him."

"For shame," said Rosamund, indignantly. "you know that I could not do that. For his sake, I could not. If I did it would be—it would be—oh, you know as well as I what could be the only result of that. I must—yes, I must let the past alone, and in the future he shall have nothing to complain of."

"Can you do this, Rosamund?"

"I can," she clasped her hands—"I can."

"Your mind is quite made up?"

"Quite, quite; nothing can alter it now."

He laid his hand on hers, and felt that she was weeping.

The gathering dusk had settled over the little room, and hid the faces of its occupants; the blaze of firelight had died down, and betrayed no secrets.

Silently the two sat for a few moments, thus.

She thought that he had accepted her promise, and that she had his approval,—he felt all further speech to be useless.

Neither spoke again, and presently he rose, and went softly out.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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Mr. Cox is a well known carpenter and joiner of Hartland.

Hartland, Carleton Co., 7 30, 1893.

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