# The Separate Room

Ethel Colburn Mayne

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It was clear that Bergsma was pleased, and Marion Cameron held her breath in thrilled alarm.

"You've done it—why! you've done it rippingly," said Bergsma, in his intermittent foreign accent, which now made a w and y precede the r in "rippingly." He did not look up, but read on eagerly from the sheet that Marion had typed for him, this morning, before he came into the study. She had felt tired, on waking, after the late evening with its difficult job, and then the exciting sense of having done it not so badly; she had hardly slept a wink, but she was at Bergsma's house much earlier than usual, so that all should be in best array when Bergsma came, and she herself in something that might figure as composure.

"So it was interesting," Bergsma said, still reading. "Miss Grey was in good voice, and Woolley not too—woolly?" He grinned at his mild joke, but still did not look up.

"Miss Grey was splendid," Marion said, in her clear solemn tones; "and Mr. Woolley was. . ."

She stopped. She wanted to acknowledge the joke, to say that Mr. Woolley had been something textile, but the word would not present itself, and Marion gave it up. "Mr. Woolley was quite good."

"Loose?" asked Bergsma, with another grin.

"Loose—Mr. Woolley?"

He glanced at her. 'The part—it's quelque peu! I thought he might have 'given' a bit for once, pulled his voice out . . . ah, peste, no more of it!" He frowned.

Marion blushed. She knew she had been slow, and knew that Bergsma hated slowness.

He laid the sheet aside. "It's all right. Send it off." Now he looked up, and at her. "You enjoyed it—the job, I mean?"

"Indeed I did," she answered with the full force of her earnestness.

He turned his thick blue eyes away.

"Like to do it again?"

"If you think I'm worthy . . ." Marion said, a shade more solemnly still. All at once a different mood seized Bergsma. "Oh, any intelligent person can turn out a notice like that. It wasn't an important production. . . . You've done it very nicely." He took the morning paper; Marion knew she was dismissed to her own table in the corner.

This kind of thing had happened before—the disconcerting change of tone, when she had thought that he was really pleased beyond the ordinary limits of a secretary's "giving–of–satisfaction."

Marion did not resent, but she would have liked to understand it. Was it something in him, or in herself, that brought the quick reaction? For she knew, as she had known before, that this was not the mere return to business–manner when the moment for expansion is over. No; he was cross, and about something that was definite, to him.

She put up her article for post—the first words she had ever written for print, and they were to appear, in the foremost musical weekly, not as hers but his. She was Bergsma's "ghost!" Marion, when first she had realized that this was what she was to be, had smiled to herself with the humour of which, for all her lack of wit, she was capable. Bergsma's ghost—a ludicrously dissimilar one! He was short and squat, with a flat, smooth, white face, and thick, prominent, most heavy–lidded eyes that deadened into boredom frankly and alarmingly: "the eyes of genius," somebody had said of them to Marion. Certainly, if that power of extinguishing his eyes were proof of genius, Bergsma had it; and if the other power of lighting so excitedly that they lit up his whole face were further proof, the eyes doubly marked him. That was what made it comic that she should be his ghost. Marion's eyes were large, but that was the most they were. They always looked the same; their brightness was constant—not a luminous bright. ness, but a mere surface glitter, just enough to rescue them from dulness. They bored her; she

despised them heartily. Other things about herself she did not so much mind. She was glad to have her strong white teeth, to be so very tall and not an atom weedy; she could not help thinking, too, that she looked more like "a lady" than most working−girls. (Marion liked to call herself a working−girl, but it annoyed her mother.) She carried herself gallantly, and had adopted the right manner of dress for an impoverished but undeniable gentlewoman, glad and proud to be the hard−working secretary to a leading critic of music—the musical drama, especially. She wore dark, well−cut coats and skirts, and broad, low stiff white collars, and sober hats that had not "too much surface," as her friend, Mrs. Wynne, was fond of saying. Marion didn't know what her friend meant, yet she always contrived to get the kind of hat. It was worn one−sidedly, "crammed" a little; that suited the frank, earnest face with its wide brows and mouth, for it toned down what might have been too much of earnestness. "You look almost piquante," Mrs. Wynne had said.

"Not quite—I shouldn't countenance that; it would spoil you."

Marion laughed. "You wouldn't countenance my countenance!"

But Mrs. Wynne did not laugh, and Marion flushed, as she often did when people didn't laugh, as they often didn't. It wasn't a good joke; one saw that when one heard it. . . . She thought of saying that; it sounded funny; but perhaps it wouldn't be a good joke, either? At all events, it was a good joke that she should be Bergsma's ghost. His public, this week, would read her devoutly, thinking she was he! And he had known that this was to be so, and yet had ordered her to send it off. . . . She had not believed that she could do it, when Bergsna, harried by a crisis at the theatre where the opera in rehearsal was of his discovery—when he had said:

"Look here, Miss Cameron, they want a notice of that Russian operetta at the Yellow on Wednesday night: the International Amateurs, you know. Do you think you could do it? I'm so bothered! It's interesting, though not important. I'd like to give them a word or two this week, but I can't spare the time just now."

Marion had trembled. "Would they take a notice—from me?"

"They'll take what I send them," Bergsma said. 4 How are they to know who wrote it? Do you feel inclined to try?"

His eyes were beginning to deaden. . . . Marion hastened to say something that would show she was not thinking of the sudden evolution of her duties, or was thinking of it as an honour.

"If I only felt sure I could do it," she faltered.

"You know my point of view by this time, and it's only a short notice—anything long would be absurd. . . . It's very good of you, Miss Cameron; we'll regard it as settled that you go and try your hand." He had glanced at her again, a little suspiciously, she thought; so Marion said, "I feel honoured," in her most earnest manner.

He had a shrug and a grunted word for it; she felt again that haunting sense of error. . . . It made her the more ardent when the evening at the Yellow Theatre arrived. Her mind was stretched to fullest tension; the little opera was Russian of the subtlest, all accumulation and intention, expressed in a new, disconcerting scale, "that beats Schônberg," said one of the appalling experts among whom she sat, "into an egg−flip.".Though she did know Bergsma's point of view, it was not an easy task for Marion, writing her first article, to utter it, and so that it would be accepted as his work. For Bergsma had a very special manner. It seemed almost impious to ape it, but what else could he expect of her? and Marion, blushing while she wrote, did ape it: the quivering, suffused attack, the adjectives and adverbs, the conviction and conversion, as in a revivalist campaign—Bergsma's patent, making each experience of the higher musical drama into a vicarious public change of heart; his heart, of course, had never been anywhere but in the right scale.

Marion, though elated, was alarmed to find that she could "do" it. Suppose he was angry? That opening—it was like. . . – But if Bergsma had noticed the mimicry, he had said nothing about it, the crossness did not refer to that, she knew. And now she had sent it off—it would appear! Even though he had said it wasn't important, she couldn't help regarding next Saturday as an epoch— she and her mother, who had sat up for her, that "Yellow" night, with cocoa and biscuits in their bedroom, and at one o'clock in the morning had heard the article, and thought it exactly like Mr.

Bergsma's own.

Soon Marion was writing all the minor notices, yet the weekly did not lose prestige. It was an astonishing development. All she had had to offer, in the beginning, was her wide acquaintance (it was hardly knowledge, in the deepest sense) with some new developments in foreign music.

She had travelled, and (most useful, too) was polyglot in a degree that rivalled even Bergsma, who never used

his native language–probably the one he now knew least, for it was Dutch, and Holland has added little to the musical drama. Marion knew Dutch, but that seemed to be one of the things in her that did not please him.

"Ah, Dutch I now speak never," he had said hurriedly, when she told him, and she had noticed with what an unusually foreign idiom he then spoke. Normally he used quite normal English.

However, this had not deterred him from engaging her, and she had not again mentioned her acquaintance with Dutch. His vexation was put away among the rest of the puzzlements, once she had thoroughly discussed it with her mother.

Marion discussed everything with her mother. Both were younger than their ages, but while Marion, at twenty–eight, showed merely a retarded maturity, Mrs. Cameron was of the type that never does grow up. She was not "well–preserved"; her hair was grey, her small pink face was frankly though quite prettily wrinkled and withered; she was, in short, the confessed old lady who is a little self–consciously a child. True to her type, she held herself to be a deep diplomatist; Marion believed this of her too—she had been nurtured in the faith. Thus they could, with zest and a tinge of vanity on Mrs. Cameron's part, sit arguing for hours and hours about other people's reasons for being or doing this or that. They would turn an incident round and round, and up and down; then Mrs. Cameron would bring forth an explanation which lately, now and then, had seemed to Marion a little superannuated. She would laugh her big, whole–hearted laugh. "Oh, mother, that's your generation!"—and Mrs. Cameron, though offended, would laugh too, and declare that Marion was now leading such a free life that no doubt she must know better, but "that would have been the reason when I was a girl."

In this way the repulse of Dutch had been explained. "He must have been dissatisfied with a former secretary who spoke it. That was it, you may be sure."

"Or perhaps," cried Marion the emancipate, "he was in love with a secretary who spoke it. That could account for his nervousness, too."

"But, Marion, Mr. Bergsma is married."

"Ça n' empêche pas," Marion smiled.

Mrs. Cameron pondered the smile. Marion was growing; her mother must grow with her.

"Will he fall in love with you, I wonder?" she said, archly.

Marion rose up from her chair. They were in their private hotel's drawing–room, quite alone together; everybody else preferred the lounge.

"Mother! If you ever say that again. . . ."

Mrs. Cameron's little face at once took on a rosy obstinacy.

"I don't see why you fly at me, Marion. You said it first."

"I! Say such a thing about myself and . . . and Mr. Bergsma! I'm a useful servant to him, that's all."

"So would the other one have been."

Marion gasped. "The 'other one!" ' For a moment she could not say any more.

Her mother became injured. "I see nothing dreadful in calling another secretary 'the other one.' And please don't speak of yourself as a servant, Marion; there's no need to do that, if you are working for a salary."

Marion sat down again. "I am a servant, and I'm not ashamed of it."

"You are an accomplished lady, who makes use of her talent to help a busy man—not of course a gentleman, but. . ."

"Not a gentleman," ' Marion gasped again.

"Do not repeat every word I say." Mrs. Cameron was calm, but her little fallen–in, pink mouth was closely set. "Mr. Bergsma is very clever, but you must know as well as I do that he is not a gentleman, in the way your father was, and Neil is."

"He's foreign," Marion panted. She had only just saved herself from echoing "Neil!" Neil liked Bergsma; he had said so when he met him before going out again to India.

"You are used to foreigners," continued Mrs. Cameron. "You know that the Count and M. de la Vigne and Herr von Adelbert were not a bit like Mr. Bergsma. He may be very courteous to you; I have no doubt he is, but his manners to me . . ."

And all this because Bergsma had omitted to open a door, the other day, for Mrs. Cameron! He had been talking so eagerly that he hadn't seen her get up. Marion did not speak; she could do nothing but echo if she

spoke. The Count—horrid old M. de la Vigne—manners. . . ."

"It is time to go to bed," said Mrs. Cameron, cheerfully, as if nothing had happened. That was her tact, the famous tact which had carried her—and Neil and Marion—through so many difficulties. Marion wondered why she hated it, now that it was being exercised upon herself. But mother had forgotten it when she spoke of Mr. Bergsma as not being a gentleman. A cloud obscured the earnest face, as she followed Mrs. Cameron upstairs, and wished, for the first time in all her life, that they could afford to have separate bedrooms.

She said much less about her work from that time forward. It grew more and more exacting; there were few nights now on which she was not out at concerts, for Bergsma was devoting himself to musical drama: he found it more inspiring for his gifts of exposition. It was clear that Marion's efforts pleased him; and yet his crossness grew more pronounced, more constant—not rudeness, but a curious coolness and aloofness, as it were a watchfulness. And since now she did not talk about it with her mother, it seemed the more oppressive, even sinister. Her mother did not ask the questions Marion had expected, and would perhaps have welcomed; they might have eased the dual strain. The strain was dual because Mrs. Cameron, too, was often cool now about little things—the cocoa, for example. It was always there when Marion came in late, but there with an effect of duty, not of glad excited revel, as on that first night. Marion sometimes felt a strange depression. Life seemed altered; though outwardly more exhilarating, it was inwardly less happy. Her toil was not the cause—that grew more dear and glorious every day. No one could have told her articles from Bergsma's now, and still he didn't seem to notice, or if he did, he liked it, to judge by the opportunities he gave her.

One day, Mrs. Wynne said something which infuriated Marion. "What's your salary now? I suppose it's a good deal bigger."

There fell an almost tangible silence. It was as if something they had waited for had happened.

. . Marion looked at her friend. Mrs. Wynne was not looking at Marion, but her eyes had just met Mrs. Cameron's, and Marion caught the gleam. She felt her own eyes flash.

"My salary remains the same."

There was another little silence; then Mrs. Wynne said, "Well done, Bergsma!"

"What do you mean?" cried Marion, choking.

Mrs. Cameron intervened at that point; she said something about "on probation."

"Rather a long probation," Mrs. Wynne observed.

Marion got up. Her voice was gone, her eyes did not flash now, but dimmed with sudden, smarting tears. She stood a moment, looking at the others, then hurried from the room.

So that was what her mother had been plotting. She had asked Mrs. Wynne to say something; the meeting of their eyes betrayed it. . . . When one was being given such a chance! If Bergsma knew, he wouldn't think so highly of his lady−secretary. Rather common, a sordid rise, as if she were indeed a servant! That was just the difference it made, to be a lady. But mother was a lady too, if Mrs. Wynne was a little too shrewd to be "quite−quite. . . ." However, there was no time to worry about it; she had a bigger job to−night than she had ever had before−a symphony, a Danish one, produced by a Society on their special Sunday night for the innermost circle (Bergsma was out of town). She must keep fit for that. And supper—Sunday supper here, with her mother!

Could she stand it? All the time that hateful incident would hover, of the eyes that met and parted furtively. . . . No; she couldn't go through supper.

When Mrs. Cameron came up to change her dress, she found a note upon the pin−cushion.

Marion was supping at a little restaurant, "quite nice and respectable," close to the hall where her job lay; she would be home at the usual hour.

Her mother was asleep, or seemed to be asleep, when she came in. There was no cocoa.

2 xxx Quite without warning it came—the letter in which Bergsma said he had decided to dispense with a secretary for the present.

Marion read it at breakfast. She managed not to cry out; if she turned white, nobody saw her, in the pre−occupation with their food which, at breakfast especially, was a source of continual unrest among the boarders. She put the letter in her belt, and blindly took a plate displaying a poached egg. Marion cut her egg mechanically; it flowed over the toast, and something in the sight made her feel sick. . . . She would have to tell her mother after breakfast. It would be dreadful; her mother would gush out, like the egg. But the thing could not be hidden: better get it told as soon as possible.

"Come up to our room a moment, mother, before you read the paper," Marion said, when Mrs.

Cameron had finished. She had smuggled her own streaming plate away, before it could be noticed that she had not touched the egg except to cut it.

"Are you staying in this morning, then?" Mrs. Cameron said, wondering.

"Yes," Marion answered, and a bitter wave of woe swept into her. She would be staying in all mornings now. . . . She mounted the steep stairs before her mother, the distress increasing as she went, until at the last landing (for their room was at the very top) she broke down, and stood with her face hidden, trembling.

"What's the matter?" Mrs. Cameron called sharply from the flight below; she had seen through the balusters.

Without answering, Marion went into their room. When the little staring face appeared, she silently held out the letter.

Mrs. Cameron began to read. Almost as soon as she began, her daughter broke out crying— weakly, the sound muffled by her covering hands.

"What is it, mother, what can I have done? Oh, tell me, tell me!" Marion sobbed.

"Don't cry, Marion," Mrs. Cameron said quickly. "Whatever you do, don't cry."

She was feeling for a prop to clutch at—there was nothing but their pride: they must not cry.

That man, whom she had always thought so common—that man had done this to them! She dropped the letter; Bergsma's cheque fell out. Money—his. . . . she could have stamped upon the cheque.

"Oh, Marion, do not cry. Remember what you are—and what he is!" she added fiercely. But the fierceness died. Soon she was crying too, because she could not bear to cry. Their sobs were audible outside, for Mrs. Cameron had forgotten to shut the door; a sloppy servant came and stared into the room. It had not been "done" yet, and the girl's face grew sulky—now they'd stop her doing it, and she was to get out so soon as she had finished upstairs.

Mrs. Cameron went to the door, and locked it. "I saw that horrid Annie staring in," she gulped.

Then she did not know what to say. Annie would be cross if they delayed her, and Annie could make a lot of difference to the boarders' comfort. But Marion would certainly not be able to come downstairs for some time yet. She had thrown herself upon her unmade bed; her sobs grew deeper every minute. Mrs. Cameron had never, since the baby–years, heard Marion cry until to–day.

"Oh, mother, tell me what I can have done," she kept on moaning.

Was it not an occasion for the tact?

"I believe," said Mrs. Cameron, "that you were getting to write so well that he was jealous."

But Marion only groaned. "Oh, mother!" on a different note of anguish.

"Mrs. Wynne says your articles really seem like making fun of him sometimes—they are so like."

"Mrs. Wynne!"

"She was your idol, Marion, before. . . . all this."

The tact seemed to be working, for Marion suddenly sat up. Her face was blurred, but it could show that she was cross, her mother thought—and then she saw that Marion was not cross, but desperate.

"It's no use," said Marion. "There's no good talking about it. The servant is dismissed, with a quarter's salary in lieu of notice."

Mrs. Cameron's eyes burned. "Extra salary! How dare he?"

"I'll throw his cheque back in his face," the girl said, getting off the bed.

"Not in his face, Marion—you wouldn't go there?"

"Mother!" Marion groaned again. – They were hunted from their room at last, for Annie knocked at the door violently. Mrs.

Cameron put on her hat before she yielded; she was going out to do some shopping, for she couldn't settle to the morning paper now. When she came back, in half–an–hour, Marion still was sitting at a table in the drawing–room, her face buried in her hands, as she had been when Mrs.

Cameron had left her. . . . It all began again, and through the whole day it went on. The letter to Bergsma must be written—a dignified, ladylike letter. Marion made draft upon draft: they were not torn up as they accumulated, for in each there was a phrase that seemed essential to her solace—one of gratitude, of meek reproach, of sad affection. But to every phrase like this, her mother objected. "No, not that, Marion—please, not that."

So it went on, and they got crosser and crosser. Tea in their bedroom—their own China tea— was the one

change from the hot, dingy, saddle–backed drawing–room. The house–tea was in the lounge as usual; they rarely went down. This hotel was their poverty's consent—a place so typical of its kind as to be almost mythical; no aggravation of the cheap private hotel's horrors was absent. But tea in their room did not refresh them. They drank cups down like poison–cups; Marion could "touch nothing," though Mrs. Cameron had specially, that morning, bought some favourite and expensive cakes. Would to–morrow be as bad, the older woman wondered. At any rate, the letter would be sent by then, and Marion might pick up some courage after it had gone.

After dinner Mrs. Wynne came in. The final drift had not been written yet, and they had lingered in the lounge—each shrinking from renewal.

"Shall we tell her?" Mrs. Cameron said in a whisper, as Mrs. Wynne came towards them, threading her way among the chairs, "Just as you like," said Marion, weakly. "She'll have to know some day."

But in her heart she knew that she desired to tell. Despite that incident about the salary, Marion still liked Mrs. Wynne. With her much wider knowledge of the world she might throw light on Bergsma's action, and anyhow one couldn't talk or think of any other subject. Mrs. Cameron, on her side, wanted to hear Bergsma blamed "as he deserved"; so eagerly they welcomed Mrs.

Wynne, and quickly transferred her and themselves to the drawing–room.

"You can smoke there—nobody ever enters it but ourselves," Mrs. Cameron assured her.

Sunk in the saddle–back Chesterfield with her cigarette, Mrs. Wynne sat listening. Her expressive monkey–face said more than she did, for at first she only murmured sympathetically.

But Marion, watching her face, asked suddenly, "Have you ever heard that Mr. Bergsma was. . . .

was given to dismissing secretaries without notice?" She laughed—a wretched little laugh, most sadly changed from the big note of other days.

Mrs. Wynne said, "Not exactly that."

"Then what?" said Marion.

"I may as well tell you. He is a 'woman's man,' they say; attractive to women, I mean. I shouldn't have supposed so, but that's his reputation. And there's a Mrs. Bergsma, you see. Have you ever met her?"

"She has come into the study once or twice," said Marion coldly, and wished she had not asked her question.

"She may be jealous."

"Jealous—of me!"

"Not of you personally. It's common enough, you know, with these men's wives."

"But Mr. Bergsma never. . . ."

Mrs. Cameron interrupted Marion. "You said it yourself."

"Said what, mother?"

"That he might have been in love with the other one who spoke Dutch. You know he did, Marion.".Marion saw a smile—at once repressed—break on the visitor's lips. But there was no stopping Mrs. Cameron; the Dutch episode was told, with "Marion's" explanation of it, and in that vein the dialogue developed, while Marion sat and writhed. There was a transition to the other theory of jealousy—Bergsma's jealousy of the articles. Mrs. Wynne rejected it.

"A writer with. . . . with his sort of style" (Marion wondered what that meant) "would never notice."

There were no more smiles, no looks exchanged with Mrs. Cameron, yet Mrs. Wynne preserved an air of knowing something that they didn't know. Soon she went away, a little bored perhaps, for they had talked of nothing else. Then Mrs. Cameron and Marion went to bed, the letter still unwritten. Mrs. Wynne had said there was no hurry; Bergsma would anticipate a short delay. It galled Mrs. Cameron—she would have liked to finish with him; but Marion seemed re–lieved, and indeed neither could have faced an evening like the day. So they went up to bed, quite early.

. . .A separate room—a room in which she could have cried herself to sleep! But Marion must be quiet every night—there never would be one when she might cry.

Soon after the candle was put out, her mother spoke.

"Are you awake, Marion? Mrs. Wynne thinks you're in love with Mr. Bergsma, I am sure."

No answer from the other bed.

"You're not asleep; I heard you move the pillow hat's what she thinks. I never liked her, but she was your friend, so I said nothing. After all, I daresay it's a blessing the connection is ended.

Anything that gives rise to gossip. . . . I should have thought of that; I blame myself. However, it's all over now, and Neil need never know how it happened. We can let him think that the work had got too hard for you, as indeed I think it had. And with no rise in salary! Do you remember how Mrs. Wynne remarked on that?"

But her voice had got drowsy; soon she was asleep. Marion for a long while did not dare to move. She lay, like a dead body, stiff and straight, and thought how like she was to one, except that the dead body would be dead. It would not wake next morning, and the morning after that, nor go to bed next night and lie so still because it feared to set its mother talking of how it was believed to be in love with Mr. Bergsma, but how Neil need never know.

Miss Cameron had been working too hard, Dr. Ferguson said; she would have had to take a long rest anyhow—she could not have gone on at that rate.

Marion peered at him suspiciously, and found him peering in a similar way at her. He was a good–looking pompous man, her mother's contemporary. Marion felt that he would be on her mother's side. She could not have accounted for the feeling, nor till now would it have come to her—there had been no "sides" till now. But as he peered at her, she found herself reflecting:

"He'll call mother wonderful, too, like Colonel Morris and the Admiral." Though Dr. Ferguson had attended the Camerons for years, he knew nothing of their lives except their ailments and their poverty; he now was obviously impressed when he heard that Marion had been working with Bergsma. It was his foible to be up–to–date, as he still called it; Bergsma's work appealed to him—there had been a new Scriabin piece lately: "the Theosophical School," said Dr. Ferguson, with pride, looking at Marion more respectfully. "Exacting work, no doubt, yours must have been."

"I was only his secretary," Marion said.

" 'Only!' " said Mrs. Cameron. She was standing, very upright, at the foot of the bed, gazing pathetically from the doctor's face to Marion's, like a child who knew that it was like a child.

Marion groaned. "Be quiet, mother"; and at the same instant her conviction of the doctor's partisanship changed. He was on her side! He had been peering at her still more closely, but when Mrs. Cameron spoke he turned his head and peered at her. His eyes lit up with a quick gleam; he prevented Mrs. Cameron from going on by going on himself with animation, ordaining change of air as soon as Marion was well enough ("and rich enough," said Marion, but he took no notice); in the meantime she was to see her friends, not read nor write at all, not brood, but look forward instead of backwards, make the best of life. . . . Marion lay and listened. She knew what would happen when her mother and the doctor left the bedroom. He would be told about the extra work, and the not–extra salary, and her too faithful mimicry of Bergsma's style. Perhaps he would not be told of Mrs. Wynne's imputed theory, but she wasn't sure: mother was so. . . . so foolish! That was the amazing word that came to her, and Marion s thoughts diverged. Her mother foolish—she who had done such marvels with her tact, who had carried her big son and her big daughter on its shoulders, as it were. "Minnie Cameron's a wonderful woman." Had there ever been a Colonel or an Admiral, among their large acquaintance in the sort, who had not at some time said that to Marion? And Neil too: he was always saying how wonderful mother was. . . was she?

Outside the door she heard them whispering. Why didn't her mother take the doctor to the ever–empty drawing–room? He couldn't know there was a place that they might, practically, call their own sitting–room, but Mrs. Cameron knew it; and wasn't whispering supposed to be the thing most fatal to a patient's nerves? "No rise in her salary": she could have sworn she caught the words. There could be no need to tell him that; the work would have been just as hard if she had had the bigger salary. But it was vain to torment one's–self; mother always did what she "thought right." And as Marion lay and strained her ears, the certainty grew stronger that Mrs.

Cameron would put the other view before him—the view that Marion might have been in love with Bergsma. She would think that, also, right. Perhaps it was; perhaps a doctor should be told such things about a helpless, useless daughter who would be a burden again now, instead of a breadwinner. And she had been so proud of earning her own living! Hot tears ran down her cheeks. As a secretary pure and simple, she would not have broken down. It was the hard work, late hours, excitement, mental strain, and—and Bergsma's growing crossness and aloofness, his avoidance of her, even while he used her; the thick eyes that had not flashed for her this many a day, but always deadened, deadened more and more with each infrequent interview. How she had watched to see the eyes light up, the way they used, when she had "done" some concert more capably than usual—and the eyes never had, though still he sent her: "in case there should be something startling that I'd better do myself, and then I

can write–up your article." That had meant that she must take even more pains than usual, lest Bergsma be "let down," and ignore a masterpiece. But Marion had not minded, or would not have minded, if . . . And then had come the letter.

They had not sent back the cheque. Mrs. Wynne had said it would be futile and undignified; they couldn't bandy money about—Bergsma would insist, it would be horribly uncomfortable; and the "salary in lieu of notice" was the proper thing for him to do. So a colourless letter had gone, in which the phrases of affection and reproach were all left out. It had had the effect of making Bergsma write again, holding forth vague hopes that some day he would be able to resume Miss Cameron's "invaluable services." There had been discussions on what he meant by that. Marion said, "Nothing"; Mrs. Cameron (commenting with much sarcasm on invaluable)

hoped so, but was afraid he did mean something. That went on for days and nights; inspirations on what Bergsma meant would flock in the darkness. – . – But the breakdown had mercifully come at last, and had done this for Marion—she might cry in her bed now. It was called part of her illness. Without the illness, another explanation of her melancholy had been showing itself as imminent. "I shall begin to think that your friend Mrs. Wynne was right."

Those words had been said one day, in a flurry of temper, at tea–time. Marion could go out of the room then; but if they should be said and added to, at night, when the candle was extinguished. . . .

Mrs. Cameron came back, brisk and brave and pathetic.

"The doctor thinks we shall have rain at last. I'm glad for your sake, Marion; this room gets so hot. The sun is cheerful, but the rain will make things fresh again."

"Did you talk about the weather all that time?" asked Marion.

"Of course we talked of you a little; he had to tell me about your diet. But, Marion, dear, you know there are other things in the world besides your trouble."

"Oh yes—the weather," Marion said.

"Invalids are never told what the doctor says about them. You must not be unreasonable, Marion."

Marion fixed her eyes upon the little face, like a ventriloquist's puppet's face. It looked back at her, and the lips drew together, with a kind of peevish patience. "You've been crying. The doctor says (as you insist on being told what he says) that I mustn't let you cry, on any account."

"Then of course you mustn't. mother. How are you going to stop me? Shall I tell you what I was crying about? It was about never being alone. I'm going to ask the doctor to order me a separate bedroom. The extra–quarter's salary will pay for it. It will do me more good than any other change."

Mrs. Cameron began to cry.

"Oh, mother, that's not tactful, is it, showing me a bad example?" Marion loathed herself, yet could not stop. It was too much for her—the triple wreck, of herself and Bergsma and her mother.

The doctor would not order the separate room. He gave all sorts of unconvincing reasons, very cheerily. Marion lay and looked at him.

"I shall torment myself till I find out the real reason," she said. "Will that be good for me?"

He laughed. "You have far too much intelligence, Miss Cameron. You won't waste your mental strength like that."

"I have no use for my intelligence," said Marion. "I have no use for my mental strength. One way of wasting them is as good as another."

"Oh, nonsense, nonsense!" laughed the doctor. "What you've got to do is to get well, and then see if you haven't a use for them. Mr. Bergsma's not the only busy man who needs a secretary."

A cunning look came in Marion's face. "And he may 'resume my invaluable services,' " she said, fixing her eyes on her mother.

Mrs. Cameron winced, but she stood bravely up to Marion's eyes. "Well, all right, darling, if he does." She smiled pathetically.

The cunning look died out. "I'm not mad, I tell you both!" cried Marion. The doctor took her wrist between his fingers. "What put that brilliant idea into your head, may I inquire?"

"You two!" Marion shrieked, and tore her wrist away. "You two think I am. That's why you won't let me have a room to myself, and that's why mother grins and pretends she wouldn't rather die than ever let me work again for Mr. Bergsma. She hated him, you know," she told the doctor in a sudden mood of confidence, "and all because

he forgot to open the drawing–room door for her one day!" She sank back on the pillow. "That was why, just that"; and she began to sob and moan. . . .

But as time went on, she did get better. Her strength came back, and with it, self–control. It was not often now that she sneered at, or "flew at," her mother; she only lay and watched her, with a smile. Mrs. Cameron did not like the smile, but she avoided looking—it was the most tactful thing to do. And when Marion got better and could be up, and better still and could come out for little walks, the smile, though it was there sometimes, was not so frequent. It, like the crying, had been part of her illness, and that was nearly over; the smile would disappear when all the illness did, and everything would be as it had been before, except that the horrid Bergsma connection would be done with. Neil need never know that Marion had, for a while, been so—so overstrained that Dr. Ferguson had warned Mrs. Cameron not to let her be alone even for a moment. Neil need never know, and that was all that mattered. . . . She looked at Marion complacently, one day in Kensington Gardens; but instantly she looked away again. Marion's eyes were fixed on her; the smile was there.

"You're a wonderful woman, mother," Marion said. "You've got me over it."

"Over what, Marion?" Mrs. Cameron faltered, off her guard.

"My passion for Mr. Bergsma."

"Don't be wicked!" the old woman exclaimed. Marion was nearly well now; there was no need to humour her to this extent.

"And my suicidal tendency, too," continued Marion. "I wonder which I ought to be most grateful for. Which do you think?"

"I am not aware that either of those things was the matter with you, I assure you, Marion, and neither is Dr. Ferguson. You exaggerate your illness absurdly."

"You and Dr. Ferguson exaggerated it too, then. I often heard you both; I was able to get out of bed, you know. I always thought you should have taken him down to the drawing–room instead of whispering outside my door, but it didn't seem to occur to you, and as it was convenient to me, I said nothing. . . . Well, mother, if I can't believe in your wisdom any more, I can believe in your pluck. It's just as good; I don't know that it isn't better. But I hope you didn't tell anyone besides the doctor that I was in love with Mr. Bergsma."

The little puppet–face was convulsed in the effort not to cry. "I never could have dreamed that my daughter would listen."

"I was mad, you see."

"You were not, Marion, so don't bring that up as an excuse. You were not mad, only overstrained. You exaggerate everything. I only told the doctor what your own friend, Mrs.

Wynne, had said—or what she thought, at any rate. I never thought so myself."

"You should have thought so, mother. It was true. That was why he dismissed me. He didn't want his secretary to have a passion for him."

"Don't use that wicked word! And about that man, with his flat face and horrid collars—they were never clean."

"Oh yes, they were clean, but they were lower than the men you know would wear. That's all, mother. . . . I used to watch for a look from the flat face–was it flat? I suppose so. I only saw his eyes." She spoke in a deep musing tone, with no smile now; she had forgotten her mother.

Mrs. Cameron stood up. "It's nearly lunch–time."

The girl looked at her again. "Won't you let me talk about my passion, a little now and then?"

"Oh, Marion," the other moaned, returning. "How can you torment me so? It's cruel of you!"

She sat down again. "You frighten me, indeed you do." Her voice shattered into sobs.

The girl sat unmoved. "We're like two dead bodies tied together. We don't love each other any more, yet we must be for ever side by side. . . . I think I won't forgive you for curing the tendency to suicide, mother. The passion's different—I can brood on that. I can think of his flat face, and wonder why a man with a flat face was not more flattered—there's a joke. But he's a woman's man, isn't he? He's tired of passionate secretaries, I suppose. That was why he snubbed my Dutch; it would have been dangerous to speak in his own language with a yearning secretary—"

Mrs. Cameron got up again, her pink cheeks glistening. "I won't listen to you. It's disgraceful—that's what it is. You ought to be ashamed."

"Haven't I been ashamed enough? Let me glory in my shame now, for a change." She got up too. "Come home to lunch, mother. Tuesday. . . . it will be mutton–hash to–day, and treacle–pudding.

That will be so nice; we'll easily forget this painful scene. Yes, let's go—home."

Mrs. Cameron pointed out the beauty of the autumn tints as they went through the Gardens.

Marion looked at each example; then looked at her mother, with the smile.

3 That phase also passed. Marion felt abominable while it lasted; it was like daggers into a doll, and the daggers hurt this doll. They made no difference, moreover; Mrs. Cameron said the same kind of things between–times.

Mother and daughter went away together for their change of air, returned, and Marion was nearly well. The doctor still came sometimes, but now as though he were a friend, vigilant and interested. He seemed, as she had felt before, to be Marion's friend rather than her mother's; but Marion did not care; she cared for nothing. In the passage of the months her bitterness had grown beneath the outward self–control; she had one watchword now—concealment of all feeling.

IF eel nothing, but if you must feel hide it—hide everything about you, all you think and are."

It became a trial of skill. She paid visits with her mother, watching for good opportunities for lies about herself, especially the lie of being lazy, glad to cease breadwinning and be entirely dependent, hanging as it were upon her mother's arm like a spoilt child.

Mrs. Cameron's friends began to disapprove; Marion perceived it, fostered it. The plan of the Minnie party was that Marion now should teach the many languages—such work could always be procured. Marion refused to try for pupils, not saying that she liked best to be lazy—that would have spoilt the game. She let it be inferred, amid glances of concern at the sad change in her.

The glances of concern pleased Mrs. Cameron. They made her feel a wonderful woman again.

During the later Bergsma period there had been a certain obscuration—Marion had been so prominent with her "inside" knowledge of musical events, her acquaintance with the virtuosi, her own remarkable development in capacity and self–reliance. But now people saw again that Minnie was the heroine, with her bravery and cheer, her patience with the lazy daughter. She loved to take the lazy daughter out to tea, to come into a room thus followed, and display her pluck and tact. But as the months drew out and she felt firmer on the pedestal, an insidious change began. At some houses there would sound again a note of interest in Marion rather than in Minnie.

Mrs. Wynne's was one of these. The dark monkey–face would turn and dwell, observing silently but intently taking in. She would talk about music, that in–hibited topic on which Marion, lamentably and surprisingly, still enjoyed to talk. Tactless of Mrs. Wynne! It brought the whole thing up again—the buried past, with all its mystery and invidiousness; and besides, "Marion would never try for pupils, while she was encouraged to remember those horrible days," said Mrs. Cameron to her friends.

Mrs. Wynne's Irish maid was another grievance. This little creature was "positively insulting"

to Mrs. Cameron, one day soon after the return to London. It happened thus. Marion and her mother entered, and put down their umbrellas—Mrs. Cameron thrusting hers into the stand, Marion propping hers against the table. Bridget (she had an engaging cast in her right eye) gave swimming Irish looks at Marion, whose height and "style" she openly admired—she was far too free with both her eyes and tongue. Then she went towards the stairs, with no admiring glance for Mrs. Cameron, who had on a new grey toque. Marion, un–delayed by the small difficulty of getting an umbrella neatly into the narrow stand, had begun to ascend at Bridget's heels, conversing with her.

Suddenly Mrs. Cameron called out: "Come back here, Marion." The two on the stairs stopped short.

"Come back and put your umbrella in the proper place."

"Oh, ma'am, it doesn't matter," Bridget cried. "The mistress never——"

"Come back here, Marion." The face under the new toque was scarlet.

Marion, pale and silent, stood still on the stairs. Her eyes were dreadful. For an instant they met Bridget's.

"Do you hear what I say?" the voice below vibrated shrilly.

"For heaven's sake, mother. . . ." Marion gasped, and came down from the stairs. She went by her mother, and put her umbrella into the stand.

"Oh, miss; oh, ma'am!" breathed Bridget, almost crying—but Mrs. Cameron was now on Marion's stair, and

was looking at her angrily. Bridget gulped, and went on to the drawing−room door. Her voice broke as she announced them. Mrs. Cameron pushed by her haughtily; Marion. .

. . Bridget never knew what Marion did, except that she did not break down, nor speak to Bridget, nor look angry, but—"Oh, ma'am," said Bridget, choking, to her mistress, "it was awful! As if Mrs. Cameron wanted to shame her before me, turning her into a child like that. The umbrella—Miss Cameron went down and put it in the stand; I could hardly keep quiet when I saw her face. She'll go mad, ma'am, if she can't get away from her mother."

Bridget's agitation was so great that Mrs. Wynne, though she too thought it "awful," tried to calm the girl and herself by saying that there was really nothing in it.

"Oh yes, ma'am, there was, and you'd know if you'd seen it. The way Mrs. Cameron looked at her—you wouldn't believe the wickedness of it."

"Nonsense; you're fond of Miss Cameron; you exaggerate."

"It's well someone's fond of her. You are yourself, ma'am. Is there no way you could get her away from that old—"

But this was decidedly too much; Mrs. Wynne dismissed the girl. She sat thinking. She had long perceived the trouble. The mother's jealousy—innate and ineradicable—never roused by Marion till the Bergsma phase, and then appeased by the dismissal, now again was quickened by her daughter's attitude. If Marion's friends should show more interest in that than in the mother's pluck and patience, the jealousy would crouch, a−stretch like a wild beast that sees its prey; and ah, that prey was visible! The daughter's pride—what a long feasting meal. . . . One knew such moods in these undeveloped women, these old children, with the cruelty and blindness of a child, but not the child's inconsequence. No; the feast once begun, the wild beast would drive out the child; its prey would not be loosened till consumed. "And one can do not one least thing to save—unless indeed one should abandon Marion, and join with Mrs. Cameron! Shall I urge the poor girl to the teaching that she shrinks from? It might help; I'll try it."

When Mrs. Wynne next went to see them, in pursuance of her scheme, she found a message from the Bergsma quarter so absorbing Mrs. Cameron that even she—now almost openly cold−shouldered— was called into council.

The message had taken the shape of a visiting−card—Mrs. Bergsma's, intimating change of address. It had come to Mrs. Cameron, not to Marion.

"Now what ought we to do?"

"Take no notice," Mrs. Wynne said, at a venture. She had not yet surveyed the ground, but it seemed probable that this would please.

It did not please, and as that showed, the visitor began to see the rest. Marion sat by, silent. Not even by a look did she confess herself, but Mrs. Wynne's nerves shuddered for her.

'There's nothing in it," Mrs. Wynne continued. "Mrs. Bergsma just went through her address−book, or someone else did for her, more likely. They'll not expect a call."

The argument began, went on; and Mrs. Wynne knew horror. All cruelty seemed in it, all base vengeance, all that once meant woman; each word seemed chosen to retaliate for that brief spell of bliss and glory; yet as the listener looked into the little face, she told herself that she, like Bridget, was imputing that which was not in its owner's competence. This could be only sheer stupidity; the worst evil was not there. But then again some glance, some word, abominable, would upset the milder judgment.

"What does Marion say?" her friend broke out at last, unable longer to fight single−handed. She turned to the dumb girl and saw her quiver momentarily, then constrain herself to sit impassive as before. But it were kindlier to force her speech, and Mrs. Wynne persisted.

"Tell me, Marion," she entreated, casting aside caution, putting all her friendship into the low tone. It was as if she challenged the fell mother for the daughter's voice. No answer came. The girl's eyes met hers for an instant, and she caught her breath. What a look—what weary wastes of suffering. . . . And yet admitted the thing was trivial—almost certainly, a mere card−leaving:

they would not be admitted, no one ever was home on chance, in London. But Mrs. Wynne could understand the girl's repugnance.

"I can't see why Marion should be with you, if you wish to go," she repeated, for this had been of course the

first thing she had said.

"It is only through her that I ever knew these people"—yes, the tone, the look. . . . "It is for her sake that I wish to go."

But if she doesn't want it?"

Such morbid nonsense! 'Hanging round the house,' she calls it. I think it is we who confer the favour by calling."

But as if this, in its absurdity, were the breaking point, Marion spoke at last.

"Mother has never consented to recognize Mr. Bergsma as a social being. He's only a common little man with a crushed collar to her. 'No one' goes to his house; 'no one' knows the Bergsma."

She smiled—the old smile which had frightened Mrs. Cameron, but now had lost its power.

"I don't profess to understand the society in which people like the Bergsmas move. I leave that to you. . . . and your friends."

There was a silence.

"Could you, Marion?" Mrs. Wynne then murmured. "Could you go, I mean. It wouldn't be a case of getting in, I'm sure.".Marion, having spoken at all, seemed to have abandoned wholly her new attitude, for she gave her friend an overwhelming answer. "I could go, but I won't. I won't be dragged there at mother's chariot−wheels." She stood up. "Now you know, mother. I dare say you'll say you don't understand, but I'll explain another time. Don't drag Mrs. Wynne into a scene like this morning's. She wouldn't like it. Let her off the rest."

But the teeth were firm in the flesh now, and Mrs. Wynne heard all the rest. She heard that Marion was still absurdly "sorry for herself' and that her friends encouraged her, while Mrs.

Cameron's were more and more disgusted every day; that "that man" would imagine, if no one else did, all that their omission to call might signify; that indeed his wife could not be blamed if she had been suspicious, and her card was intended for a delicate hint that, having nipped the thing in the bud, she was prepared to resume a friendly acquaintance. "Anything more disgusting, more indecent, than Marion's whole behaviour since that man cast her off. . . ."

And Marion stood and heard, without the smile, and said at last in a pause:

"The most devoted and most tactful mother, you can see—and Mrs. Bergsma is to see. How do you know I haven't been 'hanging round the house' in secret, mother? Mr. Bergsma cast me off, as you say, but men do that and women hang about them, still. Perhaps that's why I stick at going to call—how do you know it isn't?"

But this was a bad slip.

"I know," said Mrs. Cameron, "because I've never let you out of my sight for a single instant, and never intend to."

Mrs. Wynne saw Marion pale at that. She exclaimed after a moment: "But Dr. Ferguson said yesterday that I'm to have a room to myself, in future. They're getting it ready now; you know they are." Her voice was harsh with fear.

'They're not getting it ready. I countermanded it, after this morning's 'scene,' as you call it."

The girl sank on a chair. Her face was terrible to see, but Mrs. Wynne did not see it—she had hidden her own. She sat, crumpled into a heap, in her corner of the sofa. Marion looked at her, then at her mother. Mrs. Cameron was by the tea−table; she was picking biscuits from a plate and nibbling at them, and then dropping them; her face was red and angry, but exultant.

"Look at Mrs. Wynne, mother," Marion said at last, in the old languid tone. "She seems distressed. It's not a pretty scene. We ought to let her go."

Mrs. Wynne sprang up. "I'm going. I can't stand it. You two should be entirely apart—it's monstrous. Is there no one who could take you, Marion, for a while? I will, if you like. I can't stand by and let this be—it's not safe; I feel responsible. . . . Let her come to me!" She turned to the mother, speaking gently now: she had regained her self−control.

Mrs. Cameron, a biscuit at her lips, laughed slightingly. Her voice took a vile note as she replied: "I'll keep my unfortunate daughter, thank you."

"Then some day you'll have to keep her in a mad−house," Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, once more forgetting prudence.

"That's no worse than the kind of house you'd keep her in."

Mrs. Wynne did not hear; she was looking at Marion, who had got up again.

"Stop!" she cried.

But Marion laughed, and threw the biscuit–plate—now empty—in her mother's face.

It grazed the skin, that was all. Mrs. Cameron wept, Marion stood and laughed. Mrs. Wynne took out her handkerchief to stop the blood. The plate lay whole upon the floor some distance off; it had fallen into a thick woolly rug. The blood soon ceased—it was the merest graze;.Marion stopped laughing; and Mrs. Wynne escaped. There was nothing she could do, except go to Dr. Ferguson. He must insist upon the separate room, at any rate.

She went, straight from the hotel—she found him in and told her tale, and Dr. Ferguson confessed that he was anxious. He would see the Camerons tomorrow. As a measure of precaution—"you understand me?"—he had at first refused the separate bedroom; now he, too, considered it essential.

"There can be no doubt that the mother's constant presence is injurious to Miss Cameron."

"But what should make her so inhuman to the girl? It has been a strain for both, of course; but what happened to–day was more than nerves. I assure you, Dr. Ferguson, it looked like intentional persecution. Yet surely such things cannot be?"

The doctor thought awhile; then said, "Persecution, yes; intentional persecution (in your sense), no. Do you happen to have read what is now being published here about Freud, a German scientist, and his theory of the 'suppressed wish'?"

Mrs. Wynne had not. He set it forth, rudimentarily—a subconscious motive, usually sexual in origin and sinister in aim, underlying the conscious will, and secretly inspiring the action. In certain conditions, it became the dominant impulse, potent above all others.

"That amiable old lady," he continued, and as Mrs. Wynne exclaimed, he sagely smiled. "As she appears, or appeared, to us to be, and in her own view still is. She knows nothing of the 'wish,' you must consider, either as a psychological theory or in herself—the wish in her case being to dominate, nay, humiliate, her daughter. You have perceived this in her, and may even, being a woman" (he bowed), "have diagnosed it correctly as jealousy: no rare thing, as doubtless you are aware, in a mother towards her daughter, though here it takes a somewhat unusual form.

It was awakened, as I early saw, in Mrs. Cameron by her daughter's prominence during the Bergsma period."

"It sounds more devilish than ever," Mrs. Wynne exclaimed.

"You must remember that the state is pathological. To inhibit the 'wish' is not within the victim's competence, did she even know that it exists. A pitiable condition—and the more because it engenders dislike in all who witness its effects."

But Mrs. Wynne could feel no sense of mitigation; rather, the "Freudian wish," in its gaunt determinism, seemed to add despair to all the other ills.

"And the unhappy girl!" she cried. "Is she to be condemned to this, because a German scientist has an interesting psychological theory?"

He had an indulgent smile for her feminine unreason. "Most natural—in a woman, most natural. . . . But reflect that if the daughter's martyrdom can be explained, it is not thereby increased."

She groaned. "Explanations have a way of paralysing us, I think! What are you going to do?"

Dr. Ferguson stiffened a little. "What can be done, you may rest assured. The separate room, for example."

His tone annoyed her. "Is that the certain panacea?"

"We are struggling against an occult force in human nature, Mrs. Wynne," he said, more stiffly still.

"But we're not sure it's there; we have only this man's word for it!" And as he shrugged, she exclaimed, "I want to take Marion away from her."

"Do so, by all means, if you can compass it," Dr. Ferguson more cordially rejoined.

"Meanwhile, I will ordain the lesser separation." His gesture was dismissive, and she rose.

At the door she turned. "To–morrow?"

"Without delay," the doctor promised, again somewhat stiffly.

But with the morning of the next day, very early, came the secretary of the Camerons' hotel to Mrs. Wynne, who, going out, met her upon the doorstep, and when she learnt who it was, drew her at once into the dining–room. The woman, with a horrible detached annoyance in her manner, told her news. Mrs. Cameron had found her daughter dead in bed at six o'clock that morning—in the same room with herself.

"In the same room, Mrs. Wynne, lying in streams of blood." The faded, worried eyes traversed Mrs. Wynne's room curiously, as she talked on. "Miss Cameron had cut open a vein in her arm, and bled to death. Such a state as everything was in—I needn't tell you!"

"It must have been," Mrs. Wynne heard herself inanely answer. She looked at the secretary; there was a kind of pity in her horror at the woman's callousness. She was so much the creature of her job that her blank face, if it could be said to wear any expression, wore only that of anger at the "state" of Marion's bedclothes and the carpet by the bed.

"And the talk and annoyance in the hotel—it's been bad enough without that; people leaving because of the old lady and her tempers. We all thought Miss Cameron would go out of her mind, three months ago, but she seemed better.

We were getting a separate bedroom ready for her yesterday, but Mrs. Cameron countermanded it. Well, she might have spared herself something, if she hadn't—not that it would have made much difference, I suppose. And of course there's any amount of trouble and annoyance before us—the inquest, and all the unpleasantness."

The inquest. . . . of course there would have to be one. . . . How much could be kept back? Mrs.

Wynne controlled her face and voice.

"I'll come over at once and see Mrs. Cameron," she said, though her soul fainted at thought of that interview.

"You won't find her. You wouldn't suppose that she'd be in and out of the house every minute, but that's what she is, and looking so queer with that cut on her face"—the secretary glanced at Mrs. Wynne as she said this—"that she got at tea–time yesterday."

The biscuit–plate—had either of the Camerons remembered to pick it up, or had a servant found it on the floor, so far from the tea–table? . . . Mrs. Wynne again controlled herself.

"That cut was nothing, I fancy; I remember noticing it yesterday afternoon. You say Mrs.

Cameron won't be in?"

"She was out when I left, at Dr. Ferguson's; at least that's where she told the taxi to go—she had a taxi, that time. He was at the house this morning, of course; but she said she must see him again. Goodness knows why."

Even the gleam of curiosity was listless. Mrs. Wynne felt, with shuddering reassurance, that you could never fathom London's indifference.

"I'll wait, then; I won't go back with you to the hotel," she said.

"Mrs. Cameron spoke of you, this morning," the woman apathetically remarked.

"And said what?"

"It's not very pleasant to repeat, but perhaps I'd better. She said on no account to let you in."

"I was more Miss Cameron's friend than hers. It's odd, though," Mrs. Wynne returned, and hoped that she seemed only ordinarily troubled. "At such a time, however, one can't wonder at anything. . . . Is there nothing I can do to help in any way?"

"I don't think so." But the woman still sat, looking round the room, and Mrs. Wynne grew fidgety. She wanted her to go at once, that she herself might get to Dr. Ferguson's before Mrs. Cameron should leave him. No place could be so good to meet, and they would have to speak together, let her knowledge be resented as it might.

The secretary seemed to feel at last that they had finished. She rose, but then she paused, and spoke with eyes averted.

"I found the plate myself," she said, as impassively as before. "I happened to go into the drawing–room. I haven't mentioned it." She waited.

"The plate?" said Mrs. Wynne, in a strained voice of questioning.

The faded eyes met hers. "The biscuit–plate. It wasn't broken, fortunately. We may as well leave it out, if we have anything to say at the inquest. It would be a nuisance, if . . . ." She drifted to the door. "You see, I have to think of my employers. People hate a scandal about a private hotel; it ruins business. You won't speak of it?"

"I don't know what you mean," Mrs. Wynne lied bravely.

The secretary looked at her again. "Something happened in the drawing room," she went on, unmoved. "Any fool could see that—and you were there at the time. But it's just as well for me to know nothing about it, so don't tell me if I'm right."

With that, she opened the door at last; Mrs. Wynne went with her to the steps in a stunned silence.

As she drove to Dr. Ferguson's, Mrs. Wynne reflected on his theory. It, like K the biscuit–plate, would have to

be kept dark! Even in her grief, she smiled at a quick thought. The Freudian Wish—and the Bergsma visiting–card. . . . but such ironic fellowships would be the very core, no doubt, of speculations in this kind. Was it another Wish that put the silly strip of pasteboard in its halfpenny envelope? And had Marion had one too—did she "wish" Bergsma to know what had been done? For, without the card, she would have had her separate room; those words would not have sounded: "I've never left you alone for a single instant, and I never intend to. . . ." Never alone from Mrs. Cameron, ridden by the Freudian Wish! A new burden had been bound upon humanity, if that frightful theory were true.

She was at once admitted at the doctor's, for she sent in her card. As she drew it from the case, she wondered if she ever should do that again without a shudder—and knew that she would, that this would pass as all things pass. . . . She entered the consulting–room—yes, Mrs. Cameron was there. Instantly the old woman sprang up, and stood defiant of her. But the doctor put his hand upon her arm.

"Keep quiet, Mrs. Cameron," he said, with stern decision. "Sit down, Mrs. Wynne."

Mrs. Wynne sat down. She felt horribly unpitying. Mrs. Cameron looked as usual—the pink face was a little pinker for the sticking–plaster on the cheek, which gave her a weird air of coquetry. Her mouth was quivering, but it looked more peevish than distressed. . . . And she had seen that sight, not many hours ago!

"Go on with what you were telling me," Dr. Ferguson said.

Still standing, with one hand on the table and her angry eyes on Mrs. Wynne, Mrs. Cameron obeyed eagerly, as if she trusted the man to be her friend against the woman.

She had evidently been telling him about the visiting–card.

"I thought it seemed unnecessary, but my opinion was that Marion and I should call. I considered it my duty to uphold Marion's dignity."

She stopped, still fixing Mrs. Wynne with her malignant eyes.

Mrs. Wynne dropped hers before them. A coroner's jury would not have heard of Freud.

"Yes—your daughter's dignity?" Dr. Ferguson said, smoothly. His eyes met Mrs. Wynne's when she lifted her head again.