

THE
SHADOW OF A CRIME.

A Drama,

IN THREE ACTS.

CHARLES SMITH CHELTNAM,

AUTHOR OF

Edendale, The Greenwich Pensioner, A Lesson in Love, More
Precious than Gold, A Fairy's Father, The Ticket of Leave
Man's Wife; or Six Years After, Mrs. Green's Snug
Little Business, Dinner for Nothing, Slowtop's
Engagements, A Lucky Escape, Aurora Floyd,
Deborah. &c, &c, &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
89, STRAND, LONDON.

THE SHADOW OF A CRIME.

First produced at the Theatre Royal, Belfast, (under the management of Mr. J. F. Warden) on Monday, August, 23, 1869.

CHARACTERS.

CYRIL EDGEWORTH (*a painter*) . . . Mr. J. F. Warden.
PHILIP RASHLEIGH (*a spendthrift*) Mr. W. Lowe.
REDWAY (*his friend and confidant*) Mr. W. F. Perry.
LORD MIDFORD Mr. E. Concauen.
MERRITON (*a retired iron master*) Mr. J. Paulton.

RALPH HOLDEN { *steward at*
Greywood Hall } Mr. J. Stinton.

DAVINCI MAGUILP { *a portrait*
painter } Mr. T. Nerney.

SERVANTS, &C.

GRACE..... Madlle. Beatrice.

CONSTANCE { *Lady Slowburn's*
daughter } Miss Grace Montford.

LADY SLOWBURN Miss Kate Reeves.

MRS. DAVINCI MAGUILP . . . Miss Annie Sinclair.

MRS. GIBBS, *her ill-used mother* . Mrs. C. Stanton.

SUSAN Miss Kate Lawler.

SCENE.—ACT I. : Greywood Hall, Cornwall; Acts II. and III. in London. TIME: 1867-8.

An interval of twelve months between the first and succeeding acts.

ACT I.—THE CRIME.
ACT II.—UNDER THE SHADOW.
ACT III.—THE SHADOW DISPELLED.

Time of representation—Two hours and twenty minutes.

COSTUMES.—Modern. All change after the First Act.

THE
SHADOW OF A CRIME.

—◆—
ACT I.

THE CRIME.

SCENE.—*A Drawing-room in Greywood Hall. A wide fire-place with sculptured mantel-piece, L., a wool fire on the hearth. A door, F. L. C. Other doors, R. and L. A large recessed window, giving a view of a terrace overlooking Greywood Park, F. R. c. An easy chair near the fire. Table, with lamp, a tray with coffee, cups, &c, L. c. Chairs, &c. A coffee-pot by the fire-side. A console between the door and window in F., medicine bottles, &c, on it.*

A SERVANT *discovered arranging the lamp. Enter MR. MERRITON and RALPH HOLDEN, D.L., talking.*

MERRI. (to SERVANT) Let Lady Belfield know that I am here, (*exit SERVANT, R. L.—to RALPH HOLDEN*) You are wrong, Holden, you are wrong, I tell you, to keep such company, which suits neither your age nor your position.

RALPH. Pah ! I know you can't bear Redway because he's an affable, clever fellow.

MERRI. Affable—because, in spite of his elegant manners, he is not above getting drunk with you at the Greywood Arms.

RALPH. Mr. Merriton !

MERRI. And you think him clever because, in spite of your own talent as a billiard-player, he can almost beat you, playing blindfold.

RALPH. Well, whatever he is—I like him.

MERRI. So much the worse for you. I should like to

know what he is doing in the neighbourhood still, now that his errand to Lady Belfield is done ?

RALPH. You think his errand *is* done ?

MERRI. Unless his friend and confidant, Mr. Philip Rashleigh, has commissioned him to extort by force the ten thousand pounds which she has positively refused to lend to her graceless nephew, I don't see what further business he can have down here.

RALPH. You're quite right, he hasn't any—in fact, he went back to London this afternoon.

MERRI. Pleasant journey to him, and hoping that he has not troubled himself to take a return ticket. The man alarms me on your account.

RALPH. Ah! Well, it doesn't seem to me that Lady Belfield has treated Mr. Philip very kindly, in refusing him the money he sent Redway for.

MERRI. She has acted like a prudent woman. It is hardly five years since Philip Rashleigh came into his fortune of eighty thousand pounds, and a year ago, every penny of it had been squandered, in the devil only knows what round of vice and extravagance.

RALPH. Well, it was his own; he had a right to spend it how he liked.

MERRI. Yes, and Lady Belfield's fortune is her own, to dispose of as she thinks best—and what she thinks best at present is, to refuse a halfpenny of it to Mr. Philip Rashleigh. Now, listen to me, Holden ; you and I were born in the same village ; you are the son of a worthy surgeon, who gave you an education which you have not made the most of—I am the son of a small farmer, who had me taught to read and write-----

RALPH. (*sneeringly*) And keep accounts.

MERRI. True; and I quickly learned that one can't earn one pound and spend two without getting into debt.

RALPH. (*impatiently*) Oh ! you were always a model of prudence; step by step, you have become ironmaster, railway contractor, millionaire, and you are now looking about for a seat in Parliament. You have met with nothing but luck, I have had nothing but misfortunes.

MERRI. Misfortunes ?

RALPH. Yes ; not the least of which is to be preached at by-----

MERRI. By the loan through whose interest you were appointed agent for the Greywood estate.

RALPH. From which post—you are, no doubt, going to

add—I should have been dismissed a dozen times, but for-----

MERRI. But for the intercession of your daughter, for whom Lady Belfield has long shown an affectionate regard. Grace is a good girl, Holden.

RALPH. My daughter is—what she ought to be

MERRI. I wish as much could be said for her father.

RALPH. Oh! are you going to begin again ?

MERRI. I've something more to say to you. You know Lady Belfield's history ? The daughter and heiress of a Manchester manufacturer, about twenty years ago she married the late Lord Belfield, to whom she brought a fortune of a hundred thousand pounds. Lord Belfield was a very worthy nobleman, but that did not prevent his wife living unhappily with him.

RALPH. I know all about that. Her husband's family turned up their aristocratic noses at her on one side, and on the other, her brother quarreled with Lord Belfield on political grounds ; the result of all being that young, handsome, and rich as she was-----

MERRI. She was condemned to a life of exile—here in Cornwall.

RALPH. Well, what need is there of telling me all this?

MERRI. I want you to understand that her illness is much more serious than is supposed. We must be prepared for her death and, therefore—as, for the last two years, you have had the entire control of her money affairs—I am anxious to know, whether, in case she dies, you are prepared to render an account to her representatives.

RALPH. Her representatives ? She will only leave *one*, her brother's son—Mr. Philip Rashleigh.

MERRI. That is to say, if she dies intestate.

RALPH. (*with a questioning look*) Well, she-----

MERRI. You, possibly, hope that she will not leave a will, because, with the help of your friend Redway, you think it would be easy enough to settle accounts with Mr. Philip Rashleigh.

RALPH. Do you suppose she means to disinherit her nephew ?

MERRI. Otherwise she need not have taken the trouble to make a will.

RALPH. A will! She has made a will, then ?

MERRI. She has.

RALPH. (*aside*) Redway's suspicion was well-founded, then ! (*aloud*) And to whom has she left her fortune ?

MERRI. That's her affair ; but I am pretty sure Mr.

Philip Rashleigh will not pocket much, if any of it. Now whoever inherits, the settlement of accounts with them will not be so easy.

RALPH. Perhaps not—especially if she has left her property to her husband's relatives ; to her sister-in-law, Lady Slowburn, who used to call her Lord Belfield's "housekeeper," and who has taken up her quarter at the Hall, with her daughter.

MERRI. It is for that reason I have given you warning. Nearly forty thousand pounds must have passed through your hands during the last three years, and the expenditure has not been more than a third of that sum.

RALPH. Don't be at all uneasy, (*a bell rings, without.*)

MERRI. That is her ladyship's bell. Do not leave the Hall; I may have more to tell you, by-and-bye.

RALPH, (*aside*) I know all I want to know already.

Enter GRACE and MRS. GIBBS, D. R. (MRS. GIBBS goes into D.F. L. c.)

MERRI. (*to GRACE*) Good evening, my dear.

GRACE. Ah! good evening, Mr. Merriton ; I did not know you had come to the Hall.

MERRI. I have just been telling your father that Lady Belfield has sent for me. (*looking kindly at her*) But, my dear child, you are looking pale.

RALPH. Yes, you are looking decidedly pale. I thought you were gone to bed. It's late.

GRACE. I should have gone to rest, father, but her ladyship seemed specially to desire that I should remain with her to-night.

RALPH. To-night!—But you are worn out, already—I can't have it.

GRACE. Oh, yes, father.

RALPH. I say, no ! I'll not allow it.

GRACE. But it is my duty, father.

RALPH. Duty or no duty, I say that to-night-----

GRACE. Speak for me, Mr. Merriton.

MERRI. Come, come, Holden ; you fear that the continued fatigue will be too much for her ; but sick people have their fancies—and this may be the last advice Lady Belfield will require.

GRACE. (*tenderly*) Oh, yes! that is what was in my mind, father. If I am to lose my benefactress, let me have, at least, the consolation of satisfying her latest wishes. Let me watch by her bed-side to-night.

RALPH. (*aside*) The thing's impossible!

Enter MRS. GIBBS, D.F. L. c.

MRS. G. Her ladyship is ready to see Mr. Merrington.

MERRI. Come in with me, Grace. I shall find you here, Holden?

RALPH. (*moodily*) I don't know.

GRACE. Beg for me, Mr. Merriton—that I may be allowed to remain up with her ladyship.

MERRI. Go in and announce me, my dear. I'll try and arrange all this. (*exit with* GRACE, D. F. L. C.)

MRS. G. (*placing coffee-pot on the fire*) You appear to have a daughter as tries your patience, Mr. Holding?

RALPH. (*aside*) What's to be done?

MRS. G. I always will say, as only them as have daughters knows what half a parient's troubles is.

RALPH. (*aside*) She must be got out of the way! (*reflecting.*)

MRS. G. My lot it has been only to have one which, in regard to handsomeness, proud I was—eleven months and four days after Gibbs led me to the hymineral altar—but little did I then think as it isn't always handsome is as handsome does with grow'd up daughters of one's own flesh and blood!—lar otherwise!

RALPH. (*aside*) I'd better stop here on the chance of finding some pretext for sending her away.

MRS. G. And *my* daughter, Mr. Holding, have a born right to the name of Gibbs—her legitimate father's name, which nobody can, with truth, deny.

RALPH. (*surlily*) Well, what is that to me?

MRS. G. I only mean to say that if *my* daughter—as has a right to her father's own name—gives *me* trouble, it isn't so wonderful if *your* daughter troubles *you*. I didn't go away, nobody knows where, for six months at a time, and come back at last with a daughter two or three years old! No one can say that of *me*! Everybody knows when and where my daughter was born—ungrateful though she have proved.

RALPH. Much good may the knowledge be to everybody!

MRS. G. Which, whatever you may think of it, Mr. Holding, seems more than they are likely to know in respect of *some* people's daughters. Howsoever, troubles enough I have had with my own—born correctly as she was, and handsomer than I wish she ever had been! Married, my daughter is—and any day a copy of her marriage lines is somewhere to be had for half-a-crown—

but that it is as has filled to the brim the cup of her ingratitude, in my heart. After me letting her be painted at eighteen-pence an hour, and exhibited in pictures as Venuses come up from the bottom of the sea, and Andromache* frightening away the wild beasts of the ocean, and Eves a feeding of horrid curly snakes with sour green apples—isn't it enough to try my patience, that, with all that done for her, she should go and throw herself away upon nothing better than a painter fellow ! (*moving the easy chair nearer to the fire.*)

RALPH. Ah ! [*seeing her moving the chair*] What are you doing there ?

MRS. G. Why, seeing whether I can make myself comfortable for the night, since forced I am by that ungrateful girl to go out nursing for my bread, and hard enough it comes to me, however soft the cushions of the chair may be, and in that respect I don't complain-----

RALPH. (*aside*) She watches, too !

MRS. G. Never have I seen him, but only let me ever get face to face with the fellow as my girl have married! A coffee-pot a boiling over will be cool to his wife's only living parient remaining ! (*attending to the coffee-pot.*)

RALPH. (*aside*) If I could only send her to sleep ! (*moves towards the console at back*) What have you got there—coffee ?

MRS. G. Yes. Bless you, if I didn't take something to keep me awake, I should precious quickly be off as sound as a church ; and so will your daughter, if she does not take some, and that strong, too.

RALPH. (*snatching a phial from the console and putting it in his pocket—aside*) I have it ! (*aloud—moving towards the fire-place*) You are quite right, Mrs. Gibbs.

MRS. G. Hard it is that I have had to learn such things—and me with a daughter as has a figure as might have fitted her for any station ! (*going to console*) Now as I've got all ready for the night, I must look after her ladyship's composing drops, (*tahing up a bottle, and reading the label*) Ten drops of laudanum to be added." That's it. But wherever's the laudanum-bottle? Good gracious! your daughter ought 'o have seen to these things being ready ; but these young girls think of nothing but worrying their parient's out of their lives ! And just upon midnight it is—and three miles if it's an inch to the nearest chemist's!

RALPH. Perhaps, Mrs. Bell, the housekeeper, may have some in the family medicine-chest.

MRS. G. Ah ! I'll go and ask her. Don't leave the room

till I come back—for fear as there should be a ring — which when everything's going wrong, and nobody in the way to answer it, there's pretty sure to be. *(exit, D. R.)*

RALPH. I must not lose a moment! *(taking the phial from his pocket, and pouring the contents into the coffee-pot)* That will ensure her sleeping the night through ! *(listening)* Back already! No!—footsteps on the terrace! *(going quickly to the window and opening it)* Who can be there at this time of night? *(REDWAY appears)* Mr. Red way ! *(REDWAY enters by the window)* If you are seen here-----

REDWAY. Don't be uneasy ' half-a-dozen worthy persons saw me off this afternoon—for London. A little change of costume, effected in the railway-carriage, enabled me to alight without fear of recognition at the station from which I had taken my departure five or six hours before. Selecting one of the quietest inns on the outskirts of the town, I made myself as conspicuous as possible—in the character of an invalid; retired early to my bed-room, and, as soon as all was still in the house, slipped out by a back door, by which road I shall return to my room, with the comfortable feeling that, whatever may happen to-night, *my alibi* will hold water! What I have come to tell you is—that this affair must be finished to-night or never. If there is no will— things will take their course ; but if there *is* a will—five thousand pounds for you, if you get possession of it and hand it to me.

RALPH. If it exists, it shall be in your hands within the next two hours, *(quickly)* Hush! someone is coming! *(REDWAY retreats to the window)* Wait for me in the shrubbery at the north end of the terrace.

(exit REDWAY—HOLDEN closes the window.)

Enter LADY SLOWBURN and CONSTANCE, D. L.

LADY S. *(seeing HOLDEN move from the window)* Is that you, Holden ? Are you going to remain at the Hall during the night ?

RALPH. I had no intention of doing so; but—if your ladyship desires it-----

LADY S. No, no, not at all. Your house is only a stone's throw off; it will be easy to send for you, should your presence be needed ; but we are in hopes that Lady Bel-field will pass a tranquil night.

RALPH I will go home at once, then.

CONSTANCE. Will you, before you leave the Hall. Mr. Holden, see that the servants have properly secured all the doors and windows ? I don't know why, but in this old

house I feel constantly in a state of tremor after night-fall. I daresay it's only my fancy, but the great rooms, long corridors, and creaking window-frames, make me horribly nervous.

LADY S. Constance, I'm ashamed of you for being so silly.

RALPH. (*to CONSTANCE*) To take away all cause for apprehension, miss, I will myself see to the fastening up of the house, (*aside*) That will enable me to secure an easy entrance! (*aloud*) Good night, ladies. (*going.*)

LADY S. Good night, Mr. Holden.

RALPH. (*aside*) Ha! Merriton coming back ! I may hear something. (*slips behind the hangings of the window.*)

Enter MERRITON, D.F. L. C.

MERRI Still up, ladies ?

LADY S. Oh, yes, my dear Mr. Merriton—What have you to tell us?

MERRI. Everything is, I imagine, as you could wish?

LADY S. You relieve my mind greatly ; for, really, Lady Belfield's reception of us has been so—so cold.

CONSTANCE. She has scarcely addressed a word to us since we have been here !

LADY S. And yet, as soon as we heard from you that she was in danger, we delayed not a moment in hastening to her bed-side.

CONSTANCE. In the middle of the London season—at great inconvenience.

LADY S. It was our duty, of course, Lady Belfield being so nearly related to us.

MERRI. And, as I had the honour to inform you before you undertook the journey—especially as she contemplated naming one or both of you in her will as legatees.

LADY S. Really, Mr. Merriton, you make us pay somewhat dear for your services.

MERRI. My dear Lady Slowburn. there is no need for either of us to waste sentiment. You do not like Lady Belfield—she does not like you ; nevertheless she is prepared to leave your daughter a considerable portion of her fortune.

LADY S. (*eagerly*) Are you sure of it?

MERRI. Quite : but she attaches a condition to the inheritance. Of all the members of your family, there was but one who was friendly to Lady Belfield — the late Lord Midford.

LADY S. My cousin, Lord Midford, was a man of only

too much gallantry. I have no wish to say anything more, than that we were all aware how warmly he defended her, and put himself forward in oppositon to the feeling of his family as her friend, as long as he lived.

MERRI. Her dearest friend. Pardon  or speaking so plainly. If Lady Belfield, before make making her will, had not been informed of the contemplated marriage between your daughter and the present Lord Midford, his son-----

LADY S. I am sure, Constance, there is nothing for you to blush at. I am happy to think that from the moment Lord Midford made known to me his preference for you, he was informed of the fact of your having no fortune to bring him.

MERRI. But if, instead of having no fortune, your daughter had a very large one to give him—would that —

CONSTANCE. Oh, sir!

LADY S. My love!—If my daughter's marriage with Lord Midford has not already taken place, it is because I made my consent to it conditional—on his waiting six months.

CONSTANCE. And five months have passed, and only yesterday he wrote to mamma, saying that he cared nothing for my not being rich.

MERRI. Very well ; I may tell you that it is on the ground of this marriage that she has arranged her will.

CONSTANCE. Does she know my Arthur—Lord Midford?

LADY S. No, she has never seen him. I'll tell you all about it some other time, my love.

MERRI. I'll go back to Lady Belfield.

Enter GRACE, D. F. L. C.

The will may now be sealed up. I shall deposit it in one of the drawers of the secretaire in her room, the key of which she keeps under her pillow ; (CONSTANCE *perceives* GRACE, *who bows to her politely*) for, even in her last moments, her mind is perfectly unclouded, (*exit, D. F. L. c.*)

LADY S. This is almost beyond my hopes.

CONSTANCE. Hush, mamma! The girl Holden is in the room.

LADY S. (*turning*) Ah, is it you, my dear? Are you going to sit up again to-night?

GRACE. I am waiting Lady Belfield's orders. My father wishes me not to sit up.

CONSTANCE. He is quite right; you are looking pale and

worn, and you will soon lose what complexion you have if you overtax yourself so much.

GRACE. I should not at all mind that, miss, if anything I could do could bring back Lady Belfield's health.

CONSTANCE. You are a very devoted servant, indeed.

GRACE. Servant!

LADY S. (*quickly*) My love, you forget, Grace has been brought up at the Hall; and I have little doubt Lady Belfield has remembered her in her will.

GRACE. Her will, madam ! Oh, is she so very seriously ill ? (*to MERRITON, who enters from D.F. L. C.*) Dear Mr. Merriton, please tell me truly-----

MERRI. In a moment, (*aside to LADY SLOWBURN*) The will is deposited, as I told you, in the second drawer on the left hand of the secretaire.

RALPH. (*aside*) Thanks for the information.

LADY S. (*after having spoken in a whisper to CONSTANCE*) Then, Mr. Merriton—(*seeing GRACE*) What are you doing there, Grace,—listening?

GRACE. I, madam ! I am only waiting to learn whether Lady Belfield wishes me to remain with her to-night.

MERRI. No, my dear, no.

GRACE. DO you know why ?

MERRI. (*quickly*) She knows you are very much fatigued, and wishes you to get some rest.

RALPH. (*aside*) That difficulty is removed.

(*exit noiselessly through the window.*)

GRACE. But is she so very—so very ill ?

MERRI. (*aside to her*) Hush!

GRACE. (*in the same tone*) What is it?

MERRI. When all the rest are gone to their rooms you must come to her bed-side.

GRACE. But why this mystery ?

MERRI. Ask no questions, my dear child ; the interview will be more important than you think.

GRACE. Pray tell me!

MERRI. Plush, we are observed! (*aloud*) Ah, here is Mrs. Gibbs.

Enter MRS. GIBBS, D.F., speaking.

MRS. G. Drat the fellow! will he never come back with that laudanum ?

MERRI. What's the matter, Mrs. Gibbs ?

MRS. G. Matter enough Mr. Merrington! what with a daughter as has throwed herself away in marriage, and this groom as hasn't come back with the laudanum—(*seeing*

GRACE) Oh, there you are ! What have you done with the little bottle of laudanum, that was along with the medicine?

GRACE I, Mrs. Gibbs!

MRS. G. Oh, of course, you don't know where you put it, and I've been looking everywhere for it, to give my lady her sleeping-draught.

GRACE. I'll help you search for it.

MERRI. No, no ; you go to your room and rest yourself. *(aside)* Be ready, when all is quiet.

GRACE. *(aside to him)* I will.

CONSTANCE. Come, mamma, let us go up to our room; I'm overpowered with sleep.

MERRI. I have some letters to write before going to bed. Good night, ladies.

LADY S. *(caressingly)* Good night, Mr. Merriton. *(aside to him)* In the event of—of anything happening—the key is under her pillow ?

MERRI. I myself placed it there by her direction.

(exit, D. L.)

LADY S. *(to GRACE)* Good night, child.

GRACE. Good night, madam.

LADY S. You must take care of your health, my dear, for we hope that our relative will long require your excellent services. *(exit with CONSTANCE, D. L.)*

GRACE. Oh, that I may be allowed to serve her all my life. *(she appears to fall into a reverie.)*

MRS. G. *(taking the coffee-pot from the fireside)* Patience is a great virtue, I daresay, to them as has never been worried with an ungrateful child, and things as is wanted nowhere to be found ! *(going to table with the coffee)* Since there's no dratted laudanum to make my lady sleep, there's all the more reason for me to take something to keep me awake, *(pours out coffee, then seats herself in easy chair.)*

GRACE. *(aside)* What can be the reason that I'm to return secretly ?

MRS. G. *(drinking)* I've made it strong enough to keep me awake for a week. I'll not give you any, as you are not going to sit up. *(drinking.)*

GRACE. But you appear more tired than myself. Best for a few minutes, while I keep watch for you.

MRS. G. Well, take a little coffee, then, but not much, for it's as strong as anything, it is ! *(drinks.)*

GRACE. *(pouring out coffee)* I'll not take more than half a cup.

MRS. G. (*drinking, then setting the cup down*) You'll find it wants a good deal of sugar, it's so uncommon strong. (*settling down in her chair*) Very odd ! if I hadn't known that strong coffee makes you wakeful, something else—and liker to ardent spirits in character—I might have thought I'd been drinking by mistake. You'll rouse me, my dear, if I *should* happen to doze.

GRACE. (*tasting the coffee*) You are right, Mrs. Gibbs—this coffee is indeed very strong.

MRS. G. (*her eyes closing*) Sugar-----

GRACE. (*again tasting the coffee*) And it has a strange taste, as if-----

MRS. G. (*talking incoherently*) With such a figure as yours, Henrietta—throwing of yourself away !

GRACE. (*putting down the cup, and looking closely into MRS. GIBBS'S face*) How strange ! She sleeps! and yet her sleep does not seem natural. What can this mean? (*attempting to rouse her*) Mrs. Gibbs !—Mrs. Gibbs !

MRS. G. I told you it would want a good deal of sugar. (*her head sinks forward.*)

GRACE. Mrs. Gibbs! do you hear me speak to you? (*kneels, so as to be better able to see her face*) Mrs. Gibbs—no, she is soundly asleep ! (*listening*) All is quiet in the house ; perhaps I had better go at once to my lady's bedside.

Enter RALPH HOLDEN, by the window, cautiously.

What could Mr. Merriton mean, when he said that the interview would be important ?

RALPH. (*aside*) The old woman sleeps soundly—I have not a moment to lose ! (*exit quickly into D. F. L. C.*)

GRACE. (*rising slowly and thoughtfully: turns and sees RALPH enter the door. For a moment she stands as if petrified*) Heavens! No, no, it is not possible! I seemed to see—(*her eyes fixed on door*) Wake! for heaven's sake, rouse yourself, Mrs. Gibbs ! How heavily she sleeps ! No, no, I must have been deceived! (*going to the doors, R. and, L.*) The doors are both closed—no one could have entered the room—it must have been an illusion. Long sleeplessness has weakened my faculties. I shall hardly have strength to reach her room—I feel so faint—so very faint, (*she sinks down upon a chair.*)

MRS. G. (*murmuring in her sleep*) Drat—that groom !

GRACE. Ah! if she would only wake ! Mrs. Gibbs! I—(*a moment of silence, then a sound, as of a chair being overturned, heard, inside of D. F. L. c., followed by the ringing*)

of a bell and stifled shrieks, a female voice calling " Grace ! Grace ! " She rises with a low cry, and is about to rush to the door, but shrinks back and crouches beside the chair of MRS. GIBBS, on seeing RALPH hastily entering by the door)
My father ! Oh, then it was no illusion !

RALPH. *(rushes to the window and opens it—REDWAY appears)* Are you there, Mr. Redway ?

GRACE. *(aside)* Mr. Redway !

REDWAY. I heard a cry and thought you might want assistance.

RALPH. Let us get away from here as fast as we can ! She was awake, shrieked out, and I was obliged to—to—silence her !

REDWAY. The devil!—but the will ?

RALPH. I have it. What of Mr. Rashleigh's five thousand pounds ?

REDWAY. Come with me and the money shall be yours.

RALPH. Quick ! quick, then ! I hear some one moving.

(exit hurriedly with REDWAY through window.)

GRACE. My father and Mr. Redway ! They spoke of Philip Rashleigh—of a will! *(with wild terror)* Merciful heaven ! what has happened? *(she hurries out at D. F. L. C.)*

Enter MERRITON with two SERVANTS, bearing candles, L.

MERRI. What can have been the meaning of those cries, and that violent ringing? *(going to MRS. GIBBS)* The nurse asleep ! *(shaking her)* My good woman! All this is very strange. Where is Grace? *(calls)* Grace! Grace! *(he is about to enter at door, F. L. c, when GRACE appears at the doorway.)*

GRACE. Mr. Merriton ! Oh! hush ! hush !

MERRI. What has happened?

GRACE. *(hastily)* Nothing, nothing ! I know nothing ! Oh, sir, it is a horrible dream !

MERRI. My dear child, collect your senses. What was the meaning of those cries ? *(going towards door, F. L. C.)*

GRACE. Oh, pray don't go in !

MERRI. Not go in—good heavens !

GRACE. Yes, yes ; go in ! Oh, that I were dead, too !

MERRI. Dead ? *(after looking at her for a moment, hurries out at door, F.L.C.)*

GRACE. *(aside)* It was my father ! What—what shall I do! What shall I say ! Oh! I can do nothing but fly—fly from the sight of all who know me !

Enter LADY SLOWBURN *and* CONSTANCE, D. L.

LADY S. (*eagerly*) What has happened ?

GRACE. I do not know—I know nothing.

LADY S. Let Mr. Holden be sent for instantly.

(*exit a* SERVANT, D. R.)

GRACE. My father! No, no, no! it was not he ! it was not he!

LADY S. Have you lost your senses, girl!

GRACE. Oh, my poor lady !

LADY S. Lady Belfield!— what of her? Speak, girl! what of Lady Belfield?

Enter MERRITON, *from* D. F. L. C, *speaking as he enters.*

MERRI. Dead! She has been murdered in her bed !

Enter RALPH HOLDEN, D.R., *with* SERVANTS, *carrying lights.*

CONSTANCE. Murdered ! Oh, mamma, take me away !

GRACE. My dear benefactress, murdered.!

RALPH. Is it possible ? — by whom ?

GRACE. (*aside*) My father !—here !

LADY S. Again I say, speak, girl! You know something ----

GRACE. (*mildly*) No, no! I know nothing! I saw nothing!

MERRI. Calm yourself, child ; fear nothing, and tell all you know of this horrible affair.

GRACE. (*with shriek of terror*) Let me die! let me die! (*she rushes out at* D. R.—*Tableau.*)

END OF ACT FIRST.

ACT II.

UNDER THE SHADOW.

SCENE.—*A studio in Edgeworth's house at Kensington. The walls and sides of the room, decorated with sketches, armour, &c, &c, a cabinet at back, c. A door concealed by a portiere, F. L. c, another door L. An easel, with a full length portrait of Merriton on it, R., an arm-chair, &c, on a small dais, c. A sofa, L., in front of it a table, with alarum, prints, &c, chairs, &c, &c.*

MERRITON *discovered seated on the dais, c*, MAGUILP *painting his portrait*, R. RASHLEIGH *lying upon the sofa*, L., *smoking*, REDWAY *astride upon a chair*, L. c.

MAGUILP. (*to MERRITON*) Might I trouble you to look a little more to the right—a little more.

RASH. By Jove, Davinci, that's a good idea! political! Whenever you paint the portraits of men who have made great fortunes in business, always make them looking well to the *right*—suggesting a flattering distinction between past and present, right and left-handed views.

MERRI. Mr. Rashleigh, you have taken the liberty to indulge in this kind of pleasantry several times during the past twelvemonths.

RASH. (*rising and going towards him*) It's because my jokes, like history and my animosities, have a knack of repeating themselves. I have not forgotten that by your kind officiousness, I was near losing my aunt's fortune.

MERRI. Don't forget, Mr. Rashleigh, that you owe your succession to a double crime—a murder and the robbery of a will, that disinherited you.

REDWAY. Nonsense; there was no will.

MERRI. How do *you* happen to know that?

REDWAY. Why, I was down at Greywood at the time.

MERRI. On the night when the will was stolen?

REDWAY. No; I had gone up to London—hours before—as I proved at the inquest.

MERRI. Proved!

REDWAY. What do you happen to mean by that?

MERRI. I'll keep my meaning to myself, since it does not at once suggest itself to you.

REDWAY. Take care, Mr. Merriton!

RASH. Tut! don't be put out by anything that Merriton says: he means no harm—in spite of his constantly repeating his malicious little story of a will! We all know who killed my equally close-fisted and unfortunate aunt.

MERRI. You mean Grace Holden?

RASH. The inquiry I set on foot put the question of her guilt beyond doubt; every circumstance of the case went dead against her. In spite of her father's command that she should go to bed, she insisted on remaining up; then there was the old nurse, sent to sleep with the very laudanum that was known to have passed through the girl Holden's hands; then, to crown all, when she is discovered almost red-handed, she flies from the Hall towards the sea,

and makes away with herself. The facts are as clear as daylight—and so an intelligent British coroner's jury thought then.

REDWAY. Strange her body was never found!

RASH. (*aside to him*) Hold your tongue!

REDWAY. (*aside*) I can't help thinking of the poor girl!

RASH. The devil take the whole affair—I'm sick of hearing it talked of ! (MRS. MAGUILP'S *voice heard without calling* "Vinci! Vinci!") Aha! here come's the fair Henrietta; now we shall have something pleasanter to temper our wits on ! (*throws himself negligently on the sofa again.*)

MAGUILP. (*uneasily*) I hope, Rashleigh you'll not forget-----

RASH. You mean, you hope I *will* forget that before you made the exquisite Henrietta Mrs. Davinci Maguilp, she and I-----

REDWAY. Married ! I'd no notion Maguilp was married!

RASH. To the most enormous extent!

Enter MRS. MAGUILP, D. L.

MRS. M. (*calling as she enters; she wears a very décolleté dress with a long shirt, over which she occasionally trips, as if unused to wearing it*) Vinci ! are you a coming to your lunch ? Oh! I beg parding Mr. Merrington; I thought your setting was over.

MAGUILP. Sitting, my love ! *Sit-ting!*

MRS. M. What?

MAGUILP. Nothing ; it's of no consequence.

MRS. M. Oh ! I didn't know *you* was here, Rashleigh !

MAGUILP. (*nervously, to MR. MERRITON*) My wife, Mr. Merriton. (MERRITON *bows to her politely; she just returns the salutation and turns again to RASHLEIGH.*)

RASH. (*to her*) Allow me to introduce you to a friend of mine, just returned from—Serlingapatam—Mr. Redway.

REDWAY. (*rising and bowing*) Happy to make the acquaintance of a lady whom I have so much admired—on canvas.

RASH. (*aside to him*) Of whom you have admired so much, you mean ?

MRS. M. (*making him a deep curtsey and stumbling*) Drat the dress ! You're very perlite, I'm sure.

MAGUILP. Po-lite, my love! *po-po-lite.*

MRS. M. What did you say, Vinci ?

MAGUILP. Only that—Mr. Rashleigh and his friend will take lunch with us.

MRS. M. That will be jolly! only you'll have to look sharp about it; because, you know, you've got to paint in the legs of that ballet-dancer to-day. What do you think of that for a swindle, Rashleigh? This madame or made-mezelle, or whatever she is, wants to get a first-class engagement at St. Petersburg; so, what is she going to do but have a portrait of herself painted—with *my* legs, because her own are mere clothes props!

RASH. While yours—witness all the graces that have been painted for the last five years!

MRS. M. Yes, and the Venus's too! the Minervy's is always draped, so, of course, anything will do for *them*,

MAGUILP. My love!

MRS. M. What now?

MAGUILP. Nothing!

REDWAY. (*looking round the studio*) You must have found it rather tiresome to sit for all the studies I see here?

MRS. M. Oh! those are not studies of me. This studio ain't Vinci's.

MAGUILP. No; it belongs to a friend of mine, who lent it me while he was away in Switzerland, and with whom I am living here, for a-while.

RASH. He seems to do deucedly little work, your friend Edgeworth; for, often as I have dropped in upon you lately, I've never even caught sight of him.

MAGUILP. He lives rather retired.

MRS. M. Rather? confoundedly, I should say, if I was his wife! (*a tap heard at D. L.*) Come in!—If that's the ballet-dancer, what's to be done about her-----? (*another tap sharply*) Come in!

Enter LORD MIDFORD, D. L.

LORD M. (*at door*) I beg pardon—I fear I have made a mistake-----

MERRI. (*recognising the voice*) Lord Midford!

LORD M. (*advancing*) Mr. Merriton!

MRS. M. (*aside*) A nobilman!

RASH. (*without turning towards LORD MIDFORD*) How do, Midford?

LORD M. (*distantly*) Good day, Mr. Rashleigh.

REDWAY. (*aside to RASHLEIGH*) Who's Lord Midford?

RASH. He has lately married Lady Slowburn's daughter.

REDWAY. (*aside*) That's worth knowing.

LORD M. Pray excuse me; my visit is to Mr. Cyril Edgeworth. He is not at home, perhaps?

MAGUILP. The fact is, my lord,—he is, and he is not.

MRS. M. Vinci means, my lord, that when Edgeworth is at home with his wife he's never at home to nobody else. That's about the fact, my lord. But, if you want to see him—he'll open the door to me, my lord.

LORD M. If I might trouble you so much, (*he bows.*)

MRS. M. Oh, my lord! (*attempts to make a very deep curtsy and stumbles*) Drat the dress ! (*RASHLEIGH laughs*) Don't you be a fool, Rashleigh! or I'll make you laugh the other side of your mouth ! Anyone can see that *you're* not a nobilman ! (*sailing out grandly at D. L.*)

MAGUILP. Will your lordship be seated.

LORD M. Pray don't disturb yourself, (*bowing, then turning to MERRITON*) You've not forgotten, I hope, that you are engaged to dine with us this evening—and for Lady Midford's party afterwards ?

MERRI. Oh, no! I shall be at my post.

RASH. I say, Davinci, it's deucedly odd of your friend Edgeworth, to keep his wife shut up like an *odalisque* ! Did he marry a model, like you ?

MAGUILP. (*irritated*) I don't know anything about his affairs. (*aside*) I should like to kick him!

LORD M. (*aside*) Edgeworth marry a model!

RASH. What is she like? Enormously beautiful?

REDWAY. My idea is, that she must be so ugly he's ashamed to let her be seen.

MAGUILP. Ugly ! I should like to see the painter who could do justice to her beauty ! even her husband can't!

RASH. By Jove ! What coloured eyes and hair has she ?

MAGUILP. (*aside*) Confound my loose tongue!

RASH. Well, if you won't satisfy my curiosity, I throw myself into the sea of speculation, to fish for a probable explanation of the mystery. The first idea I land is, that your friend has appropriated somebody's pet Venus, and is afraid of her being reclaimed.

MAGUILP. You'd do better to let the subject alone, seeing that it doesn't in the least concern you.

RASH. My dear fellow, anything in the likeness of a mystery in which a woman plays a part has an irresistible attraction for me ! I shan't be able to eat, drink, or even smoke, till I have made my way behind your friend's scenes! (*getting up from the sofa*) My plan of action is formed ; I shall plant myself as a sentinel outside yonder door-----

MAGUILP. Rashleigh !—you appear to forget that Edgeworth is my friend!

RASH. You mean that you will try to spoil sport ? Ha, ha !

MAGUILP. I mean-----

Enter MRS. MAGUILP, D. L.

RASH. What news, fair Henrietta ?

MRS. M. All the news *you* gets from me will do you good, for your impudence! (*to* LORD MIDFORD, *with a curtsey*) Mr. Edgeworth will come to you directly, my lord.

REDWAY. (*half aside to* RASHLEIGH) As soon as he has put his Venus safe under lock and key.

MRS. M. (*catching the last words*) Who told you as she was a Venus ?

RASH. Who but your highly appreciative husband, Henrietta ?

MRS. M. It's like his rubbish ! He thinks his friend has married a princess in disguise, I believe !

MERRI. (*laughing*) Princesses have occasionally been known to make better matches !

MRS. M. She's as much a princess as I am—and the proof of that is, that she knows you, Mr. Merrington.

MERRI. Knows me ?

MRS. M. Yes ; and you, too, Rashleigh.

RASH. Me! By Jove ! this is becoming thrilling !

MRS. M. When I told Edgeworth that (*curtseying to* LORD MIDFORD a nobilman was a-waiting in the studio to see him, he asked me who was there besides; and (*to* RASHLEIGH) when I told him as *you* was there, and Mr. Merrington—she was in the room—well, to say as her face turned suddingly from black to white is nothing ; but you should have heard her disclaim—" Philip Rashleigh! Mr. Merrington!"

RASH. The deuce ! this is getting complicated !

MRS. M. You'd a-said so, if you had seen how pale her husband turned, and heard in what a tremble-ing voice he asked her whether she knowed you ! She says she don't—but that's all my eye, I know.

MERRI. As for me, I'm not in London more than one month out of the twelve.

RASH. What Christian name does she go by ?

MRS. M. Dora, Edgeworth calls her.

RASH. Dora ? I know no Dora. Do your recollections enshrine a Dora, Mr. Merriton ?

MERRI. No.

RASH. Or yours, Midford? (LORD MIDFORD *makes an impatient gesture.*)

REDWAY. Oh ! with Venus, name has always gone for nothing ; to Apelles she was Venus Anadyomene, but she had twenty aliases besides.

RASH. Well, by Jove! since she claims acquaintance with me, before the day is done I shall do myself the pleasure to present myself to her. St!—here comes the husband !

Enter EDGEWORTH, D. F. L. C.

EDGE. (*crossing to LORD MIDFORD, after casting a distrustful tool; at RASHLEIGH and REDWAY*) I beg your lordship to excuse me for keeping him waiting.

LORD M. I have come to tell you that the business which we lately talked of is finally settled. Lady Midford wants you to begin operations forthwith.

EDGE. I place myself entirely at her ladyship's orders—and if you will come to my private rooms-----

MAGUILP. My dear Edgeworth, if it is more convenient to you to remain here, we have finished, (*to MERRITON*) One sitting more, Mr. Merriton—to-morrow, if you can favour me ?

MERRI. By all means ; to-morrow, at the same hour.

EDGE. (*aside*) That is Mr. Merriton!

MERRI. Until this evening—good-bye. *He and LORD MIDFORD shake hands cordially—he bows to MAGUILP, MRS. MAGUILP and EDGEWORTH, and exits, D. L.*

MAGUILP. Now, gentlemen, we'll go to lunch Rashleigh, will you show your friend the way ?

RASH. (*to LORD MIDFORD*) Ta-ta, Midford ! No use inviting you to drop in at my place, I suppose , you are *range*, now that you are married? Remember me at home !

EDGE. (*aside*) Lord Midford knows him !

LORD M. (*bowing to MRS. MAGUILP*) Madam, allow me to repeat my thanks.

MRS. M. Thanks is all on my side, I'm sure, my lord ! (*curtseys and stumbles— RASHLEIGH laughs*) Rashleigh, you're a fool, and some of these times I shall smack your face! (*flouncing out at D. L., followed by RASHLEIGH and REDWAY laughing.*)

MAGDILP. Good day, Edgeworth, if I don't see you again.

LORD M. (*crossing to him*) Mr. Merriton and your friend Edgeworth do me the honour to dine with me to day-----

EDGE. (*aside*) I hoped to find some excuse.

LORD M. And if you are not better engaged-----

MAGUILP. Your lordship is only too kind.

LORD M. I may hope for the pleasure of seeing you ? We dine at eight, and Lady Midford and her mother-in-law, Lady Slowburn, have a dance afterwards—at which, I am sure, they will be happy to see you.

MAGUILP. I shall have the honour to accompany my friend Edgeworth. (*they shake hands —exit MAGUILP, D. L.*)

EDGE. So, then, my lord, you have collected your originals ?

LORD M. A good number, at least, both of canvasses and old frames, in addition to the miniatures Lady Midford has already sent to you. Some half-dozen portraits, however, will still have to be created to make the line of beauty complete—especially one of Diana Slowburn, who was a maid of honour at the Court of Elizabeth, and — Lady Midford has made up her mind to believe—a young lady of superhuman loveliness. That will be the only face that will give you any trouble.

EDGE. Have you any idea of the style of beauty Lady Midford imagines for her ancestress?

LORD M. By no means a clear idea.

EDGE. (*aside*) Before his marriage Lord Midford was a man of pleasure—what if he—? What if I were to show him her portrait? (*aloud, going to cabinet, C, unlocking it, and taking a portrait from it—showing him the portrait*) Does this in any way approach your ideal ?

LORD M. (*taking the portrait, and admiring it*) This is indeed a beautiful head—most beautiful—and I beg to offer you my very sincere admiration of it. No woman exists who is so lovely, I imagine; and yet (*starting*) I don't know in what respect—there is something in the character of the features-----

EDGE. (*seeing him reflecting*) Which reminds you of some one you have known ?

LORD M. (*quickly*) No, of no one ; but I admire the face exceedingly—it seems to me a creation worthy of Raphael.

EDGE. (*taking the picture*) It is an unfinished portrait only, (*going to the cabinet and putting the picture back, but leaving the cabinet partly open.*)

LORD M. A portrait!

EDGE. (*returning*) Of my wife, (*he takes up a maul-stick.*)

LORD M. Of your wife! Oh, then I am no longer surprised at your friend Maguilp's description of her beauty.

EDGE. Maguilp ! He had been speaking of her, then, to-----

LORD M. On the subject of her great beauty only I assure you. But what is the matter ?

EDGE. (*snapping the maul-stick nervously*) Nothing—nothing, my lord, (*with an effort to hide his uneasiness*) When will it be convenient to you to let me have the materials you have collected ?

LORD M. The sooner you set to work, the better Lady Midford will be pleased.

EDGE. I am entirely at her ladyship's disposal.—Your lordship is sure that neither Mr. Merriton nor Mr. Rashleigh said anything concerning my wife ?

LORD M. Forgive me, my dear Edgeworth—is it possible that you are jealous ?

EDGE. (*shaking his head sadly*) Jealous-----

LORD M. Of such a man as Rashleigh ?

EDGE. You do not know, my lord-----

LORD M. What ?

EDGE. Nothing, nothing.

LORD M. It was not possible for either Mr. Merriton or Mr. Rashleigh to say anything about Mrs. Edgeworth, because they were agreed that she is an entire stranger to them.

EDGE. Indeed!

LORD M. That they had never seen her.

EDGE. Never?

LORD M. All they said was expressive of surprise at the pains you appear to take to hide your wife from all eyes. Pardon me for saying I think you very unwise to provoke this kind of notice. If you were merely jealous those about you would laugh at you for a while, and end, by ceasing to pay attention to your folly-----

EDGE. As it is, I present an absurd figure to their eyes ? and they have invented all sorts of extravagant stories, in which I play a more or less contemptible part?

LORD M. My dear Edgeworth, you are really mad to allow yourself to be carried away in this manner. Good heavens! you knew your wife before you married her?—knew her past life, whatever it may have been ? Calm yourself, my dear fellow.

EDGE. Yes, yes, you are right, my lord; I must calm, myself. Let us leave the subject. You will greatly oblige me by promising never again to refer to the portrait I have shown you.

LORD M. If you wish it, I promise.

EDGE. Thanks, my lord. To-morrow, if you will send me the pictures of Lady Midford's female ancestors-----

LORD M. They shall be with you; and, after taking my wife's directions to-night, you may sit down to the work of re-creating what is interned to be—if not a gallery of unquestionable portraits—a gallery of unquestionable beauties. "Every lady of our name a beauty," with evidence on canvas; that is Lady Midford's idea, and if you do not wish my life—and your own, possibly—to be made intolerable, you'll do your best to realize it to the letter; or, perhaps I ought rather to say to the outline of a nose, and the shape of a finger tip. At eight—sharp, this evening! Good-bye for the present, (*they shake hands.*)

EDGE. For the present, good day, my lord, (*rings—exit LORD MIDFORD, D. L.*) This kind of life is becoming more than I can bear—I must end it this very day—I must have a final explanation! Ah—

Enter GRACE, D. F. L. C,

she is coming here!

GRACE. (*at door*) Are you alone, Cyril?

EDGE. Yes, you may come in. (*aside*) I must be resolute!

GRACE. Will you go on with the portrait?

EDGE. Presently, (*looking at her enquiringly*) What is the matter with you, Dora? You are pale, and look as if you had been crying since I left you—at my reproaches, perhaps?

GRACE. Reproaches? No, no, no, dear.

EDGE. If not at anything I said to you—at what then? Dora, am I for ever to see you weighed down by a distress which you will not let me share—the meaning of which even you will not explain to me?

GRACE. Oh, Cyril! believe me, my greatest distress is the fear of not making you happy.

EDGE. It needs but one thing to make me so—confidence between us; confide to me the secret that is preying upon you.

GRACE. (*sadly*) Cyril!

EDGE. Dora! this is an outrage to my reason and my love! I cannot—I will not rest till I have discovered the secret you are keeping from me! If you will not tell it, I will search, question, till I find an explanation of the mystery of your life.

GRACE. If you do that, you will do both yourself and me a great wrong, Cyril.

EDGE. A wrong!

GRACE. Yes, a cruel wrong. (*aside*) My last defence! (*aloud, with a sad tenderness*) Cyril, do you remember how and where I first saw you ? Wounded and helpless on the sea shore, where you had fallen in rashly attempting to scale the cliff—You would have died, for the spot was so desolate that no human creature, not like me—in search of death—would have sought it. I found you bleeding, motionless, dying ; and the sight of death—which I had come to seek as a last resource—filled me with terror for your life, stranger as you were. My own trouble was forgotten in the thought of saving you. I stanchd your wounds, brought you back to consciousness, and, weak as I was, dragged you beyond reach of the rising tide; then I sought help for you, and had you taken to the nearest house, where, for weeks, you lay between life and death.

EDGE. Yes, Dora, I owe you my life.

GRACE. (*continuing*) When I had seen you in safety, I turned away to seek my own destruction, but the words, "poor gentleman—he has not an hour to live," spoken by someone of those who were about your bedside, caught my ears. I looked once more at you, and the thought came into my mind that heaven had, perhaps, placed your life in my keeping. I stayed by you, and the next day—and for many days while death hung over you—you found me at your pillow.

EDGE. And I bless you, Dora, now as gratefully as I did the first moment I knew I owed my life to you.

GRACE. You were saved, and then I wished still to die, but I no longer had the courage. You had told me the story of your life—your labours, your hopes of fame and happiness; and when your strength was returning, and you walked in the open air and sunlight, resting on my arm, I felt proud that I had saved so rich a life. I was happy to see you live, and there were hours when—in the thought of your bright future—I forgot that I had determined to destroy myself.

EDGE. And then you learned that I loved you ?

GRACE. (*with ineffable tenderness, and sinking down upon the sofa*) I loved you first, Cyril!

EDGE. (*throwing himself passionately at her feet*) My Dora!

GRACE. One evening you were seated at my feet, and the sunlight was fading over the sea. You had before that time besought me to tell you who I was, whence I came, and what had driven me to take so terrible a resolve as that of self-destruction. I prayed you not to question me;

but that evening you were very cruel. "Tell me your history," you said, " and I will give you my fortune, my name " I refused, so that I might keep my secret.

EDGE. I know you did, my love.

GRACE. Then your eyes tilled, with tears—tears that are always in the depths of a great love; and you leaned towards me and said, " I will never question you again—never ! You shall be to me as an angel descended from heaven, who has no name on earth—the guardian spirit of my life, for my life is yours." I held out my hand to you, and you took it, calling me Dora—meaning " God's gift," you told me, and we were married.

EDGE. (*rising*) Forgive me, my darling! forgive me! If you knew how I love you! if you knew what joy it would be to me—what pride—to give you your place in society ! Oh, Dora ! to be compelled to conceal you and to hide my love for you from all the world—sometimes drives me to despair and almost madness ! But your will shall be mine, love ; only tell me that you forgive me.

GRACE. (*rising*) Forgive you, Cyril? I suffer with you—and have nothing to forgive. But I have something more to say, love.

EDGE. (*tenderly leading her forward*) Speak, dearest! what is it ?

GRACE. It concerns my past life—of which I can tell you nothing.

EDGE. Speak, darling!

GRACE. Before I had said the words that made me your wife, Cyril, I swore to you, in God's house, before His altar, that I gave myself to you pure of all fault or crime.

EDGE. And you were *so*, Dora—were you not ?

GRACE. Oh, Cyril! do you doubt it ?

EDGE. No, no, no ! I do not—I will not doubt! I am happy, and that is all I will ever care to know !

GRACE. Remember—oh ! remember what you have now said, Cyril. If you doubt my oath-----

EDGE. Spare me, Dora ! I will *not* doubt! Hush! some one is coming. Dry your eyes, darling—do not let it be seen that I have made you weep!

Enter MAGUILP, in evening dress, D. L.

MAGUILP. I thought I heard your voice. Do you know, my dear fellow, if you don't see about dressing we shall be late at Wimbledon.

GRACE. At Wimbledon ?

EDGE. (*out of humour*) Yes,—a dinner party.

MAGUILP. At Lord Midford's (*GRACE starts*) followed by an evening party, given by the ladies—Lady Midford and her mamma—Lady Slowburn. His lordship was kind enough to invite me to accompany Cyril.

GRACE. (*aside, trembling with terror*) Lord Midford! Lady Slowburn!

EDGE. (*astonished at her agitation*) Dora ! what is the matter ?

GRACE. (*aside*) Oh ! what can I say or do ?

EDGE. Do you know Lord Midford, Dora ?

GRACE. (*embarrassed*) Lady Slowburn's son-in-law ?——

EDGE. You know them ? (*reflecting*) I have never spoken of them to you, and yet, now, the mere mention of their names-----

GRACE. (*recovering her calmness*) Cyril, your suspicions are returning.

EDGE. No, but-----

MAGUILP. I'm sure we shall be late, old fellow!

GRACE. Go, dear ! Take him away ! Mr. Maguilp.

MAGUILP. Hear that!—your wife says you're to go!

GRACE. And you have still to dress. Good-bye, love! (*taking his hand and trying to draw him towards her.*)

EDGE. (*turning from her coldly*) Good-bye, Dora.

GRACE. (*aside*) Again ! (*in a voice of suppressed agony*) Oh ! would it not be better to die, than to live on like this ! *[exit, D. F. L. C.]*

EDGE. (*reflectively*) She knows Lord Midford and his mother-in-law ! Yes, I will go !

MAGUILP. Come along and dress, then ; or I know we shall be too late for dinner.

(exit with EDGEWORTH, D.F. L. C.)

Enter RASHLEIGH, slightly tipsy, and REDWAY, both are smoking, L.

RASH. (*calling as he enters*) Davinci! where the devil have you taken yourself ? leaving your friends to entertain the superlative Henrietta ! Oh, yes ! I remember—it's all right: Leonardo's gone to dine with a lord ! I'll bet you a hundred he raises his prices before he goes to bed to-night, on the strength of his sprouting aristocratic connection !

REDWAY. (*pretending to be also tipsy*) Yes,—he's gone with that—what's his name?—the husband-----

RASH. Of the beautiful unknown—who knows met That's a devilish good idea, isn't it ?

REDWAY. (*aside*) He's as drunk as I could wish!

RASH. I say, Redway,—I've a sublime notion! The husband's away—don't you see?-----

REDWAY. The husband's away?-----

RASH. And, while the resplendent Henrietta is making the coffee—mysterious beauty,—behold your old acquaintance at your feet! That's my idea! You stop here till I come back and tell you how I've carried it out! (*going*)

REDWAY. (*detaining him*) Don't be in such a hurry; you've plenty of time before you,—the husband won't be back these five or six hours. As we are alone for a few minutes—we had better settle the affair that has brought me over from Paris!

RASH. Affair! that's a devilish neat synonyme for *money*! I'd rather talk about my charmer behind the curtain here!—thank you all the same for the offer!

REDWAY. But, look here, Rashleigh,—this won't do! I did you a great service-----

RASH. And I've paid you handsomely for doing it.

REDWAY. But not so handsomely as you promised.

RASH. Because you didn't complete the bargain. You didn't bring *me* the will.

REDWAY. (*aside*) That's to come! (*aloud*) But—I couldn't help it, if Holden *would* destroy it.

RASH. You are lying, my dear fellow; you know you handed the will over to the devil's first cousin, Mr. Moses Nathan, who advanced the money to get it into his clutches—and me with it. With all my heart! I'll redeem it some day, when I'm in luck. In the meantime, you may as well remember, if you are not too drunk—I have still by me a certain little bundle of acceptances forged in my name the manufacture of yourself, in conjunction with the inestimable old blackguard before mentioned—which I took up without a word of question! Ha! ha! ha! You understand each other—I understand you both. If either of you attempt to check me, by a move with the will—I give checkmate at once with those acceptances! Ha! ha! ha! you see, my very highly esteemed friend, it pays sometimes to allow oneself to be robbed!

REDWAY. I'll take your word for it;—but, you know I'm not the sort of man to be frightened by what somebody *might* do. Come, be generous! One more small sacrifice. You are rich.

RASH. Only, it's equally certain—(*tapping his pockets*) that I never have any money in my pockets, (*throwing himself on to sofa L.*)

REDWAY. But I don't want you to give me money,—if

you'll give me a bill— (*taking a bill-stamp from his pocket-book.*)

RASH. Certainly,—I can do that,—I never find anything easier to do than give bills ; but—mind you—it's to be the last! What's the figure to be ?

REDWAY. Five thousand.

RASH. (*astonished*) Five thousand—you mean pounds, of course ?

REDWAY. And I'll undertake never to return to London.

RASH. 'Pon my soul, you're a great creature, Redway !

REDWAY. (*looking about*) There must be a pen and ink about here, surely; in this cabinet, perhaps, (*opens the doors of the cabinet at back, c, and sees the portrait of GRACE—aside*) By all that's Wonderful ! (*taking out the portrait and examining it.*)

RASH. Look here, my friend,—I'll give you my acceptance for five hundred pounds, just to settle your " affair" out of the way of *my* affair with the lady yonder.

REDWAY. (*aside*) Edgeworth's wife ! Maguilp said her husband had painted a portrait of her ! Can it be possible ! (*putting the portrait back into the cabinet—aloud*) You hold to your project, then, of getting to see Edgeworth's wife ?

RASH. As decidedly as I hold to my determination not to give you one penny more than the five hundred pounds I've offered you!

REDWAY. I withdraw my claim altogether.

RASH. You are considerateness itself !

REDWAY. Pray do not forget that you had refused to let me have the sum in question.

RASH. I'm very drunk—but I never forget anything I wish to recollect.

REDWAY. There will be no occasion for me to remind you to-morrow, then.

RASH. (*aside*) To-morrow! what does he mean by that? By Jove! to-night I'll settle with that old blood-sucker Nathan, one way or the other—and free myself from the pair! (*rising.*)

REDWAY. (*aside*) I'll see Lord Midford at once—to-night—and then, Mr. Philip Rashleigh, your game will be played out! (*aloud*) We must not quarrel, Rashleigh ?

RASH. Very good, my dear fellow, (*holding out his hand*) If you be bear no animosity ?-----

REDWAY. (*taking his hand*) So long as we have been friends !

RASH. Bosom friends! touching remembrance ! ha ! ha! ha!

REDWAY. Ha! ha! ha! (*they shake hands with pretended fervour and exit D. L.*)

Enter SUSAN, D.F. L. C, closely followed by MRS. MAGUILP, who stumbles over her dress.

MRS. M. Drat the dressing I wish as we was all Adams and Eves ! and parlours was paradises with nothing in 'em to ketch in or tumble over! Don't tellme as your misses ain't at home ; she couldn't have left the house without my seeing her!—Where's she gone ?

SUSAN. I don't know.

MRS. M. I should think you don't! Just you go and tell her it's only me.

SUSAN. But she won't see anybody, ma'am.

MRS. M. As if you thought I was anybody! Drat you servants! you've got no more heads than Hollowfurniss on a tea-tray ! Go and tell her I've come to have a chat with her, to prevent her moping herself to bits, like Mary Ann in the molting grange—though what the dickins a molting grange was I never could find out!

SUSAN. Well, I'll tell her what you say. (*exit. D. I L. c.*)

MRS. M. I don't go back to my own apartments until you *have* told her ! Rashleigh and his friend are still at their wine, and I can't rest till I've found out the meaning of her a-turning white and all that, at hearing Rashleigh's name ! Been something between them, before Edgeworth married her, I suspect, in spite of Mr. Phil's pretending he'd never seen or heard of her !

Enter SUSAN, D.F. L. C.

SUSAN. I told mistress-----

MRS. M. And, of course, preciously she blowed you up for not bringing me to her at once?

SUSAN. No, ma'am, she bade me say that she is not feeling well-----

MRS M. How *should* she feel well?—moping herself like Mary Ann-----

SUSAN. And that she is sorry she can't see you.

MRS. M. Can't see me?—won't, she means!

SUSAN. She's not well.

MRS M. Fiddlesticks ! What's the matter with her?

SUSAN. I don't know—but she can't see you.

MRS. M. Indeed ! Upon my word ! she gives herself nice airs, I don't think ! and so I shall do myself the pleasure of telling her. the first time I meet her! (*a tapping heard without*) Who the deuce is that, I wonder !

(*going to D. F. L. C., and listening*) Why, if it isn't Rashleigh tapping at her door ! My ! I begin to smell a rat ! Gemini ! there'll be news to tell Mr. Edgeworth—besides, his wife being too indisposed to see *me!*

SUSAN, What *do* you mean, ma'am ?

MRS. M. Only, that when anybody smacks my face, I generally smacks theirs in return ! That's about the carrow-skuro of it!

Enter RASHLEIGH, D.F. L. C.

RASH. Henrietta!

MRS. M. In her own appropriate person, Mr. Rashleigh, —if you've no objection, in course !

RASH. Hush! (*aside to her*) Redway's waiting impatiently for that coffee, Henrietta !

MRS. M. Oh, that's how the cat jumps ! Thank you for the information, and—pleasant reception! (*aside*) Sorry she can't see you, ma'am! too unwell! I should think so! Well, I never! (*exit, D. L.*)

RASH. (*to SUSAN*) The room's on the other side of the passage, there are Mr. Edgeworth's.

SUSAN. Yes, sir ; he is not at home at present.

RASH. I know it; but Mrs. Edgeworth is at home?

SUSAN. Mistress is-----

RASH. Tell her I have come from Mr. Edgeworth.

SUSAN. Will you please to give me your name, sir ?

RASH. Your mistress does not know me; tell her a gentleman sent by your master wishes to speak with her immediately.

SUSAN. From master? yes, sir. (*exit, D.F. L. c.*)

RASH. By Jove! that was well thought of! Thinking I come from her husband, she'll be sure to come out of her hiding-place. I don't know how the deuce it is, but I never in my life felt so much curiosity as I do to see this mysterious beauty, whose pre-nuptial name nobody has been able to discover, and who turned from black to white—as the strong-speaking Henrietta described the effect—when she casually heard mine mentioned. A lovely woman who knows me, and is an enigma to everybody, myself not excepted! The mystification is delicious! Sentimental idea! Some old, and as I thought extinguished flame, perhaps! By Jove! I quite glow with the anticipation of refulgent possibilities ! Here she comes—with her servant to play propriety ! Certainly *not*, my charmer!

Enter GRACE, followed by SUSAN, D.F. L. C.

GRACE. (*going eagerly up to RASHLEIGH*) You come from Mr. Edgeworth, sir? No—no accident has befallen him?

RASH. (*aside*) I have not the least remembrance of having ever seen her before.

GRACE. You do not answer me, sir! Have you anything—anything painful—to communicate to me?

RASH. No; pray don't make yourself uneasy. But—it is to you—alone—that I wish to communicate the object of my visit.

GRACE. Leave us, Susan. [*exit SUSAN, D. F. L. C.*]

RASH. (*aside*) She does not appear to know me any more than I know her! She's devilish handsome, however; and, since I am here-----

GRACE. We are now alone, sir.

RASH. I see we are—but—(*aside*) I remember it was Merriton's name first made her turn from "black to white!"

GRACE. Still you are silent, sir! Oh, do not keep me any longer in suspense, I beg. Has anything happened to my husband?

RASH. Nothing at all serious, I assure you.

GRACE. Your hesitation alarmed me.

RASH. (*aside*) I'll try what effect it will have! (*aloud*) Mr. Merriton-----

GRACE. (*starting with terror*) Mr.—Merriton!

RASH. (*aside*) there's no doubt about that result!

GRACE. Mr. Merriton, who was to be at Lord Midford's, in company with my husband, this evening?-----

RASH. And who requested me—(*with a look of enquiry*) My name is Rashleigh-----

GRACE. (*starting and uttering a cry of terror*) Rashleigh!

RASH. (*aside*) By Jove—a thunderbolt!

GRACE. Your name is Rashleigh?

RASH. That's my name, (*aside*) Devilish odd I can't recollect anything about her!

GRACE. You are Philip Rashleigh!

RASH. You know me?

GRACE. Know you!-----

RASH. If it is so, you have completely the advantage of me, madam, for I certainly do not know you.

GRACE. You say you do not know me? (*reflecting*) Yes, yes, that is true. You do *not* know me—for *you* were not there. But, then, what brings you here?

RASH. Well, madam, since the ruse has been successful, I confess I came simply because I was curious to see you.

GRACE. (*aside*) Can he have any suspicion?

RASH. And—to make a further confession—now that I have seen you, I have a still greater curiosity to know something of you.

GRACE. Leave my husband's house, Philip Rashleigh!

RASH. In good time—when I have ascertained who you were before you became Mrs. Cyril Edgeworth. Will you favour me with the interesting—I'm sure it *is* interesting, information?

GRACE. Coward! is it because I am alone?

RASH. Precisely; but if you will not satisfy my curiosity, I'll question your husband on his return.

GRACE. Question my husband! Why should he answer the questions of such a man?

RASH. Such a man! If you know me so well, madam, you know that whatever I take in hand I go through with it.

GRACE. Not even hesitating at crime.

RASH. Crime!—By Jove, madam, you increase my interest in you by every word you speak! Your husband shall tell me how it has happened that you are so well informed—who you are! The information may be of some importance to me, I see.

GRACE. I forbid you to question my husband!

RASH. Possibly; but I assure you there is only one mode by which you can turn me from my purpose—that is, to tell me yourself who you are.

GRACE. I *will* tell you, Philip Rashleigh—I am Grace Holden!

RASH. (*staggering, and trembling with terror*) Grace Holden!

GRACE. Do you know enough?

RASH. (*as if stunned*) Grace Holden!

GRACE. You now know the secret of my seclusion—a secret which even my husband does not know. Will you tell it him?

RASH. No!

GRACE. Wretch and coward! I know you will not; for you fear that if you were to accuse me I might tell the truth!

RASH. The truth?

GRACE. The whole truth—I know it!

RASH. Your father betrayed me, then? (*recovering his sang-froid.*)

GRACE. Do not dare to name my father.

RASH *You forbid me ?* Madam, it strikes me you forget that an ugly accusation—no less than murder—hangs over you !

GRACE. And you, Philip Rashleigh, forget the revelation it is in my power to make !

RASH Not in the least; but I remember that—unfortunately for you—the only person who could have supported your testimony is in his grave—your father.

GRACE. My father dead !

RASH. These six months.

GRACE. Monster!—after tempting my poor father to commit a horrible crime, you have had him destroyed to secure your own safety ; but you have deceived yourself in your atrocious calculations—for if my father is dead, I am living to avenge him !

RASH. At the cost of your own life ?

GRACE. Yes!

(As she utters the last word RASHLEIGH makes a movement as if to seize her; she strikes the table-alarum, and instantly SUSAN appears at D. F. L. c, RASHLEIGH pauses as if irresolute, GRACE points commandingly to D. L. as the act-drop descends.)

END OF ACT SECOND.

ACT III.

THE SHADOW DISPELLED.

SCENE FIRST.—*A room in Lord Midford's villa at Wimbledon. Doors R. and L.*

Enter MRS. GIBBS, fussily, D. R.

MRS. G. Let them as don't know what the anxieties of being a housekeeper is, in a nobleman's family where there is a mother-in-law lady born, and her daughter is too jealous of her husband to attend to anything, keep what they has to say about it to themselves, then they'll be sure not to go wrong, which'll be pleasanter in every way. Take my word for it they may, that so situated, quite enough she has to do, without having her feelings preyed upon by her only child as it was her misfortune to have brought into the world with a figure beyond her station.

Though I will say, kind both my lady and her mother have acted by me, after the shameful way I was treated that awful night, with poison put in my coffee by that good-for-nothing, which might well go away and drown herself—and me a living witness, if ever one was wanted to be summin'd, of her crime; which she didn't bargain for when she did it, I dare say ! Comfortable I own, I ought to be, if I could only leave off a-thinking of Henrietta's throwing herself away on a mere painter feller! and wishing I could only find out where she lives and let her husband know just what I think of him !

Enter LADY MIDFORD *and* LADY SLOWBURN, D.R.

CONSTANCE. That's all nonsense, mamma; you know very well, Arthur ought to have been home by this time.

LADY S. No, indeed, I don't, my love. Mr. Merriton has just told you that he left him busy with Mr. Edgeworth.

CONSTANCE. Yes, and it is precisely what he has told me that makes me most uneasy. I can't bear Arthur to be mixed up with stories of mysterious beauties.

LADY S. You are really absurd, Constance.

CONSTANCE. No, I am not, mamma. To-day's visit is not the first Arthur has made to Mr. Edgeworth's *studio*, but he has never made the least allusion to Mr. Edgeworth's beautiful wife!

LADY S. Come, come, don't give way to such silly fancies. Remember you have company to entertain.

MRS. G. And which—here is his lordship.

Enter LORD MIDFORD, D. L.

CONSTANCE. I was wondering whether we should see you at all at dinner.

MRS. G. (*aside*) Catch it you. will, my lord !

LORD M. I *am* rather late.

CONSTANCE. Very, I should say.

LORD M. I've had a good deal to do in town. I shall just have time to dress. Mr. Edgeworth and M friend of his are coming to dinner.

CONSTANCE. A friend of his ?

LORD M. A young painter, who is living in the same house with him.

MRS. G. (*aside*) A painter !—which if there is a word that makes me goose-flesh all over, painter is that word!

LORD M. Is that unpleasant to you ?

CONSTANCE. Not at all. I thought, at first, you might

have prepared an agreeable surprise for us—by inviting Mrs. Edgeworth.

LORD M. Mrs. Edgeworth ?

CONSTANCE. Of course I could have offered no opposition.

LORD M. I have not the honour of knowing her.

CONSTANCE. Have you not ?—have you never seen her ?

LORD M. Never. Mrs. Edgeworth leads a very retired life, and it appears she neither likes to go out nor to receive visitors.

MRS. G. (*aside*) If I could only find out from this painter that's a-coming to dinner, what has become of my ungrateful-----(*exit D. R*)

CONSTANCE. That's unfortunate, because Mr. Merriton tells us she is extremely handsome.

LORD M. (*quickly*) That, I also can undertake to say she is ; and even more, wonderfully beautiful!

CONSTANCE. You speak with extraordinary certainty for one who has never seen the lady !

LORD M. I have seen her portrait, (*with a slight, bitterness*) I beg your pardon ! I did not readily appreciate the point of your remark, (*to LADY SLOWBURN*) You see on what grounds Constance will found these distressing suspicions of hers?

LADY S. I must tell you candidly, Arthur, I don't think you are entirely blameless. There has latterly been a good deal that has appeared like concealment in your conduct.

LORD M. I own I *have* a secret trouble preying on my mind—a trouble this very portrait, of which I have told you, has revived.

CONSTANCE. Oh!—it has awaked unpleasant recollections?

LORD M. Bitter ones, believe me.

CONSTANCE. This is too much! (*she throws herself into a chair and weeps.*)

LADY S. You forget, Arthur, that your mother suffered deeply on account of your father's inconstancy ; that she died, perhaps earlier than she might, had she not had cause to suspect that he had given to another the affection which was hers of right. Do not bring upon my child this inheritance of misery ! (*points to CONSTANCE.*)

LORD M. (*going to her tenderly*) My love! my love! what is all this ?

CONSTANCE. (*softened by his voice*) Nothing ; no, nothing.

LORD M. Constance, when I can tell you the secret of my care, you shall judge whether I have not just cause for all I do and suffer. To-day we have friends and

acquaintances about us; let us at least hide our troubles from their eyes.

CONSTANCE. I won't be troubled any more—I'm *not* troubled!

LORD M. Thanks, dear ! Believe me, if the secret had been mine alone I should already have imparted it to you. I am going to dress. *(exit D.R.)*

CONSTANCE. *(following him with her eyes)* He's deceiving me, mamma ! I know he's deceiving me !

Enter MRS. GIBBS, D.R.

MRS. G. *(aside)* They are still here! *(aloud)* Know my place, I hope I do, my lady ; but if I might make so bold—

CONSTANCE. *(sharply)* What do you want, Mrs. Gibbs?

MRS. G. *(rather embarrassed)* Which a little while ago I heard my lord a-mentioning a painter-----

CONSTANCE. Well?

MRS. G. Leastways, begging your ladyship's pardon—two painters it was as he spoke of.

LADY S. What is it you want to know, Mrs. Gibbs ?

MRS. G. *(more at ease with LADY SLOWBURN)* Which it is my daughter, as your ladyship has often kindly heard me say, deserted me to go and marry a painter, when, though her mother says it, with such a figure as hers-----

CONSTANCE. What was the name of the painter your daughter married ?

MRS. G. Never would the ungrateful girl let me know, or long ago I would have found him out! *Shut* her up on purpose to prevent her lawful mother setting eyes on her again, is what I do believe that man is now a-doing ! If your ladyship would be so kind as to ask the painters as is coming here to dinner, telling 'em as that my daughter was well-be known at eighteen-pence anhour—Henrietta being her Christian name, and a complexion like a bouquet—perhaps I might find out where she is now a-living.

CONSTANCE. *(aside to LADY SLOWBURN)* Good heavens, mamma ! what if this should be-----

LADY S. Impossible! a daughter of Mrs. Gibbs! your suspicions are really making you unreasonable, *(aloud)* Leave us, Mrs. Gibbs. We'll make some enquiries for you.

MRS. G. My duty to your ladyship, and begging to remind you that whatever is her married name, Henrietta I had her christened, six weeks and one day after she were born—smiling like a image.

Enter SERVANT, D. L.

SERVANT, (*at D. L.*) Mr. Edgeworth and Mr. Maguilp, your ladyship. (*exit SERVANT.*)

Enter EDGEWORTH and MAGUILP, D. L.

MRS. G. (*aside*) The two painters !—If I can only find an opportunity, speak to them I will myself.

CONSTANCE. May I beg you to excuse Lord Midford for not being present to receive you ?

MAGUILP. Oh ! I'm sure, pray don't think of apologising.

CONSTANCE. The fact is, he stayed so late in town.

EDGE. At my house, then, I fear it must have been.

CONSTANCE. (*aside*) This is Mr. Edgeworth! (*aloud*) I must not be surprised at his having forgotten the hour in your house, Mr. Edgeworth ; no doubt there is so much that is beautiful to be seen there !

EDGE. Your ladyship overrates the few finished studies—

CONSTANCE. But you have some wonderful portraits— one, at all events have you not ?

EDGE. (*aside*) Her husband has told her !

CONSTANCE. (*aside to LADY S.*) Take Mr. Maguilp away, mamma, (*aloud*) I only know that Lord Midford returned home, quite enthusiastic in his praises of it. I have now greater hopes than ever of your succeeding with my beautiful ancestress, Diana Slowburn. (*to MAGUILP*) We have a few pictures worth seeing,—would you not like to examine them ?

MAGUILP. Ah, madam !—(*bowing profoundly*)—the beauties of art pale before those—of—of-----

CONSTANCE. Mamma, show Mr. Maguilp our gallery.

MAGUILP. (*bowing to LADY S*) Most happy—I'm sure. (*aside*) How deucedly odd !

LADY S. (*aside*) I must humour her—or she'll be committing some act of folly ! (*aloud—taking MAGUILP'S arm*) I shall be delighted to have your opinion.

(*exit with MAGUILP, D. L.*)

CONSTANCE. We can now speak freely.

EDGE. Lord Midford tells me that you are quite resolved to carry out your idea of having a complete series of the ladies of your family.

CONSTANCE. (*motioning him to take a seat, they both sit*) Yes. As to the men, I leave them to be treated in any way that you and my husband may decide on ; I only take my ancestresses under my protection. For them, one and all, I demand—faces of absolute beauty!

EDGE. One and all ?

CONSONANCE. Without exception ; that of the Lady Diana being made supreme—something lifted above the beauty we meet with in ordinary life—ideal and yet human ! It seems to me that, if I were a painter, such a type of beauty would always be present in my mind.

EDGE. Indeed, madam ?

CONSTANCE. The painter's highest ideal of beauty must—I imagine—always be the woman he loves ; and if, in the present day, he fails to produce on his canvas such lovely creatures as the Fornarina of Raphael, and the Joconda of Leonardo da Vinci, it is because he lacks the courage of the great Italian painters, who gloried in exhibiting to the world the objects of their adoration.

EDGE. It may be that he prefers the sancity of his passion to public admiration of its object.

CONSTANCE. But his fame as a painter ?

EDGE. Would be too dearly won by such a sacrifice. (*rising*) Oh, madam ! think !—you ask of him, to expose to the public gaze the idol of his heart; to give up to criticism, disdain, or cold admiration, that which he loves with all the fervour of his soul! No, no, madam ; what you ask is a sacrilege ; it would be to throw open his holy of holies to the coarse curiosity of the rabble !

CONSTANCE. (*aside*) He's jealous! (*aloud*) Will you forgive me, Mr. Edgeworth—for what may have seemed like an attempt to penetrate a secret-----

EDGE. A secret, madam ?-----

CONSTANCE. One which Lord Midford would never forgive me for having spoken of to you.

EDGE. Lord Midford ! Excuse me, madam,—but, has his lordship spoken to you on the subject of this secret?

CONSTANCE. Without intending to do so.

EDGE. (*aside*) Dora turned deadly pale on hearing Lord Midford's name—and he was visibly affected on seeing her portrait!

CONSTANCE. Pray let us talk of something else.

EDGE. One word more, madam—and forgive me if I speak too freely. From what, you have said, I am sure that you have become acquainted with the fact of my life being darkened by a shadow of mystery. I am sure it cannot be—mere idle curiosity that prompts you to probe my secret, at the risk of wounding-----

CONSTANCE. A heart already bleeding with jealousy !

EDGE. Madam! who told you ?-----

CONSTANCE. My own heart, Mr. Edgeworth—that suffers equally with yours.

EDGE. Oh, madam ! is it possible you believe-----

CONSTANCE. No,—nothing, Mr. Edgeworth. I—I'm very sorry I spoke.

EDGE. You have said too much, madam, not to say more. Has Lord Midford ever spoken to you of—of Mrs. Edgeworth ?

CONSTANCE. We are both getting out of our depths, Mr. Edgeworth. Whatever my husband's past life may have been—he is not accountable for it to me.

EDGE. But Dora—my wife—is accountable to me for hers!

CONSTANCE. Dora ?—that is not the name I imagined.

Enter LADY SLOWBURN, D. L.

EDGE. Oh! that is very likely : it is not her proper name.

LADY S. My love, I want you.

CONSTANCE. I'll come, mamma, (*aside*) I was right! (*aloud*) After dinner, we may have an opportunity for continuing this conversation. Excuse me for leaving you. (*she and LADY SLOWBURN reach D. L., when they are met by MRS. GIBBS.*)

Enter MRS. GIBBS, D. L.

MRS. G. Begging pardon, my lady—but if you *could* tell me whether it is ?

LADY S. You had better question him yourself.

(exit with CONSTANCE, D. L.)

EDGE. I must have an immediate explanation with Lord Midford I cannot—will not—rest till I have satisfied my doubts, (*is going towards D. L., when he is stopped by MRS. GIBBS.*)

MRS. G. (*placing herself before him*) Begging your pardon, sir, which my name is—Gibbs !

EDGE. (*smiling*) I'm sure I've no intention to dispute the fact, Mrs. Gibbs. But what of the undisputed fact?

MRS. G. (*taking a more imposing attitude*) What of it? Begging your pardon, sir, once more—I am Mrs. Gibbs !

EDGE. I take your word for it, ma'am ; but-----

MRS. G. Little would it signify, sir, if you didn't; for there is born ladies in this house, and servants—as their words was never doubted—in one of the best of families of Cornwall—which, though not my native place of birth, is where I lived and met with my misfortune, a year ago it is-----

EDGE. Cornwall ? a year ago ? Tell me clearly, if you can, my good woman, what you mean.

MRS. G. My daughter, sir?-----

EDGE. (*looking more closely at her*) Your daughter, ma'am ?

MRS. G. Ungrateful that she was, I will say! and her with a figure as, painted in oils or water, any nobleman in the land would have been proud to hang in his drawing-room!

EDGE. You say you were living in Cornwall twelve months ago ?

MRS. G. Well you may say that!

EDGE. (*looking intently at her*) It's impossible !

MRS. G. (*whimpering*) Which more hard-hearted than ever I supposed, you are, to say so ! But though you may deny her lawful mother, I hope you'll never make my poor misguided child unhappy—after marrying her as you have done !

EDGE. (*aside*) Dora this woman's daughter !

MRS. G. Nothing you can have to say against my Henrietta—whatever have been her ingratitude to me as brought her into the world-----

EDGE. Henrietta! your daughter's name is Henrietta?

MRS. G. As there is parish books to prove, whenever my word—which is her own mother's—is not sufficient to be took alone!

EDGE. My good woman-----

MRS. M. Tell me first that my ungrateful child is well in her health.

EDGE. (*aside*) There is only one way to get rid of her. (*aloud, looking through D. L.*) The gentleman now coming—Mr. Maguilp—will very likely be able to tell you all you want to know about your daughter, (*aside*) How shall I be able to find Lord Midford alone ? (*exit, D.R.*)

Enter MAGUILP, D. L.

MRS. G. Well, more astonished I never was—to think that, after all, it wasn't him ! But now I know his name—and here he is !

MAGUILP. Where's Edgeworth, I wonder ? Another elderly female ! I seem to gravitate towards all the elderly women in this house—or they towards me !

MRS. G. (*placing herself before him*) My name is Gibbs—Mr. Maggles!

MAGUILP. (*starting*) Eh ?

MRS. G. (*in an imposing attitude*) Gibbs—Mr. Maggles!

MAGUILP. (*aside*) By all that's unpromising—my mother-in-law !

MRS. G. Which that my name have took your speech away, is what does not surprise me !

MAGUILP. (*aside*) If I can only keep her off for four-and-twenty hours—time to get into fresh lodgings, or go abroad ! (*aloud*) I think they are sitting down to dinner—good day, Mrs. Gibbs ! (*going.*)

Mrs. G. (*resolutely barring his way*) No, Mr. Maggles! after searching for you as I have done for twelve months, escape me you shall not now !

MAGUILP. Escape ! Can you think it possible I thought of such a thing ? after enjoying the unexpected pleasure of meeting you in the midst of such agreeable associations? Nothing of the sort, I assure you! (*trying to get away*) Good day!

MRS. G. (*not to be moved*) Less I might have felt her ingratitude if she had only written me one line !

MAGUILP. She thought, perhaps, that you might not have been able to-----

MRS. G. Which I hope you will allow me to say, Mr. Maggie's, that always it have been my fortune to live in the midst of persons as *could* have read anything as she had chose to write to her own lawful mother, however ill she might have used her otherwise !

MAGUILP. That difficulty might have been got over, as you say, no doubt; but, as it accidentally happened that writing was overlooked in your daughter's education-----

MRS. G. My daughter's education, Mr. Maggies—whatever you may think of it—is what it is! But what, as her own mother, I can say is—that with such a figure as hers-----

MAGUILP. I beg your pardon for interrupting you, but I'm sure they are sitting down to dinner!

MRS. G. My daughter, Mr. Maggles-----

MAGUILP. You shall see her.

MRS. G. Deceiving me you are not, Mr. Maggles? When shall I see my ungrateful child ? Name the day.

MAGUILP. Say this day ten years—I mean, this day week. (*going.*)

MRS. G. (*staying him*) Forgive her I never can ! But, has she—have you—any-----

MAGUILP. One ! Good evening ! (*going.*)

MRS. G. (*staying him*) A grandmother, and not even to know it! Boy or girl, Mr. Maggles?

MAGUILP. Boy—I mean, girl.

MRS. G. Bless it! I always said my Henrietta-----

MAGUILP. (*escaping*) Thank you—yes! Good evening!

(*run out, D.R.*)

MRS. G. Stop! Mr. Maggies! (*hurrying after him*) I forgot to ask him whether the little darling was like-----

(*exit, D. R.*)

Enter LORD MIDFORD, with MERRITON, a letter in his hand, D. L.

MERRI. I've just received this note, and want you to hear the contents without delay, (*opening the letter.*)

LORD M. It relates to pressing business, then?

MERRI. (*reading the letter*) Singularly so. "The bearer of this note has discovered who Mrs. Edgeworth is, and wishes to confide this knowledge to Mr. Merriton. As the intimate friend of Lord Midford, Mr. Merriton will be glad to receive the intelligence referred to, which is in the highest degree important to his lordship. It is, above all, essential that Mr. Merriton should at once receive from the bearer certain explanations which cannot be made in writing."

LORD M. What answer have you given?

MERRI. None, yet; your servant is waiting outside to deliver it when it's ready. I prefer that the "explanation" here spoken of should be made directly to you.

LORD M. To me?

MERRI. My dear Lord Midford, I was honoured by your father's friendship—may I speak out?

LORD M. My dear Merriton—of all things, I wish you would.

MERRI. Here goes, then! If I am not enormously deceived, Lady Midford is already jealous.

LORD M. Merriton!

MERRI. I knew it could not be done! and it's exactly because I do not wish to be mixed up in an impossible manner in an affair—at the bottom of which there is plainly a lady—I have read you this letter instead of answering it without consulting you.

LORD M. My dear Merriton, you shall shortly hear how groundless are your suspicions, (*rings.*)

MERRI. With all my heart. In the mean time, mind what you are about. (*exit, D. R.*)

LORD M. (*to SERVANT, who enters at D. L.*) Show the person in who brought a note to Mr. Merriton. (*exit SERVANT, D. L.*) Highly as I esteem Merriton, I, too, prefer to deal single-handed with this mysterious confidence.

Enter SERVANT, showing in REDWAY, D. L.

SERVANT. The gentleman who brought the note, my lord. (*exit, D. L.*)

LORD M. (*aside*) Rashleigh's companion ! (*aloud*) You did not expect to-----

REDWAY. To find myself in the presence of Lord Midford, instead of Mr. Merriton? No, my lord ; but I wrote to Mr. Merriton in the expectation that he would show you my note.

LORD M. The hour of your visit is somewhat inconveniently chosen, but if you will make your communication, whatever it is-----

REDWAY. Very briefly, my lord ; but first—I know I may rely on your lordship's word—you must promise me that if you should not think fit to agree to the terms I am about to propose to you -----

LORD M. (*surprised*) Terms !

REDWAY. Give me your promise of secrecy, my lord, and I will explain.

LORD M. I promise.

REDWAY. As the price of the secret I have to confide, I demand ten thousand pounds.

LORD M. What have you to give me for so large a sum?

REDWAY. Something worth fifty thousand pounds to Lady Midford, and fifty thousand more to another member of your family, possibly. You see I do not ask a large price.

LORD M. Pray explain yourself more clearly.

REDWAY. (*dropping his voice*) The will made by Lady Belfield is in existence.

LORD M. The will!

REDWAY. And I know where it is to be found !

LORD M. The girl who was accused of killing Lady Belfield did not destroy it, then?

REDWAY. The poor girl you speak of was as innocent as you are, my lord.

LORD M. Innocent! oh ! are you sure of that ?

REDWAY. As certain as that I am now standing in your lordship's presence.

LORD M. (*greatly excited*) Grace! Oh, man—if you can

but prove what you have now told me, I will make your fortune!

REDWAY. Thanks, my lord. I trust entirely to your lordship's word. On the strength of what I can tell, Grace Holden may be able to prove her own innocence.

LORD M. (*astonished*) Then she still lives ?

REDWAY. Have you not already guessed, my lord?

LORD M. Mrs. Edgeworth-----

REDWAY. Is Grace Holden.

LORD M. (*aside*) My instinct did not mislead me, then ! as I looked upon her portrait—it was my father's face I saw in hers ! (*aloud*) You are sure - quite sure—not of her innocence, of that I have now no doubt—but that you will be able to prove it ?

REDWAY. That her innocence may be established, I have no doubt. The first thing we have to do is to secure the will.

LORD M. It is not in your possession, then?

REDWAY. No, it is in the hands of a Jew ; but it is to be had for the money, for which it is held as security; only, my lord, there is not a moment to be lost in getting it into your possession. A certain project of Mr. Philip Rashleigh's makes delay dangerous.

LORD M. A project of Philip Rashleigh's ?

REDWAY. My lord, he has determined on having an interview with Mrs. Edgeworth, even if he has to force his way into her presence.

LORD M. But he does not know her.

REDWAY. Nor does she know him ; but he is bent on finding out the secret of her seclusion, and if he discovers who she is—he is not the man to stick at destroying her to secure his own safety.

LORD M. His own safety !

REDWAY. It was with his connivance that Holden undertook to steal the will, and deliver it into my hands.

LORD M. You, then-----

REDWAY. Yes, I was the tool of Philip Rashleigh and the Jew with whom he is heavily in debt; and he has broken the bargain he made for my services.

LORD M. Only save Mrs. Edgeworth, and I will more than keep my promise to you !

REDWAY. One thing more, my lord. Besides giving me the ten thousand pounds for the will, you must promise to let me have twelve hours to get out of the country, before the magistrates have anything to do with the affair.

Enter EDGEWORTH, D. L.

EDGE. (*aside*) Not alone !

LORD M. I give you my word.

REDWAY. Come with me at once, then, my lord. Rashleigh may even now, be with Mrs. Edgeworth.

LORD M. I'm perfectly ready to follow you. (*going*) Edgeworth!

EDGE. Pardon me, my lord—I wish to have a moment's conversation with you—to ask you a question.

LORD M. Quickly, then, my dear Edgeworth.

EDGE. My wife—the portrait I showed you to-day—do you know her ?

LORD M. I do.

EDGE. You confess?

LORD M. Confess !—Ah ! I understand you ; but, believe me, your suspicion wrongs both your wife and me. At this moment she is in danger, Edgeworth—Philip Rashleigh—

EDGE. Rashleigh!

LORD M. Hasten home, without a moment's delay, my dear Edgeworth, and protect your wife from the insults of that heartless scoundrel.

EDGE. My wife in danger of insult from Philip Rashleigh; He, too, is known to her! Forgive me, Lord Midford ; I have greatly wronged you by a suspicion ; but I am grievously entangled in a constantly-expanding net of mystery.

LORD M. My dear Edgeworth, lose not a moment in reaching your home ! (*he wrings his hand, and EDGEWORTH rushes out, D. L.*)

REDWAY. And for us time flies, my lord.

LORD M. Come, then. (*going*)

Enter CONSTANCE and LADY SLOWBURN, D. L.

CONSTANCE. Good heavens, Arthur! are we to sit down to dinner to-day or not ?

LORD M. My love, you must apologise for me ; an affair of vital importance calls me to town again.

CONSTANCE. Arthur!

LORD M. I am very sorry, dear, but I must go. (*to REDWAY*) Come this way. (*exit with REDWAY, who bows to the ladies, D. R.*)

CONSTANCE. (*bursting into tears*) I am sure of it! I am sure of it, mamma ; he's deceiving me!

(*exit with LADY SLOWBURN, D. R.*)

Enter MAGUILP, closely followed by MRS. GIBBS, D. L.

MAGUILP. Really, if dinner is to be delayed much longer, I fear I may be driven to nibble the furniture !

MRS. G. Oh! Mr. Maggles! waiting for this opportunity I have been, to ask you whether my granddaughter—bless her little heart!—is like-----

MAGUILP. Like?—oh, yes, enormously ! You wouldn't know her whiskers one from the other! Good evening!

(rushes out D. R.

MRS. G. *(following him)* Which, if not already christened, Mr. Waggles, nothing there is as I should so much wish as that her name should be----- *(exit after him, D. R.*

SCENE SECOND.— *A drawing-room in Edgeworth's house. Elegantly furnished. Fire-place, R., large window, L. through which the moonlight streams into the room. Door L., another door, F. L. c. A table, R. C, with handsome lamp burning on it. Between the table and the fire-place a sofa. Among the ornaments of the room, a trophy of curious arms conspicuously hung on one of the walls. The room only partially lighted.*

GRACE *discovered seated on the sofa; she is pale and agitated.*

GRACE. I am lost! I am lost; In this monster's power, every moment of my life will be filled with terror worse than death. Uncertain whether my unhappy father lives or dies, I dare not give this wretch up to justice !—but he who has no scruples, whenever his own safety demands it, will denounce me ! No, no ; I cannot endure the thought of my miserable past being laid bare to Cyril's eyes ! Torn from his roof, he would drive me from his heart! Better a thousand times, that I should fly, no matter where, so that it be far, far away from all who may now recognise me and bring the dreadful truth to his knowledge ! Let me not hesitate. My jewels will buy me food, *(rising, and suddenly pausing)* My jewels ? Oh, no! they are *his*—everything, even to the dress I now wear, is Cyril's ! It would be robbery. But, if I beg my bread, I may be seized as a vagrant, questioned—my secret wrung from me ! Oh, heaven ! am I entirely helpless ? is there no way I can turn for relief from the great misery a father's sin has brought upon me ? no way but death ? I see none ! I see none! for I have not strength to battle longer with my fate. Forgive me, heaven!—forgive me, Cyril! *(she rushes to the trophy, and seizes a small stiletto.)*

Enter SUSAN, quickly, D. L. C.

SUSAN. Ma'am-----

GRACE. (*retreating towards the sofa*) What, what is it, Susan ? (*she sinks down upon sofa and conceals the stiletto under one of the cushions—aside*) Heaven's interposition!

SUSAN. You spoke of going to bed early, ma'am.

GRACE. I—I have not made up my mind. My headache is better, and I may sit up until your master returns.

SUSAN. Master will most likely be late, ma'am.

GRACE. You are right; and, perhaps I had better not wait, (*aside*) And yet, if I do not sit up for him, he will think that I am ill, and question me ! I know not what to do! (*aloud*) Leave me, Susan, and when your master returns I—I wish you not to tell him that anyone has called since he has been out.

SUSAN. Oh! very well, ma'am, (*aside*) Well!—and he said he came from master, too !

(*exit D. L. C.*)

GRACE. Good heavens ! what will this girl think !—and when Cyril returns, how shall I be able to hide my sufferings from him ? He will see that I am pale and trembling! and to-morrow, and to-morrow, it will be the same ! No ! I cannot bear such a life of torment! Let me die at once and end it! (*she is about to seize the stiletto but pauses*) Lost wretch that I am, I dare not! I am afraid either to live or to die ! Cyril! (*she again hides the stiletto.*)

Enter EDGEWORTH, D. L.

EDGE. (*speaking as he enters without seeing GRACE*) It is true, then! he has dared !

GRACE. (*starting to her feet*) No, Cyril, no one ! (*sinking back upon the sofa, partly insensible.*)

EDGE. (*going to her*) Fainted ?

GRACE. (*after a pause without opening her eyes*) No, Cyril, no !

EDGE. Is her mind wandering ?

GRACE. Have pity on me, Cyril! (*opening her eyes*) Ah! where am I ? Is it you, Cyril ?

EDGE. Yes, it is I.

GRACE. I've had a frightful dream!

EDGE. A dream ?

GRACE. Yes—I dreamt that you were driving me from your house!

EDGE. On what account ?

GRACE. Because----- I do not know—I forget.

EDGE. (*fiercely*) Because you had infamously deceived me !

GRACE. (*starting to her feet*) Oh, Cyril! what have I said in my sleep or my delirium?

EDGE. There has been no need for *me* to play the spy!

GRACE. Philip Rashleigh?-----

EDGE. No, it was not Philip Rashleigh who told me that you had received his visit while I was out, but the whole household!—your neighbour, your servant, are full of the scandalous story! From them I had it!

GRACE. (*recovering something like calmness*) You have not met him?

EDGE. I shall meet him!

GRACE. No, Cyril, no! you must not! I entreat, I implore you by all the tenderness we have felt for each other!

EDGE. The tenderness!

GRACE. Avoid this man, Cyril! I ask it of you by your love for me!

EDGE. My love!—Woman! is it possible you do not understand me! I tell you, I know that this man Rashleigh has visited you this evening—that he is to repeat his visit, that you forbade your servant to speak to me on the subject; and you appeal to my love! Strumpet! I know you at last! the mystery with which you have so carefully shrouded your past life is solved! You have been Philip Rashleigh's mistress!

GRACE. (*drawing herself up proudly*) Cyril!

EDGE. Oh! your airs of innocence will no longer mislead me!

GRACE. (*in a tone of deep pity*) Poor Cyril!

EDGE. What! you have the effrontery to pity me!

GRACE. Yes! because I love you—with a love whose depth I scarcely knew till now!

EDGE. Enough of hypocritical tears! I am no longer to be duped by them. I—I-----

GRACE. Finish, Cyril—you spurn me from your house?

EDGE. (*with bitter irony*) Doubtless, another is ready to receive you? But, before you rejoin your quondam lover, tell me by what name he called you, for you affected to be nameless when I first saw you. (*she weeps silently*) The name I gave you was my mother's—may she forgive me for having so profaned it. I strip it from you, and forbid you to bear it an hour—a moment longer.

GRACE. (*slowly going towards D. L.*) Adieu, Cyril!

EDGE. Where are you going?

GRACE. What does it matter? You have driven me from your house. (*going.*)

EDGE. Dora! (*hurrying to her*) Oh, why have you deceived me?

GRACE. *I deceived you, Cyril?*

EDGE. Tell me. Dora, tell me!

GRACE. I can tell you nothing.

EDGE. Nothing?

GRACE. Nothing! (*endeavouring to pass him.*)

EDGE. Then you shall not leave the house! I will keep you here till he comes to fetch you—for he said he would return—and then I will force him to tell me all he knows of you!

GRACE. Cyril, I have given you all that was mine to give in this world—my life, my love, my hope—for my only hope of peace was in the death I turned from for your sake! In return for all I gave you, I asked but one thing—I besought you not to seek to know who I am, and you promised me.

EDGE. A rash, senseless promise, which I cannot keep!

GRACE. And yet, only to-day, you renewed it.

EDGE. Since then you have deceived me! and that wrong cancels all obligation. You received Philip Rashleigh here, did you not?

GRACE. It is true.

EDGE. And instructed your servant to keep the fact from me?

GRACE. I did.

EDGE. Well, then!-----

GRACE. You drive me from your house, Cyril; do I complain?

EDGE. But if you have not deceived me, for what purpose did Philip Rashleigh visit you? (*GRACE is silent*) You do not answer me. What did he say to you? what did he ask of you? with what object is he going to repeat his visit?—Still you do not speak!

GRACE. Farewell, Cyril! (*going.*)

EDGE. Go, then—since you will have it so! he is waiting for you, perhaps! and may you not escape the punishment you deserve, for having broken a heart that loved you so deeply as mine! (*He throws himself on to a chair, covers his face with his hands and weeps passionately.*)

GRACE. (*hesitating*) Poor Cyril!—but if I stay, to-morrow will renew the misery of to-night!—No, I will not stay. (*she opens the door.*)

EDGE. (*starting from his seat, and rushing to her*) Dora! Dora! do not leave me! I may forgive you! However great your fault has been, I will struggle to forget it. I did not say I drove you from your home—or if I did I was mad, Dora! Oh, I love you so greatly—and my suffering is so hard to bear!

GRACE. Your sufferings, Cyril, are not half so hard to bear as mine.

EDGE. Oh, then, why will you not with a word remove the suspicion that tortures me and makes me torture you ? Tell me that I have deceived myself ! tell me that you truly love me ! Oh ! tell me this, Dora !

GRACE. Heaven only knows how I love you, Cyril.

EDGE. And yet you doubt my love !

GRACE. Doubt your love ?

EDGE. Yes.—Dora, if I were at this moment to tell you that I have to reproach myself with a great fault-----

GRACE. You, Cyril ?

EDGE. If I were to confess to you that, in a moment of thoughtlessness, or recklessness, I had committed a crime-----

GRACE. Cyril?

EDGE. After such an avowal, would you still love me ?

GRACE. A crime ?

EDGE. Speak! would you still love me ?

GRACE. (*aside*) A crime ! (*aloud*) Cyril, what if I were to make such—such an avowal to you?

EDGE. Dora!

GRACE. That—that I had committed a—a murder ?

EDGE. You?

GRACE. That I was a thief?

EDGE. (*staggering with terror*) Great heaven!—can that be?-----

GRACE. You think it possible! (*going.*)

EDGE. Stay! my reason loses itself in a bewildering maze ! I know only that I owe my life to you— that I have loved you with all the ardour of my soul! Whatever may have been your crime, I will not abandon you—you shall not leave the shelter of my roof. Stay—till to-morrow—till I have thought of what is best for your future-----

GRACE. (*wildly*) He believes me guilty ! Why did I let him come between me and death ! (*she rushes to the sofa, seizes the stiletto, and raises it.*)

EDGE. (*rushing to her and seizing her hand*) In heaven's name, Dora, what would you do?

GRACE. (*struggling to free her hand*) Die !

EDGE. You shall not—you shall not! Help! help!

GRACE. (*still struggling*) If you have any mercy for me, let me die—let me die !

EDGE. (*wresting the stiletto from her, and throwing it away from him*) You shall not, Dora—you shall not! (*she utters a despairing cry, and falls senseless.*) MAGUILP and MRS.

MAGUILP *rush in from D. L.*, SUSAN *from D. F. L. C.* EDGEWORTH *sinks into a chair, while the others partially raise GRACE*) Heaven have pity on her and on me !

MAGUILP. (*to MRS. MAGUILP*) Don't say anything, but help her into the next room, (*they raise GRACE, and carry her out at D. F. L. c.*)

EDGE. (*rising, and walking to and fro*) The perplexity of this horrible mystery benumbs my brain ! Like a blind man on strange ground, I stumble and lose myself whichever way I turn. Oh, who can give me the answer to this dark enigma ? To question her further is to kill her ; yet, what can I do ? Guilty of crime I cannot believe her—in all things so gentle, so good !

Enter MERRITON, D. L., speaking.

MERRI. If he is alone. I will make bold—(*seeing EDGEWORTH*) Quite alone—that's all right, (*going to D. L.*) Come in, ladies.

Enter CONSTANCE and LADY SLOWBURN, D. L.

EDGE. Lady Midford and Lady Slowburn !

MERRI. Being both extremely anxious to see you, Mr. Edgeworth, they prevailed on me to escort them.

EDGE. Pray, no apologies; but permit me to enquire to what I may attribute the honour of such a visit?

LADY S. You will not be surprised, I am sure, when you learn the object of it.

EDGE. (*about to hand the chairs*) Will you be kind enough to inform me-----

CONSTANCE. Do not trouble yourself, sir.

LADY S. A few minutes after you left our house this evening. Lord Midford hastily left home; you can, perhaps, tell us where he went?

EDGE. I have no notion, madam.

CONSTANCE. Indeed ? (*producing a letter*) You are, perhaps, equally ignorant on the subject of this letter ?

EDGE. (*surprised*) This letter, madam !

CONSTANCE. (*handing it*) Read it, sir.

EDGE. (*reads*) " The bearer of this note has discovered who Mrs. Edgeworth is." (*he starts, and looks eagerly to the end of the letter.*)

CONSTANCE. There's no signature to it.

EDGE. (*reading*) "And wishes to confide this knowledge to Mr. Merriton." To Mr. Merriton !

MERRI. Read on.

EDGE. (*reading*) " As the intimate friend of Lord Midford, Mr. Merriton will be glad to receive the intelligence

referred to, which is in the highest degree important to his lordship." (to CONSTANCE) To you, madam ?

MERRI. On that account I at once handed this note to Lord Midford.

CONSTANCE. Who, as soon as he read it, hurriedly left home, and I can find no trace of him. After the revelations of this note—as to the intimacy which apparently exists between Lord Midford and the person named-----

EDGE. Mrs. Edgeworth, madam ?

CONSTANCE. If she *is* Mrs. Edgeworth—I have no hesitation in coming to you for information on the subject of Lord Midford's disappearance.

EDGE. To me, madam !

CONSTANCE. To you or Mrs. Edgeworth. You have the right to question her.

EDGE. Question her ? No, madam—I was wrong to read this letter.

CONSTANCE. Mr. Edgeworth, my anxiety on Lord Midford's account is far too great to permit me to stand upon ceremonies. He may have been the victim of a crime.

EDGE. A crime ! (*aside*) Can it be possible the crime she spoke of was this? Yesterday the name of Merriton filled her with agitation! (*aloud to MERRITON*) You know who my wife is?

MERRI. I?-----

EDGE. You know her I say ! In heaven's name, tell me who she is! (*seizing him by the hand and drawing him to D. F. L. c.*) Recognise her, and tell me whether I am to save her or give her into the hands of justice ? (*throwing the portiere, aside.*)

MERRI. (*starting back*) Heaven have mercy on us!

EDGE. Who is she?

MERRI. Grace Holden !

CONSTANCE. (*almost shrieking*) Grace Holden!

EDGE. (*wildly*) Who is Grace Holden?

GRACE. (*appearing at D.F. L. C.*) Who calls me? Who calls Grace Holden? (*seeing MERRITON and the Ladies, she utters a shriek, and rushes to EDGEWORTH for protection*) Oh, save me—save me, Cyril!

MR. and MRS. MAGUILP *come from* D. F. L. C.

EDGE. Grace Holden! what is this name—and who are your GRACE. You, too, Cyril! Oh, no—no—no! Tell me that I am out of my senses—that there is no one here but yourself and me, Cyril !

EDGE. No, there are others here.

GRACE. (*surprised, but without any increase of terror*) Mr. Merriton!-----

EDGE. And besides-----

GRACE. Lady Slowburn and her daughter,—true; the hour has come at length! Heaven's will be done!

EDGE. (*aside*) This fearful resignation—oh! what does it mean? (*aloud*) Grace Holden,—I implore you to tell me what crime attaches to that name!

LADY S. I sincerely pity you, Mr. Edgeworth,—but the crime is of too dark a character to be left unpunished.

GRACE. Cyril! Cyril!

EDGE. Speak! is this true?—Silent! Guilty! (*GRACE utters a cry and falls on her knees, hiding her face in her hands.*)

Enter LORD MIDFORD, D. L.

CONSTANCE. (*rushing to him*) Arthur!

LORD M. Hush! hush, dear! you shall know all presently, (*aside, seeing GRACE*) She is here!

CONSTANCE. Let this unhappy woman escape! since you are safe,—whatever her guilt may have been—I cannot bear the thought of causing her destruction.

Enter RASHLEIGH, *hurriedly*, D. L.

RASH. I have no such hesitation,—and therefore, at once, accuse this woman of being the murderer of my unfortunate aunt!

EDGE. A murderer!

GRACE. He!

LORD M. Scoundrel!

RASH. A little less familiarity, my lord, if you please,—and no indignant sentiment.

LORD M. Philip Rasleigh,—do you know where I have just come from? Wait! (*to GRACE*) Grace—on the night of Lady Belfield's murder, a will was stolen by the person who committed the deed.

GRACE. (*aside*) Oh! my father!

RASH. Who destroyed it—if there ever was one!

GRACE. (*aside*) Cyril believes me guilty! Let me end my misery! (*aloud*) I stole the will—and destroyed it.

RASH. (*triumphantly*) Now, cousin,—scoundrel in your teeth! You have all heard this wretched woman's confession!

LORD M. But all have not yet heard her motive for so accusing herself; this was, to save the man whom she believed to be her father.

GRACE. Believe! Oh! my lord,—what do you mean? For pity's sake! If that unhappy man were not my father

LADY S. Holden not her father!-----

RASH. There must be no "ifs" and "beliefs" here; I call on all present to bear witness that she has distinctly admitted having stolen and destroyed my aunt's will!

LORD M. The will which made her the heiress to one half of Lady Belfield's great wealth !

RASH. (*starting*) How did you come to know that?

LORD M. (*after speaking in a whisper to MAGUILP, who goes out hastily, L. D.*) Because (*drawing paper from, his pocket*) I here hold in my hand the stolen will!

RASH. It's a forgery !

LORD M. The Jew of whom I bought it knew its value better as a security, Philip Rashleigh.

RASH. This is that hound Redway's doing ! Good-night! the sooner I settle accounts with him—(*MAGUILP returns with two POLICEMEN, D. L.*) What does this mean ?

LORD M. It means that—if justice does not gravely miscarry, you will answer to it for the life of Lady Belfield.

RASH. If my life is spared, cousin Midford,—it will be for a day of reckoning between us for to-night's work, take my word for it! (*exit between the POLICEMEN D.L.*)

GRACE. Oh ! my lord,—for heaven's sake tell me what all this dream-like business means.

LORD M. (*taking a letter from out of the will*) Read his letter, Grace—it was folded in the will.

MERRI. I placed it there myself, by direction of my poor friend, Lady Belfield, on the night of her death.

GRACE. (*after reading the letter, repeats the last words*) " Farewell, my beloved daughter—(*lowering her voice, and with deep emotion*) keep my sad secret, and forgive me." (*aloud, placing the letter in her bosom*) Forgive her !—my dear, lost mother!

LORD M. (*in a low tone to her*) Sister !

GRACE. Oh, may heaven bless you for this moment's happiness! too great for me bear alone !—Brother ! Cyril!—husband!

EDGE. I dare not raise my eyes to you, Dora! Hate me—spurn me ! I have forfeited your love! An angel was sent me from heaven, and I was blind to the radiance of her presence! Leave me to the darkness in which I am alone worthy to live.

GRACE. On earth, Cyril, there is no light for me but that which comes love-laden from your eyes, (*she stands within the flood of moonlight, and they embrace passionately.*)

(*Tableau.—CONSTANCE and LORD MIDFORD embrace;*

MERRITON and LADY SLOWBURN appear to congratulate one another. MAGUILP after embracing MRS.

MAGUILP is leading her towards the door L., when he is met, face to face, by MRS. GIBBS radiant with satisfaction, who fills the doorway.

CURTAIN.