

had been dining, but he was not in evening dress, and there was something unrestful and reckless in his way of moving round the room and throwing himself in the chair nearest his mother's, which roused Mrs. Brand's attention. She turned slightly towards him, and became conscious at once of the fumes of wine and strong tobacco with which her son had made her only too familiar. She looked at him for a moment, then clasped her hands tightly together and resumed her former position, with her sad face turned to the window. She may have breathed a sigh as she did so, but Wyvis Brand did not hear it, and if he had heard it, would not perhaps have very greatly cared.

"Why do you sit in the dark?" he said at last, in a vexed tone. "I will ring for lights," Mrs. Brand answered quietly. "Do as you like: I am not going to stay: I am going out," said the young man.

The hand that his mother had stretched out towards the bell fell to her side: she was a submissive woman, used to taking her son at his word.

"You are lonely here," she ventured to remark, after a short silence: "you will be glad when Cuthbert comes down."

"It's a beastly hole," said her son, gloomily. "I would advise Cuthbert to stay in Paris. What he will do with himself here, I can't imagine."

"He is happy anywhere," said the mother, with a stifled sigh.

Wyvis uttered a short, harsh laugh.

"That can't be said of us, can it?" he exclaimed, putting his hand on his mother's knee in a rough sort of caress. "We are generally in the shadow while Cuthbert is in the sunshine, eh? The influence of this old place makes me poetical, you see."

"*You* need not be in the shadow," said Mrs. Brand. But she said it with an effort.

"Needn't I?" said Wyvis. He thrust his hands into his pockets and leaned back in his chair with another laugh. "I have such a lot to make me cheerful, haven't I?"

His mother turned her eyes upon him with a look of yearning tenderness which, even if the room had been less dimly lighted, he would not have seen. He was not much in the habit of looking for sympathy in other people's faces.

"Is the place worse than you expected?" she asked, with a tremor in her voice.

"It is moldier—and smaller," he replied, curtly. "One's childish impressions don't go for much. And it is in a miserable state—roof out of repair—fences falling down—drainage imperfect. It has been allowed to go to rack and ruin while we were away."