

MISS PRISCILLA.

[All the Year Round.]

"I consider your conduct so foolish as to be inconceivable," the rector said severely. This from Mr. Hornby was heard with care, and as Miss Priscilla bent her head she sobbed.

"I am very sorry," she murmured heart-brokenly. "If I had known you would have cared so much, I should not have dared to do it."

"As if my caring mattered!" he said to himself with independent amazement. "Why, you poor foolish creature, what can it matter to me except for your sake? But to think that you have beggared yourself—literally, actually beggared yourself, and at your age, too!"

"I am only a little over 40," Miss Priscilla ventured with meek protest. "But 40, and penniless and incapable of anything!"

Miss Priscilla made a faintly rebellious movement. "I mean to teach," she said, with wavering confidence.

"Teach! Why, you are years behind the times. Nowadays girls learn astronomy, and chemistry and Greek, ma'am—Greek!" Miss Priscilla sobbed again.

"And for a young scapegrace who never was worth his salt, and all that money in 3 per cents, too! Oh, I have no patience with it all!"

Miss Priscilla rubbed her eyes, and looked up at him pitifully. "Would you have had me let him go to prison?" she asked.

"I would," Mr. Hornby closed his mouth determinedly as he spoke. "In this world whose sins should bear the punishment?"

"He was Letty's son," Miss Priscilla said, "and Letty was more to me than ever sister was before. How could I let him be ruined, just that I might face sumptuously and live at ease?"

"Of course you felt that," the rector admitted, reluctantly; "but, all the same, he was a criminal, and as such had a right to bear his own punishment."

Miss Priscilla rose to go. "If the Deity you preach were as merciful as you are, it had been a bad thing for the world," she said. "I tell you, my son, poor boy, because I wished to have nothing sacred from you, for the sake of your old friendship, and you only want me with it. Oh, you are very cruel!"

He put out his hand to stop her. "You must forgive me if I have spoken harshly," he said. "I am only harsh because I feel so much. What do you mean to do? This is a hard world for women who are penniless."

"The Lord takes care of fools and children," Miss Priscilla answered with a break in her voice.

"Are you angry still?" He extended his hand as he spoke. And Miss Priscilla took it, her heart softening.

"We have been friends always, and I should like us to quarrel now at the last," he said.

"At the last!" he echoed, looking at her inquiringly. "Of course I must leave the village. One does not live as I have done hitherto, on nothing."

"Nothing! And is it as bad as that?" "I have a couple of hundred left and the furniture," she answered, smiling at him faintly.

"You have not told me how it came about—the necessity for your sacrifice, I mean," he said.

"I do not know all the particulars, but I can guess." She shivered slightly as she spoke. "There was an extravagant youth, and a position of trust, and temptation and a fall and ruin, unless a miracle intervened."

"And you wrought the miracle!" Mr. Hornby quivered with a rather uncertain smile quivering about his lips.

"I did all I could to save him from the consequences of his deed."

"And was the deficit for a large sum?" "For 3,700 pounds sterling. Had it been for much more, I should have been powerless."

"In your place, I should not have interfered," Mr. Hornby said, sighing. "The very magnitude of the offense shows a hardened nature."

Miss Priscilla was weeping bitterly now. "It is too late to think of that," she said. "The thing is done and irrevocable. I did not tell you before, lest you should try to hinder me. He has gone abroad to make a fresh start and to do well, I trust and believe. He was Letty's son."

"And you mean to teach?" looking at her pitifully. "It is all I can think of."

"But it is such a hard life, and so difficult to find a place in even, nowadays, without a special training."

"No matter; I can only try my very best," she held out her hand to him. "Good-bye," she said; "don't fret about me; I am more hopeful than you are. I have good health and all my wits about me, and I am ready to do my best at anything that offers."

She shook hands with him, the perturbation in his eyes meeting the striving smile in hers, and then she went out and down the rectory lawn, and through the little gate that led into the village street.

owed his origin to it, however remotely, though a few of the oldest inhabitants did venture to whisper among themselves that Mr. Edward Glynn was very like his father, and that his father had been a curse to every one who had ever trusted him. Of course, they would not have said this to Miss Priscilla for the world, and they only breathed it to each other in confidential moments, for Miss Priscilla was a kind of little Providence in the neighborhood, and a word against aught belonging to her was disloyalty.

As she passed down the still street that came June afternoon, one and another offered her a friendly greeting; and, observation being none too acute here, no one noticed with what a frozen smile she answered. She was almost at her own door when a little girl on crutches hobbled after her and put a rose into her hand.

"It is off the bush you gave me," she said, and then Miss Priscilla drew down her veil and hurried on, weeping. How was she to leave these hearts that loved her and the happy home in which she had spent her entire lifetime!

Her little maidservant opened the door for her without waiting for her knock and took her bonnet and hawl and brought her slippers and a cup of tea. Miss Priscilla drank the cheering beverage to give her courage, and then she went into the little kitchen, where the little maiden sat sewing by the hearth.

"Jane," Miss Priscilla said, clearing her throat, "Jane, I wish to say that at the end of the month you and I shall be obliged to part."

Jane's face assumed an expression of dismay, but she only said "Lor!" She felt at that moment a whole volume of things, but being an uneducated person, she only said "Lor!"

"It is no fault of yours, Jane," Miss Priscilla continued with painstaking precision; "I have found you everything a girl should be, and I only part with you because I have decided to leave Fairview."

Jane sighed faintly, and her round eyes grew rounder. "I cannot tell how soon I may leave the village," Miss Priscilla went on, "but in any case you will have your month's wages."

"I don't want no wages but what I've earned ma'am," Jane answered with severity. "I would take you with me if it were possible," Miss Priscilla ventured explanatorily, "but it is quite out of the question."

"Don't mention it, ma'am; it's no matter, I'm sure, though I have served you faithful. And then Jane clattered about the fire iron, and hunted the cat from his cozy nook by the fire with muttered exclamations of contempt for his laziness, and finally drove Miss Priscilla from the kitchen, thus depriving both of them of the solace of mutual sympathy."

Miss Priscilla was disappointed in Jane, but Miss Priscilla's ideas on many things were likely to suffer metamorphoses. It was only now that this quixotic lady was beginning to realize the entire consequences of all she had done for the sake of Letty's boy. When danger and disgrace had loomed large and terrible above him, her only thought had been, was there time to save him, and would the sacrifice of her whole fortune be enough? But when the deed was done, when the culprit had sailed scathless away, and when she was left to break to her friends the story of her changed fortunes, then she realized the import and consequences of her action.

The old life, the life of prosperous, easy independence was over; she was a beggar, or but little better—one who fronts the world to ask something at its hands. Her small stock of powers and possibilities was now to be brought to judgment—and what were her powers and possibilities? Old-fashioned accomplishments, antiquated erudition, half-forgotten sciences, whose very outlines later developments had obliterated. As Mr. Hornby had said, she was ages behind the times. But it was too late to think of this now; too late to remember her shyness, her spinster timidity; too late to regret her quiet life, and simple pleasures and small sphere of usefulness. She had sacrificed all this to Letty's son, who, perhaps, scarcely thanked her, and she had no alternative now but to accept the consequences of her action.

Mr. Thomas Hornby sat at breakfast in a large, luxurious dining-room; and Mrs. Thomas Hornby looked large and luxurious herself. She wore a gown of conspicuous pattern, and had bits of color interspersed in the lace of her cap, and many rings on her plump hands.

Opposite was her husband, the rector's brother, a man who asserted himself seldom. On either hand were the young Hornbys, who asserted themselves often.

The silver urn was hissing vigorously, and the other pieces of plate caught the sun's rays as they came broadly through the open window. Mr. Tom was reading the newspaper; Mrs. Tom was giving lessons in deportment to her offspring, who received instruction as reluctantly as is the wont of youth. It was only as Mr. Tom was about to take his way toward the omnibus that would bear him to the city, that his wife addressed him.

"I have had a letter from your brother George, to-day."

Mr. Tom stopped in mid-career. "Indeed! George is not a great correspondent."

"No, but, like other people, he can write when he wants anything."

"Has he been begging, for, for another pet hobby?" Mr. Tom smiled faintly, as people do with whom smiles are rare.

"Not this time, but he has some woman on his hands, and he wants me to dispose of her."

"A woman, George?"

"A flicker of amusement played over Mrs. Tom's face. "Some person in his parish has got into trouble; a lady, he says, who has been comfortably provided for, but has chosen to bestow her fortune on a worthless relative, and so finds herself, in middle life, at the mercy of the world. Serve her right, say I. I can do nothing for her."

"Now, I wonder who that could be! There are not many moneyed ladies in Fairview," Mr. Tom mused reflectively.

"Let me see. He gives her name. Compton—yes, Miss Priscilla Compton."

"Priscilla Compton?" Mr. Tom sat down and let his less particular omnibus follow its predecessors. "Why, she is our oldest friend. It was her father's influence that got George Fairview. What can have happened to her?"

"He only says that she has sacrificed her independence to the needs of some unscrupulous relative, and now wishes to work for her bread. Such folly, as if the world could find work for a woman grown old in idleness!"

"Priscilla Compton working for her board! Dear, dear! I remember her, a pretty girl who held her head as high as any one. Why, once upon a time George worshipped the very ground she walked on, and now to

leave of him trying to get her a situation! Well, time does work wonders!"

"Your brother loved her?" Mrs. Tom said, looking at the letter with new interest. "Yes, though I would not venture to say that he ever told her so."

"Yet he married another!"

"Yes; men do sometimes, when an energetic woman catches them on the rebound." He looked at her and uttered a little chuckling laugh, that came awkwardly, as though ashamed of itself.

"I suppose he is free to marry his first love now, if he will," Mrs. Tom said coldly. "And he'll do it—sure as I live he'll do it!" Mr. Tom struck his hands together as he spoke. "Now that things are at a crisis with her—"

"You would like it—I do believe you would like it though you know that our children are his heirs."

"Oh, hang it, Rebecca! Our children will be as rich as Jews, and why should we grudge him a fragment of contentment in his old age?"

Becoming suddenly conscious of the passage of time, Mr. Tom made his exit hastily, and his wife was left alone to ponder.

The rector was a widower and childless, his parish was a good one, and as he had always lived economically, he must have a goodly store of accumulations. Mrs. Tom liked money, and Mrs. Tom had managed to make many indirect streams trickle into her own pockets ere this through management. Mrs. Tom would not have been guilty of a criminal action for the world, neither would she permit herself any course that might seem like scheming; but in her time Mrs. Tom had known the value of many artfully simple little dodges, and the chief of these was to remove temptation when she knew it might be formidable.

Mr. Thomas Hornby had as many annual thousands as her husband's brother had hundreds, but what did that matter? Business was uncertain, and prudency, who could tell what a godsend the rector's savings might prove one day to her poor children? If she could help it, she would not permit this second marriage.

Mrs. Tom discussed the matter with herself, pondered on the possibility of circumstances playing into her hands, and finally decided that it was safest to rely on herself. She sat quite still for half an hour, and then she rose with a rustle expressive of decision, and took her way up the wide, softly carpeted stairs.

Fine rooms opened on either hand, the pictures smiled down on her from the walls; but Mrs. Tom went on to her room at the end of the corridor, and opened the door.

A pale woman, who stood buttoning her gloves by the window, looked up timidly as Mrs. Tom sailed in.

"Are you going out, Miss Spence?" "Yes; the children have asked for an early walk since the weather has grown so hot, and so I have taken them to the park for the last week after breakfast."

"You should have consulted me about it," Mrs. Tom said coldly. "I did not think it mattered," the governess answered, shrinking a little. "They are to have a walk, and when they get it at the best time—"

"The best time is questionable; in any case, you should have consulted me." Miss Spence did not answer. Addressing this large, prosperous, self-assertive woman was an ordeal from which she shrank.

"Indeed, I have often thought lately that you assume too much," Mrs. Tom went on. "You are too independent in your ways, too confident of your own infallibility." Miss Spence looked up at her with the soft, pleading eyes that were the sole beauty in her pale, plain little face. Mrs. Tom did not care to meet them as she continued: "And so I have decided that it would be better for us both to make a change."

"Very well, Mrs. Hornby."

The little governess accepted the fact calmly, for the absence of hope teaches endurance; and then she went out with her pupils and paced the park, where the glory of the sunlight was falling like a benediction, and wondered why she had ever had the burden of life cast on her.

Meantime Mrs. Tom, indifferent to the fact that she had pushed heaven further into the background of a desolate life, was writing a gushing letter to her dear brother at Fairview.

It was a hot afternoon in early July; there was not a cloud in the lofty dome of the sky, and a few trees dotted along the dusty highway flung dense shadows here and there, while in the distance the heat seemed to set the landscape dancing to a measure of its own. Mr. Hornby sighed several times as he went down the Fairview street, and more than once he frowned, as people do to whom, either in suggestion or in reality, something unpalatable has been offered. Perhaps the heat oppressed him, perhaps the dust annoyed him. For surely there could be nothing in the cheery letter folded in his breast-pocket that could vex any one.

Miss Priscilla at home? He had stopped by the little oak door over which the roses and honeysuckle clustered so lovingly.

"Yes, sir," Jane had appeared in answer to his knock, and he noticed that she had lost the brisk, complacent bearing of former days.

"Then tell her I am here, please."

Mr. Hornby entered and seated himself on one of the pretty, chintz-covered chairs in Miss Priscilla's cool, fresh little drawing-room. How pretty everything was, from the handful of roses and ferns in the glass dish to the light curtains swaying in the breeze! But how could any adjunct of Miss Priscilla's ownership be other than pretty? And so fancy he toiling for a pittance in his brother Tom's household! Again the disgusted look spread itself over his countenance, and this time it could not be due either to the dust or the sun.

"Have you heard of anything?" he said, anxiously, as Miss Priscilla entered.

"No; but you have." She wore a snowy cap and a gown of some soft stuff, and she was smiling at him, although there were troubled lines about her eyes.

"I Oh, no; it is worth nothing; only a letter from Tom's wife."

"And she is like all the rest, anxious to help and so sorry to be sorry, that she could do nothing suitable just now."

There was a little anger in the smile that played over Miss Priscilla's lips as she put her question.

"No; she does not write that exactly." He rose hurriedly, and went to the window, and stood looking out at the honeysuckle blossoms of the woodbine that pressed against the panes.

"Oh, how good you are—now grateful I am!" Her lips quivered as she spoke, but she could not let the tears fall, though they nearly blinded her.

"And you would think of it?" looking at her mournfully.

"Of course I would; beggars must not be choosers. There are not likely to be many people eager to engage an old woman brought up to no employment. Besides, I want to teach, and I am very glad that I can make my essay in the household of a friend of yours."

"I do not hold myself responsible for Mrs. Tom," he answered.

"You mean to say she is not perfect?" Well, neither am I. So we are likely to suit each other. Will you write to her, and ask her to let me know all she requires?"

"I can not bear it. It was so horribly," she repeated, with needless warmth.

"But do not look so. I have brought it all to you, and it will be time enough to pity her when she is old."

"You would never do that—not if things were killing you."

"Possibly not. I was always better at scolding other people than at speaking of myself. But never mind me now. What will you say to your sisters-in-law?"

"I shall tell her to come and meet you at my house, and make all her own arrangements, since you are willing to accept her offer."

Miss Priscilla looked at him with a little smile. "Mrs. Tom has been the first to offer me tangible help, and you will kindly write and say that I am very grateful, and that I await her orders."

She was more like her old self as she spoke than she had been since the hour of her sacrifice.

"I shall write to her that you will meet her at my house any time she wishes to see you."

"But what will she think of that when my own house is here? Remember that she is my future employer, and that I want her approval in everything."

"But she is my sister-in-law, and a dominating woman, and I want her to understand what I think of you, and what place I wish you to take in her household."

Miss Priscilla looked at him doubtfully. "If only you don't make a mess of things after all," she said.

"She has not come."

"Did I not tell you so?"

Dismay and triumph struggled oddly for mastery on Priscilla's face as she answered. She was at the rectory door, where Mr. Hornby had come out to meet her, and as she faced him now, consternation began to creep over his countenance.

"She said she would come," he answered sheepishly.

"Of course; but that was before she had begun to consider. You know there was no reason in the world why I could not receive her at my own house."

"I thought it was best to have her here."

"And she did not think so."

Miss Priscilla set down as she spoke, and untied her bonnet strings, and the rector noticed that she was flushed and breathed hurriedly, as though but little would be needed to make her cry.

"I am very sorry," he said, penitently. "It was not your fault; you meant well, and in any case I am no worse off than I was."

She wiped her eyes furtively as she spoke, and her hot glow still more miserable.

"I never dreamed of this," he said; "and no one else would have played me such a shabby trick."

"Well, never mind. Let us take it for the best. But it does seem hard, when a likely thing arose, to lose it like this."

"But she may come yet. There is another train at 5, and she said positively that I might expect her. You will wait, won't you?"

"If you think there is any chance."

He had meant kindly, and he was very down-hearted, and so she could not bear to be hard on him. His face cleared.

It will be quite like old times to have you over. For the time he felt that old things were quite ended.

"Looked back on, life is different from one's anticipations," he said, sadly. "Not that I have not got more than my deserts, but still the award has been different from anything I expected."

"I think it is better, even for our happiness, that results of all we do are in other hands than ours," she answered gently.

"No doubt, no doubt; but still—"

He stopped, as though his thoughts would not shape themselves to any words that fitted the occasion.

They had been sitting all this time in the bleak, damp little drawing-room, and, whether from the conversation or the atmosphere, she felt chilled and depressed, though bright sunshine lay athwart the land. The rector was a cheerful, honest man, with dusty decorations dragging from the spotted grate, and long cowbells hanging unnoticed in dim corners. And once she had known him so fond of brightness, and free air, and sunlight. Poor George! Of course he was no more neglected than are other lonely men, but having known him young and hopeful, his circumstances struck her with melancholy sense of contrast. It was like Miss Priscilla to forget her own immediate troubles in pitying some one else.

The lunch made a diversion, though it was not what could be called, strictly speaking, an enlivening repast. A grim serving-woman waited on them and handed them cold plates with an air of protest, and her presence, taken in conjunction with the dim glasses and spotted cutlery made Miss Priscilla very unhappy.

"He has seven hundred a year if he has a penny; and yet everything is perfectly dreadful," she said to herself, while his good-natured hospitality over the soaked potatoes and hard peas and underdone mutton gave her a tremulous inclination to laugh and cry together.

All this time dark clouds had been filling the sky, and the west, and a sharp wind had begun to blow coldly, so that when a messenger came to call the rector urgently to a death-bed, Miss Priscilla became suddenly aware that a storm was threatening.

"You must wrap up well," she said, as he prepared to go; "you know you are not young enough to run needless risks; and he thanked her smilingly for the unpalatable information.

"You will make yourself quite at home during my absence," he said, and went away cheerfully on his melancholy errand.

The house looked worse to Miss Priscilla than she was left alone in it. The forest trees seemed to acquire an uncomfortable humanness suddenly; the mirrors stared at her, the chairs held themselves stiffly aloof, and the arabesques on the walls developed countenances which eyed her inquisitively. She bore it as long as she could, then she rang the bell nervously.

"I shall take off my bonnet if you will kindly show me to a bed-room," she said, accosting the grim woman servant with friendly warmth.

The woman surveyed her, with hostility, sniffed unpleasantly and preceded her up the stairs without answering.

Arrived in a neglected chamber, Miss Priscilla looked round her with the inevitable curiosity that spinsters bring to bear on the abodes of bachelors or widowers. The pretty paper on the walls was mildewed, the brown Holland blinds were drooping from their rusty nails, and the mirror was so dim that she could not refrain from drawing a finger across its surface. Then she blushed at her action. "What an old maid I am growing!" she said, and effaced the traces of her handwork.

"Master allows no one in the study," the servant informed her as she approached the door on her descent.

"Your master will not mind me," she said, turning the handle and entering.

Here, too, the demon of neglect and disorder reigned supreme; the grate was reddened in spots by the last shower down the chimney; the ink-stand was filled with a thick sediment, and a heap of pro-Adamite pens lay beside it; when she selected a book from the shelves it blackened her fingers; when she sat down the chair reeked an outline of her form. "It is perfectly disgraceful," she said, flushing angrily; "and to think that of all the women pretending to serve him! And, of course, he poor dear, notices nothing."

Miss Priscilla was in a scornfully indignant mood, otherwise she would not have ventured to jerk the bell as she did. "Bring me a duster, please," she said, when the woman appeared. The latter tossed her head wrathfully and waited for an explanation. None being vouchsafed, she flounced off, and presently returned with a nondescript article, which she offered at arm's length. Miss Priscilla thanked her politely, closed the door after her carefully, and then set to work. She did not reason about what she was doing, she only felt that if she was to sit in that room it must be cleaned first, and with her snowy cuffs laid aside and her sleeves tucked up, she got into the spirit of her occupation that she sang softly to herself over it. There was not a thing that she touched that she did not renovate, and when all was tidy, and the roses, gathered an hour ago, were pouring their fragrance from a jar on the center-table, Miss Priscilla sat down and sighed. Meantime the rain had begun to fall sharply, and the wind to whistle shrilly, in the keyhole, and Miss Priscilla bethought herself of the luckless pedestrian.

"When Mr. Hornby is out in the rain what do you do?" she said, walking boldly into the kitchen and assailing the enemy in her stronghold.

"Do! Why, nothing. What is there to do?"

"Do you not have a fire lighted for him and his warm things waiting?"

"The master has no old maid's ways that I know of, and if you please, miss, you will leave me to mind my own business in the house where I have given great satisfaction for over five years. This self-satisfied person leaned herself in a threatening attitude against the table, and looked at the intruder sourly.

"Your business is to make your master comfortable, and I am sure you have no stronger desire than to do so," Miss Priscilla answered sweetly.

"We never have fires in the rooms before September."

"And in a general way that is quite right."

"And I would have difficulty in finding his like again." The woman hesitated still, and then this clever Miss Priscilla looked at her watch and notified the necessity that she would be under of returning home soon.

As was after a while, and all chance of Mrs. Tom's appearance that day was ended, but in the ardor of her work, Miss Priscilla had momentarily forgotten the object of her visit to the rectory.

Three things in her last remarks had modified Miss Gaunt; first, she had known Mr. Hornby for forty years, and, therefore, was not likely to prove fatal to his peace of mind; second, she was about to remove her obnoxious presence from the rectory forthwith; third, the rector was really a phenomenon among masters.

Actuated by a variety of motives Miss Gaunt bestirred herself, and in ten minutes a good fire was piled in the grate, and after a little spluttering and puffing consented to burn cheerfully. Just as if to convince the rector's guest that she knew what was what, and could have things right when she chose, the attendant spread a spotless cloth for tea, and brought forth honey and fresh butter, reserved, no doubt, for the occasion, and use in a general way, and made the toast delicately and crisply, and being then mollified by her success, grew amiable, and urged Miss Priscilla not to think of venturing out in such soaking weather, as Mr. Hornby was sure to be in presently.

Miss Priscilla went to the window and looked out dubiously. The wide-open roses were hanging their heads dejectedly, the mignonette was stirring rebelliously in the wind, and the vivid greenness of the spongy turf showed how thoroughly it had been soaked. Rain was falling still, but occasional rifts in the clouds gave promise of improvement by and by. She decided, therefore, to await it.

The rector felt, on his return, as if a change had come to the whole world. To find himself cozy and comfortably and cheerfully at tea by his own fireside, with Miss Priscilla, rosy from her past exertions, smiling opposite him, and expressing a kindly interest in all he had to tell, delighted him somehow. He could not have accounted for it, but he felt as if he would like to go to sleep then and there, to the musical accompaniment of clinking silver and china and a woman's voice. Not that he ever indulged in an afternoon nap, but he felt so soothed and rested, it seemed as if the next step must be slumber. But Mr. Hornby was polite, if he was anything. He shook off the drowsy influence, discussed Mrs. Tom and the best way to reach her, feeling more than ever how sad it was that Priscilla should fall into her clutches, so that before his guest was bonneted for her return home, the sun had set, and the crescent moon had asserted itself boldly in the watery sky.

"I shall go down to the village with you," Mr. Hornby said when she wished to say good-bye; and in spite of her demurrings, he got his thick boots and overcoat, and sallied forth by her side.

In the air there was the softness of recent rain; the stocks and gilly flowers were pouring out incense to the moon, while an undaunted nightingale sang lustily in a neighboring tree.

In the faint light, Miss Priscilla looked as pretty as she had done twenty years before, and more than once Mr. Hornby caught himself looking at her furtively, as he had done when she had been a dainty girl and he a great undeveloped school-boy.

And to think of her now as the governess to Mrs. Tom's children, snubbed and patronized by that pompous person, alternately, and placed in that position by his intervention, too! He grew a little hot as he spoke of it. It would be had enough to lose her out of his life; to put her into Mrs. Tom's clutches was unbearable.

"But what alternative have I?" she asked with a little scorn of his pusillanimity. "When one is in a strait, one must fit one's self to hard circumstances."

They were close to her door now, and he put out his hand to detain her when she would have raised the knocker.

"Would you not be happier at Fairview with me—as my