

Anna Katharine Green



Behind Closed Doors

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Chapter 1

An Unexpected Visitor

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It was Dr. Cameron's wedding-day. At eight o'clock in the evening, the ceremony of marriage between himself and Genevieve Gretorex was to be performed at the house of the bride's parents in St. Nicholas Place. It was now four o'clock.

Seated in his office, Dr. Cameron, who for a young man enjoyed a most enviable reputation as a physician, mused over his past and built castles for the future; for his bride was the daughter of one of the richest and most influential citizens of New York, and to such ambition as his, this fact, implying as it did valuable connections in the present, and a large and unencumbered fortune in the future, was one that lent lustre to her beauty and attraction to their union. Not but what he loved her—or thought he did—would have loved her under any circumstances. Was she not handsome, and in that reserved and somewhat haughty way he especially admired? Had she not fine manners, and would she not add increased honor to a name already well known, and as he might add, respected? To be sure she had her caprices, as a woman so circumstanced had a right to have, and she esteemed rather than adored him, as many little events in their short courtship only too plainly betrayed. But then he would not have admired a gushing bride, and being what he was, a man of taste and the son of a man of taste, he found a certain satisfaction in the calm propriety of a match that united equal interests, without jeopardizing that calmness of

mind necessary to the successful practice of his exacting profession. There was but one thing troubled him. Why had she refused to see him for the last seven days? She was not a woman of petty instincts. Indeed he had sometimes suspected her of possessing latent energies which the round of a fashionable life had never called forth; and in her cool and somewhat languid gaze he had caught glimpses now and then of a spirit that only needed light and air to expand into something like greatness. Why then this strange desire for seclusion at a time when a woman is usually supposed to desire the support of her lover's society? Had he displeased her? He could not think so. Not only had his presents been rich, they had been rare and of an order to gratify her refined taste. Was she ill? He was her physician as well as lover and he had not been notified of any indisposition. Besides the last time he had been so fortunate as to be received into her presence, she had seemed well, and looked blooming; more so indeed, than he had seen her for some time; and though somewhat nervous in manner, had exhibited an interest in his attentions which he had not always observed in her. It was not a long interview, but he remembered it well; saw again the almost timid look with which she greeted him, followed by the smile that was nearly a shock to him, it was so much warmer and brighter than usual. Then the few hurried words—for even that night she would not see him long—and the sudden coyness of her attitude as he took her hand in parting!—he recollected it all. He had not thought of it at the time, but now it seemed to him that there had been something strange in her whole bearing, an impalpable change from her former self that he

could not analyze but which had nevertheless left its impression upon him. The kiss he had received, for instance, had moved him. There had been warmth in it and her lips had almost returned the pressure of his own.

This was new in the history of their courtship and would have argued, perhaps, that she was beginning to recognize his appreciation of her if her after conduct had not given the lie to any such surmise. As it was, it rather seemed to show that she had been in an unnatural condition—suggestive of incipient fever, perhaps, She was ill; and they were trying to keep it from him! The butler's excuses, "Miss Gretorex is very much engaged, sir;" "Mrs. Gretorex's regrets, sir, but Miss Gretorex has gone out on important business," were but polite subterfuges to blind his eyes to the real truth. And yet to his calmer judgment how untenable was even this supposition. Had she been sick he could not have failed to have heard of it from some quarter. No, she was not sick. She was but indulging in a freak easily to be explained, perhaps, by her mother's over-exacting code of etiquette; and as in a few hours she was to be his wife and life-long companion, he would cease to think of it, and only remember that kiss—

He had reached this point in his musings when they were suddenly interrupted. A tap was heard on his office door.

With some irritation he arose. It was not time for his carriage and he had expressly ordered that no visitors or patients were to be received. Who could it be, then? A messenger from Miss Gretorex? He sprang to the door at the thought. But before he could touch the knob, the door opened, and to his surprise and possible relief there entered

an unknown man of middle age and prepossessing appearance, whose errand seemed to be one of importance though his manner was quiet and his voice startlingly gentle.

“I hope I am not intruding,” said he. “The boy below told me this was your wedding-day, but he also told me that the ceremony was not to take place till eight o’clock this evening, and as my business is peculiar and demands instant attention, I ventured to come up.”

“That is right,” answered Dr. Cameron, feeling an unaccountable attraction towards the man though he was not what you would perhaps call a gentleman, and had, as the doctor could not but notice even at this early stage of their acquaintance, a way of not meeting your eye when he spoke that was to say the least, lacking in ingenuousness. “Is it as a patient you come to me?”

“No,” rejoined the stranger, fixing his glance on the white necktie and one or two other insignificant articles which lay on the table near by, with an air strangely like that of compassion. “My business is with you as a doctor—that is, partly—but I am not the patient. I almost wish I were,” he added, in a troubled tone that awakened the other’s interest notwithstanding the natural pre-occupation of his thoughts.

“Let me hear,” returned Dr. Cameron.

“You make my task easy,” the stranger remarked. “And yet,” he went on in a curter and more business-like tone, “you may be less willing to listen when I tell you that I have first a story to relate which while not uninteresting in itself, is so out of accord with your present mood that I doubt if you will be able to sit through it with patience. Yet it is

necessary for me to relate it and necessary for you to hear it, now, here, and without any interruption.”

This was alarming; especially as the speaker did not seem like a man given to sentimentalities or even to exaggeration. On the contrary he gave the impression of a person accustomed to weigh his words with studious care, not allowing a sentence to escape him without a decided motive.

“Will you tell me your name?” requested Dr. Cameron.

The reply came quietly.

“I doubt if you will know it, and I had rather you had not asked it. But since it is important above all things that you should trust me, I will say that it is Gryce, Ebenezer Gryce, and add that I am a member of the police force; in short, a detective.”

Dr. Cameron felt his apprehensions vanish. Whatever the other’s errand, it could not be one that touched him or his; and this to a man on his wedding-day was certainly a comforting thought.

“You undervalue your fame,” he replied. “I know your name well. Can it be possible you desire my assistance in a professional way?”

The detective’s gaze which had been resting gloomily upon a laughing cherub on the mantelpiece, shifted, but he did not respond to the doctor’s smile and his manner remained unaltered.

“I will tell my story,” said he. “It will be the quickest way to come to an understanding.”

And without further pause or preliminary, he began in the following words.

Chapter 2

The Dilemma

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“I am getting to be an old man, and I have my infirmities, but there are still cases which are given to nobody but me. Among them are those which involve the honor of persons in a high station of life.”

Mr. Gryce paused. Dr. Cameron felt his apprehensions return.

“You see,” the detective slowly resumed, “I can keep a secret; that is, when the life and property of others are not endangered by my silence. I can do a detective’s work and keep a detective’s counsel, only speaking when and where necessity requires.”

He paused again. Dr. Cameron moved uneasily.

“As in this case,” added the other, gravely.

“This case?” repeated the doctor, now thoroughly alarmed, “What case? You excite me; tell me what you have to say, at once!”

But the detective was not to be hurried.

“I was therefore not at all surprised,” he proceeded, as if no interruption had occurred, “when some three days ago I was requested to call upon—Mrs. A., let us say, on business of a strictly confidential character. Such summonses come frequently. Such a summons does not disturb an officer in the least. I nevertheless made haste to show myself at Mrs. A.’s house; for Mrs. A., whom you perhaps know, is a woman of some consequence, and her husband a man of widespread reputation and influence. I found her at home,

anxiously awaiting my appearance. As soon as she saw me she told me her trouble: 'Mr. Gryce,' said she, 'I am in a great dilemma. Some thing has occurred in our family which may or may not lead to a lasting dishonor. What I wish from you is aid to determine whether our fears are well-grounded. If they are not, you will forget that you were ever called to this house.' I bowed; I was already interested, for I saw that her anxiety was great, while I could not help being puzzled over its cause, for she had no son to disgrace her by his dissipations, and as for her husband he was above reproach. She soon relieved my curiosity,

" 'Mr. Gryce,' said she, 'I have a daughter.'

" 'Yes,' I returned, inwardly startled, Miss A. and dishonor seemed so wide apart.

" 'She is our only child,' the mother went on. 'We love her, and have always cherished her, but though it is not generally known in the house—' and here the poor lady's eyes roamed about her as if she were afraid that her words would be overheard, 'she has left us; gone away without acquainting us where—suddenly, inexplicably, leaving only the most meagre explanation behind her, and—and'—'

" 'But, madam,' I interrupted, 'if she left any explanation —'

"Mrs. A. took a small and crumpled note out of her pocket and handed it to me.

" 'A letter,' she affirmed, 'sent through the mail. And I was in the house when she left, and would have listened to any reasonable request she had to make.'

"I had already read the four or five lines which the letter contained.

“ ‘Dear Mother:

“ ‘I must have rest. I have gone away for a few days, but shall be back on the twenty-seventh. Don’t worry.

“ ‘Your affectionate—’

“ ‘What is the matter with this?’ I asked. ‘She says she will be back on the twenty-seventh, and today is only the twenty-fourth.’

“ ‘Sir,’ was the answer, ‘it is the only time in our experience when our daughter has left us without first gaining our permission. Besides, the time is especially inopportune. My daughter’s wedding-cards are out.’ ”

Mr. Gryce stopped suddenly, for Dr. Cameron had given an anxious start.

“Ah, that arouses your interest!” remarked the detective. “Your own wedding being so near, I am not surprised.”

It was dryly said, and the doctor at once reseated himself. He had no wish to appear unduly moved, but he could not suppress every token of emotion, so he turned his head away from the light. Mr. Gryce let his gaze travel to a new object before proceeding.

“This avowel of Mrs. A. put a new aspect on affairs,” said he, “but yet I saw no reason for the extreme anxiety displayed. ‘And on what day does she expect to be married?’ I asked.

“ ‘On the twenty-seventh.’

“ ‘But she says she will be back?’

“ ‘That does not comfort me.’

“ ‘You think she will not come?’

“ ‘I have no hope that she will.’

“This acknowledgment was uttered with emphasis. There seemed to be but one conclusion to draw.

“ ‘Your daughter wishes to escape her engagement?’

“The answer was less emphatic than before. In fact it expressed doubt.

“ ‘I do not know, sir, my daughter is not herself; has not been for some time. My husband and myself have both noticed it; but we never anticipated her taking any such extreme action as this. Where has she gone? What will become of her? How can we face the world? How can we tell her lover?’

“ ‘Then you think—’

“ ‘That she is laboring under a temporary aberration of mind, caused perhaps by the excitement of the last few weeks, that she is not responsible for her acts; that she may be anywhere, remote or near; and that we may wait till the hour set for her marriage is past without seeing her.’

“To this I could make but one reply. ‘Then why not take her lover into your confidence, inform him of your fears and gain the benefit of his experience in your search for her,’

“The answer will astonish you.

“ ‘Because we are very proud and he is very proud. To explain our fears, we should be obliged to say much that it would be humiliating for us to utter and for him to hear. Besides, we may over-rate the situation. She may come back, as she says she will; and should this be the case, you can see for yourself what endless regret would follow any such confidences as you suggest.’

“ ‘But—’ I began.

“ ‘It is this note that causes our dilemma,’ she interposed. ‘With these lines before me I cannot act as if there were no hope of her returning in proper time to take her part in the ceremony. Yet I do not trust these lines, nor the promise she has made. Why, I can hardly say; for she has always been a woman of her word. But she is not herself, of that I am convinced.’

“This repetition of her former assertion made it easy for me to inquire what special change she had perceived in her daughter to lead to such a conclusion. She evidently found it difficult to reply.

“ ‘I cannot put it into words,’ she declared: ‘I feel the change.’

“ ‘And how long have you felt it?’

“ ‘Not long, since we began active preparations for her wedding, I think.’

“ ‘And has no one else observed it?’

“ ‘I cannot say; I should think her lover would.’

“ ‘Why?’

“ ‘Because it has been in reference to him she has shown her peculiarities strongest. For weeks she has received him only on sufferance; and for the last few days has more than once absolutely refused to see him.’

“ ‘And what reason did she assign for this?’

“ ‘Follies. Fatigue, caprice, a letter to write, a dressmaker to see, anything that came into her head.’

“ ‘Yet she went on preparing for her wedding?’

“ ‘Certainly, her cards were out.’

“The tone in which this was said, caused me to reflect. Though affable, kindly and even philanthropic in her

dealings towards the world at large, Mrs. A. is, as every one knows, a woman who would find it very difficult to infringe upon any of the laws of society. Having seen her daughter pledge herself to a man of suitable pretensions, she would consider such a pledge final if only because she could not face the talk and scandal that would follow a rupture. Influenced by this idea I remarked:

“ ‘You must be perfectly frank with me if you want me to help you at this crisis. Has your daughter, or has she not, expressed a wish to break her engagement?’

“ ‘She asked me once if I thought it too late for her to do so. Of course there was but one reply to this and she said no more. But,’ the poor mother continued hastily, ‘that was only a symptom of flightiness. She has nothing against her lover, does not pretend to have.’

“ ‘Only against marriage?’

“ ‘Only against marriage.’

“ ‘Mrs. A.,’ I now boldly asked, ‘do you think she loves the man you expect her to marry?’

“The answer came hesitatingly. ‘She accepted his attentions with pleasure when they were first offered.’

“ ‘Do you think she loves any other man?’

“The mother shrunk back in dismay. ‘I am sure she does *not*. How could she? There is not another such gentleman in our circle of acquaintance.’

“This was flattering to the gentleman, but not exactly satisfactory to me.

“ ‘You know girls sometimes take strange whims.’

“ ‘My daughter is not a girl, sir, she is a woman.’

“This silenced me as it would you, sir, I have no doubt; and seeing the mother was really sincere in believing that her daughter’s mind was temporarily affected, I inquired again as to what she had done or failed to do of late, and found that she had shunned the society of the members of her family as well as that of her lover, finding her sole interest seemingly in the preparation of her wardrobe. ‘To that she did attend,’ said Mrs. A., ‘and it was the only thing she did help me in. No hour was too late for her to see her dressmaker; no engagement too pressing for her to receive and fit on any of the new costumes that kept coming home. Indeed she showed more than a bride’s usual interest in such matters; and it is the one reason I have for not disputing you utterly when you say she may come back. She will want to see her dresses.’

“ ‘Then she did not take them with her?’

“ ‘She took nothing.’

“ ‘What! not a trunk?’

“ ‘Nothing; that is, nothing but a little hand satchel.’

“ ‘How do you know this?’

“ ‘We all saw her go out; she was in shopping costume.’

“ ‘But she had money?’

“ ‘I cannot say. Some, no doubt; but we found a large roll of bills in her drawer, and her father says it contains nearly all he had lately given her. I do not think her pocket-book held more than five dollars.’

“This was a point. Either the girl was going amongst friends, or she was really touched in her mind. To make sure that the first supposition was not true, I asked for a list of the houses which Miss A. was in the habit of visiting. Mrs. A.

mentioned some half dozen, but added that her daughter's most intimate companion was in Europe and that she did not think she cared enough for the others to go to them at this time.

“ ‘And she positively carried no baggage with her?’

“ ‘None. I have looked her things over carefully and find nothing missing. She did not even wear her diamonds.’

“ ‘And her watch?’

“ ‘Is left behind.’

“ I felt troubled. I looked at the mother to ascertain what her real fears were. But they did not seem to be any worse than those she had expressed. Was she blind to the possibilities? I felt it my duty to repeat a former question.

“ ‘Mrs. A.’ said I, ‘I will try and find your child. The fact that she had too little money to go far from home will facilitate matters. But first I must be sure that there is no third party mixed up in this case and that party a gentleman. You are certain she was not secretly interested in some unknown person?’

“ ‘I can only repeat her words,’ replied the poor mother. ‘The very last time I saw her, (it was day before yesterday evening), she looked so feverish and acted so unlike herself, that I ventured to ask her if she were sure she would not fall sick before her wedding-day. She said with an unnatural laugh I hear ringing yet, “I have no idea of falling ill and I shall certainly not do so till after I have married the doctor.”’

“Did I say,” inquired the detective, pausing, “that Miss A.’s lover was a doctor?”

This was too much for his uneasy auditor. Leaping to his feet, Dr. Cameron confronted the speaker and exclaimed hotly,

“You are playing with me. It is of my intended wife you are speaking; and you are amusing yourself with a long, drawn-out tale, when all I want to know is, whether I am to find my bride at the altar when I go there, or whether I am to be made the victim of an outrageous scandal that will affect my whole future career. Don’t you know that it is now half past four and that at eight—”

“Softly,” interrupted the other. “I am Ebenezer Gryce and I seldom go slow when I ought to go fast. If I take up your time by telling you a long, drawn-out tale, it is because—”

But the doctor was in no mood for talk.

“Tell me,” said he, “if Miss Gretorex has returned to her father’s house.”

“She has not.”

“And they have not heard from her?”

The detective shook his head.

Dr. Cameron’s mouth took a grim curve. “There is to be no wedding then, I see.” Then as the other did not answer, he broke out into a harsh laugh and turned towards the window. “I will send and countermand the order for my carriage,” he now dryly remarked.

Mr. Gryce advanced and touched him softly on the shoulder.

“On the contrary,” said he, “you will send for it to come at once; there is use for it.”

“I do not understand you.”

“You have not heard my story out.”

“Speak, then. If nothing but slow torture will answer, why I must summon up my courage and submit.”

“Good! Meanwhile you will send for your carriage?”

“If you say I will require it.”

“I have already said so.”

“Wait,” cried the other, stopping him as he reached out his hand toward the electric bell. “Where am I expected to go?”

“To the C— Hotel.”

“A fine ride on my wedding-day.”

“A necessary one.”

“And whom am I expected to see there?”

“A young woman who has registered herself as Mildred Farley, but who I think looks precisely like the original of that picture I see hanging over your fireplace.”

Dr. Cameron shuddered.

“Don’t you know whether it is the original or not?”

“No; if I did I should not need you. I should take Mrs. Gretorex with me instead.”

“And why don’t you do so as it is?”

“For two reasons. First, she is a woman and I wish to save her all the suffering I can; secondly, she is a marked person and her appearance in a crowded hotel on the day of her daughter’s anticipated wedding might awaken comment.”

“And mine?”

“You are a doctor; you can go everywhere, at any time without causing the least scandal.”

“And the young lady? Have you thought how very agreeable to her my presence will probably be, if she is as

you surmise, the woman I am expected to marry in four hours?”

“I have thought of everything. The young lady shall not see you. You shall only see her.”

“And if I find her the stranger her name implies?”

“You shall drive to Mr. Gretorex’s house as fast as you can, confident that your bride will be there to welcome you.”

Dr. Cameron no longer hesitated. The carriage was ordered. While they were waiting for it, the doctor asked for the remainder of the story he had before disdained to hear. “I can listen now,” he said, “I already know the worst.”

With an enigmatical bend of the brows the detective continued.

“Mrs. Gretorex has an unlimited confidence in the police. When she had told me that her daughter was missing, that she had gone out of the house without baggage, and showed me the letter she had received, she evidently thought she had given me all the information necessary. But I thought differently. Having but three days in which to accomplish this task, it was necessary that no time should be lost in pursuing false clews, so after asking for Miss A.’s—Miss Gretorex’s photograph, I put a few further questions, and finding that she could really give me no added information, I followed out my usual course in these matters and asked leave to interrogate the servants.

“ ‘But,’ she exclaimed, ‘they have no notion but that she has gone away with our full knowledge and consent. It would ruin everything to take them into our confidence; girls of that class can never keep a secret.’

“ ‘I understand,’ I replied, ‘and I have no notion of taking them into our confidence. We have fifty ways of getting what we wish out of servants without their suspecting either us or our motives.’

“I thought the lady looked peculiar. ‘Well,’ said she, ‘the only one who could give you any information has lately left the house. My daughter took a dislike to her and begged that she should be dismissed. Not liking to cross Miss Gretorex in her present condition, I complied, though I knew nothing against the girl and liked her work well.’

“This had the look of a clew; at all events it was worth another question.

“ ‘And what excuse did your daughter give for her dislike?

“ ‘O, none; thought the girl prying, I believe, meddled too much with her new things, I suppose.’

“I asked for the girl’s address. That word *prying* gave me hope; it was the open *sesame* perhaps to the mystery before us. The mother gave it without hesitation, but also without any enthusiasm. That a servant should have picked up any information in regard to her proud daughter of which she herself was ignorant, seemed absolutely incredible to her. But I know my business,” asserted Mr. Gryce, “and after taking such measures as are usual with the police when a person like Miss Gretorex is missing, I went to see this girl.

“I will not try your patience by relating the interview. It was like a thousand others I have had and ended very much as I expected it would. She talked, but was not conscious she talked. She told me all she knew about Miss Gretorex and considerable that she did not. There was evidently

reason for her mistress calling her prying, for she had a great deal to say about a girl who used to come there with sewing; trash which I was obliged to listen to in order to get at the one thing I wanted, which was that she had once surprised the young lady writing a letter she evidently did not wish seen, for she blushed with anger at the intrusion, calling the girl names and threatening her with the dismissal she afterwards received.”

“And this letter?” asked Dr. Cameron, in a voice he strove in vain to keep calm.

“Was but begun. The girl only saw the line ‘My beloved D —’ a very proper beginning if she were writing to her future husband.”

“Very,” returned the doctor. But the suppressed sarcasm in his voice told the detective all he wanted to know.

“But it looked as if it were not to her future husband,” continued that worthy, gravely. “And finding that she had no intimate friend whose name began with D—, I began to feel assured that my original surmise was true and that there was a third party in the case to whose influence Miss Gretorex’s disappearance was due. I therefore added to the precautions already taken, such others as my own judgment suggested; causing a description of her person and clothing to be sent to many quarters usually omitted by the authorities. Besides doing this I had her various haunts searched and her friends examined. A detective was even sent to this office, sir, and conversed with you a half-hour day before yesterday without your suspecting his errand. But all was of no avail till this morning. This morning word was brought me that a person answering the description I

had sent out, had taken dinner at a certain restaurant and afterwards gone to the C—Hotel where she was to be found in room 153. In half an hour I was there and in five minutes more I had seen her.”

“And was—was she—” stammered the doctor.

“I have said she was like the original of that picture,” remarked Mr. Gryce. “But I cannot swear she is Miss Gretorex. Her face was that of the missing heiress, but her clothing while answering in a general way to the description of what Miss Gretorex wore on leaving home, still shows points of difference which an old hand like myself cannot but take note of. As for instance, the description reads: ‘*A dress of fine blue cloth trimmed with rows of black braid,*’ while this woman’s dress is of blue cloth indeed, but not fine and not trimmed with black braid. Besides she has a watch on and Miss Gretorex as we know, left hers behind her. Yet,” he went on, as if in answer to Dr. Cameron’s sudden look of relief—though how he could see it I cannot say for he was looking in quite a contrary direction—“clothes are alterable and faces not so much so. Though I do not profess to explain the discrepancies I have mentioned, I fully believe the woman in room 153 of the C— Hotel is the lady we seek; but that may we be sure of it, I have come for you.”

“But,” cried the doctor with a frown, “if there is a third party as you say—”

“Hark!” said Mr. Gryce, “the carriage.” And he rose in a way that admitted of no dispute.

Chapter 3

ROOM 153

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The ride was comparatively a silent one. Mr. Gryce, never much of a talker except when he had an object in view, found sufficient occupation for himself in looking out of the window, while Dr. Cameron was in too perturbed a condition of mind to risk speech even if the confused nature of his thoughts had allowed it. He was suffering from the first real blow his pride had ever received; for he knew now that it was his pride that had been hurt and not his heart, his pride which was so great that at the very thought of humiliation, his whole future became clouded. He a betrayed lover! He an outraged bridegroom! It was an intolerable thought, and yet he could not escape from it. For now that he had turned his back upon that part of the city which had held his hopes, and was *en route* with a detective to an obscure hotel downtown, he knew as well as if he had already recognized her that he was going to see there Genevieve Gretorex. The utter sinking at his heart assured him of it. The thousand and one memories of his acquaintance with the cold and haughty woman who had accepted his attentions, but who had never loved him or seemed to ask his love, added their weight to his conviction. He could perceive now that her thoughts and interest had been elsewhere. He laughed to himself with an immeasurable bitterness as he remembered how he had characterized by such terms as noble self-control, dignified reserve, and lady-like hauteur, the chill, studied manner he now saw to be the expression of

indifference if not actual distaste. And he had come to his very wedding-day without suspecting the truth; had bought his presents and fitted up his house for a bride that had actually left her home and resorted to the most miserable of subterfuges to escape him. It was enough to crush all gentleness out of him; to make of a once generous and amiable man, a cynic and a misanthrope. His working features showed his feelings; his clenched hand, his determination. If it was as he feared, and Miss Gretorex should be found by him in hiding, instead of in her father's house dressing for a ceremony to which a thousand guests had been invited, he would flee the city, leave the country, and with it the derision of his enemies, and the no less unacceptable sympathy of his friends. In his imagination, he was already half across the ocean, when the carriage came to a standstill. Looking up, he saw they were before the hotel and the character of his thoughts changed.

“What time is it?” he asked, abruptly.

“Just five minutes to six.”

“Late! if fate should be so unexpectedly propitious as to prove your surmises wrong, and I should wish to get back to St. Nicholas Place by eight.”

“No,” said the detective. “It has taken us just eighty minutes to come down, and it will take us just eighty minutes to go back. That will give us ten minutes for what you want to do here and leave you a full half-hour in which to change your coat and don a white neck-tie; all that I see you need to do before taking your part in the anticipated ceremony.”

“You calculate without delays.”

“I see no cause for any.”

“You cannot always prevent them. I should not wish to be late if the bride is not,” he somewhat sarcastically suggested.

The detective did not seem to fear any such result.

As they were alighting from the carriage the physician’s thoughts seemed to take still another turn. He glanced at his companion, and though he did not meet his eye—something which very few could boast of ever doing—he seemed satisfied with his scrutiny, for he remarked:

“You have meant to show me a kindness, Mr. Gryce.”

The detective did not contradict him.

At the entrance of the hotel, Dr. Cameron again addressed him.

“You have promised she shall not see me.”

“I will keep my word.”

“Give as little cause for scandal as you can,” he said.

Mr. Gryce shrugged his shoulders.

“Trust me,” was his laconic rejoinder.

They went up-stairs, quietly passed down a hall or two and stopped in a dark passage.

“Wait,” enjoined the detective; and he stepped up to a girl that was loitering in the vicinity.

A few words settled his business and she came rapidly forward, stepped by the doctor and opened a door nearby with a key she took from her pocket.

“Room 153 happens to be a very convenient one for our purpose,” whispered Mr. Gryce, as the girl passed in and left them a minute alone. “It has its main door and it has this other and but little used one, opening into an alcove with

curtains. The girl is gone to see if the lady wishes anything. She will leave the door ajar when she comes out."

Dr. Cameron flushed scarlet and drew hastily back.

"It is a sneaking piece of business," he objected.

"But it must be done," quoth the other; then as the girl came out, added, "if she is the patient you seek, her parents will be only too grateful to you for your attention."

Dr. Cameron frowned, subdued his natural feelings and followed in the wake of the detective, who had already stepped across the threshold.

The room or rather the alcove thus entered, was dim and for a moment he saw nothing but the bed that together with a wardrobe took up most of the space before him. But in another instant he had observed the thin streak of light made by the separation of the two heavy curtains that hung between him and the apartment beyond, and walking quickly up to it, he looked through.

A pathetic sight greeted him. Kneeling before a fire, whose leaping flames seemed neither to lend warmth to her icy cheek nor comfort to her miserable heart, he saw a woman, whose listless eyes fixed upon a paper that was consuming on the hearth, saw nothing beyond, seemingly in this world or the world to come. But apparent as was her misery, the doctor saw in that first glance but two things, her face and her form. Both were unmistakable. They were those of Genevieve Gretorex,

His look as he fell back revealed the truth. The detective who was close at his side took his arm without a word and turned towards the door. But Dr, Cameron, moved perhaps by some vague memory of the despair he had seen, turned

round again to the curtain and allowed himself one other glance. His face softened as he looked and he involuntarily raised his hand to the curtain as if moved by some uncontrollable impulse to enter, when he felt his companion's firm clasp close around his arm, and yielding to that kindly but inexorable will, he wheeled about and followed Mr. Gryce out of the room.

"So there is no mistake," inquired the detective. The doctor shook his head.

Mr. Gryce softly closed and locked the door out of which they had come. Giving the key to the girl who was not far off, he remarked, "It is not the person we seek," and quietly led the way towards the stairs. But here Dr. Cameron stopped him,

"What are you going to do?" asked he.

"Ride to St. Nicholas Place as fast as I can."

"And what do you expect me to do?"

The detective opened out his hands French fashion. "I have no further control over your movements," he observed.

Dr. Cameron still held him back.

"Mr. Gryce," said he, "have you seen this young lady yourself?"

"Certainly, before I went for you to identify her."

"You noticed how pale she was, then, how unhappy."

"I did not think so."

"She is the living picture of despair."

Mr. Gryce's hand that was sliding up and down the stair-rail suddenly stopped.

“Your emotions make you exaggerate,” he declared. “It is scarcely three hours since I saw her, and she struck me then as looking not only well but full of bloom and hopefulness.”

“Go and look for yourself,” suggested the doctor. “If I am any reader of countenances it is a wretched woman we leave in yonder,”

Mr. Gryce paused no longer. Gliding swiftly back, he procured the key once more, took a glance for himself and came out troubled.

“I don’t understand it,” his look seemed to say to the unconscious key as he handed it back for the second time to the obliging chambermaid.

The girl may have surprised that look, at all events she ventured upon a word or two that seemed to move the detective strangely. He gave the key another glance, asked a question or two and then hurried away to the office by another stair than that which was guarded by Dr. Cameron’s tall figure. He was gone five minutes and the doctor was beginning to lose control over his patience when the detective appeared below, and hastily beckoned to him. Dr. Cameron at once ran down. There was a change in the detective’s manner which he could not but notice.

“It is as I said?” remarked he.

Mr. Gryce laughed—he did sometimes—and hastened towards the street door. “We have no time to lose,” he affirmed.

“*You* have not, perhaps,” exclaimed his companion, energetically. “But my duty is here; Miss Gretorex looks as if she needed a friend, and if it is true that her mind is affected—”