## Daisy

W. Somerset Maugham

### I

It was Sunday morning—a damp, warm November morning, with the sky overhead grey and low. Miss Reed stopped a little to take breath before climbing the hill, at the top of which, in the middle of the churchyard, was Blackstable Church. Miss Reed panted, and the sultriness made her loosen her jacket. She stood at the junction of the two roads which led to the church, one from the harbour end of the town and the other from the station. Behind her lay the houses of Blackstable, the wind—beaten houses with slate roofs of the old fishing village and the red brick villas of the seaside resort which Blackstable was fast becoming; in the harbour were the masts of the ships, colliers that brought coal from the north; and beyond, the grey sea, very motionless, mingling in the distance with the sky.... The peal of the church bells ceased, and was replaced by a single bell, ringing a little hurriedly, querulously, which denoted that there were only ten minutes before the beginning of the service. Miss Reed walked on; she looked curiously at the people who passed her, wondering....

‘Good—morning, Mr Golding!’ she said to a fisherman who pounded by her, ungainly in his Sunday clothes.

‘Good—morning, Miss Reed!’ he replied. ‘Warm this morning.’

She wondered whether he knew anything of the subject which made her heart beat with excitement whenever she thought of it, and for thinking of it she hadn’t slept a wink all night.

‘Have you seen Mr Griffith this morning?’ she asked, watching his face.

‘No; I saw Mrs Griffith and George as I was walking up.’

‘Oh! they are coming to church, then!’ Miss Reed cried with the utmost surprise.

Mr Golding looked at her stupidly, not understanding her agitation. But they had reached the church. Miss Reed stopped in the porch to wipe her boots and pass an arranging hand over her hair. Then, gathering herself together, she walked down the aisle to her pew.

She arranged the hassock and knelt down, clasping her hands and closing her eyes; she said the Lord’s Prayer; and being a religious woman, she did not immediately rise, but remained a certain time in the same position of worship to cultivate a proper frame of mind, her long, sallow face upraised, her mouth firmly closed, and her eyelids quivering a little from the devotional force with which she kept her eyes shut; her thin bust, very erect, was encased in a black jacket as in a coat of steel. But when Miss Reed considered that a due period had elapsed, she opened her eyes, and, as she rose from her knees, bent over to a lady sitting just in front of her.

‘Have you heard about the Griffiths, Mrs Howlett?’

‘No!...What is it?’ answered Mrs Howlett, half turning round, intensely curious.

Miss Reed waited a moment to heighten the effect of her statement.

‘Daisy Griffith has eloped—with an officer from the dépôt at Tercanbury.’

Mrs Howlett gave a little gasp.

‘You don’t say so!’

‘It’s all they could expect,’ whispered Miss Reed. ‘They ought to have known something was the matter when she went into Tercanbury three or four times a week.’

Blackstable is six miles from Tercanbury, which is a cathedral city and has a cavalry dépôt.

‘I’ve seen her hanging about the barracks with my own eyes,’ said Mrs Howlett, ‘but I never suspected anything.’

‘Shocking! isn’t it?’ said Miss Reed, with suppressed delight.

‘But how did you find out?’ asked Mrs Howlett.

‘Ssh!’ whispered Miss Reed—the widow, in her excitement, had raised her voice a little and Miss Reed could never suffer the least irreverence in church.... ‘She never came back last night, and George Browning saw them get into the London train at Tercanbury.’

‘Well, I never!’ exclaimed Mrs Howlett.

‘D’you think the Griffiths’ll have the face to come to church?’

‘I shouldn’t if I was them,’ said Miss Reed.

But at that moment the vestry door was opened and the organ began to play the hymn.

‘I’ll see you afterwards,’ Miss Reed whispered hurriedly; and rising from their seats, both ladies began to sing,—

*O Jesu, thou art standing*

*Outside the fast closed door,*

*In lowly patience waiting*

*To pass the threshold o’er;*

*We bear the name of Christians*

....

Miss Reed held the book rather close to her face, being shortsighted; but, without even lifting her eyes, she had become aware of the entrance of Mrs Griffith and George. She glanced significantly at Mrs Howlett. Mr Griffith hadn’t come, although he was churchwarden, and Mrs Howlett gave an answering look which meant that it was then evidently quite true. But they both gathered themselves together for the last verse, taking breath.

*O Jesus, thou art pleading*

*In accents meek and low*

....

A—A—men! The congregation fell to its knees, and the curate, rolling his eyes to see who was in church, began gabbling the morning prayers—‘*Dearly beloved brethren. ‘* ...

### II

At the Sunday dinner, the vacant place of Daisy Griffith stared at them. Her father sat at the head of the table, looking down at his plate, in silence; every now and then, without raising his head, he glanced up at the empty space, filled with a madness of grief.... He had gone into Tercanbury in the morning, inquiring at the houses of all Daisy’s friends, imagining that she had spent the night with one of them. He could not believe that George Browning’s story was true, he could so easily have been mistaken in the semi—darkness of the station. And even he had gone to the barracks—his cheeks still burned with the humiliation—asking if they knew a Daisy Griffith.

He pushed his plate away with a groan. He wished passionately that it were Monday, so that he could work. And the post would surely bring a letter, explaining.

‘The vicar asked where you were,’ said Mrs Griffith.

Robert, the father, looked at her with his pained eyes, but her eyes were hard and shining, her lips almost disappeared in the tight closing of the mouth. She was willing to believe the worst. He looked at his son; he was frowning; he looked as coldly angry as the mother. He, too, was willing to believe everything, and they neither seemed very sorry.... Perhaps they were even glad.

‘I was the only one who loved her,’ he muttered to himself, and pushing back his chair he got up and left the room. He almost tottered; he had aged twenty years in the night.

‘Aren’t you going to have any pudding?’ asked his wife.

He made no answer.

He walked out into the courtyard quite aimlessly, but the force of habit took him to the workshop, where, every Sunday afternoon, he was used to going after dinner to see that everything was in order, and to—day also he opened the window, put away a tool which the men had left about, examined the Saturday’s work....

Mrs Griffith and George, stiff and ill at ease in his clumsy Sunday clothes, went on with their dinner.

‘D’you think the vicar knew?’ he asked as soon as the father had closed the door.

‘I don’t think he’d have asked if he had. Mrs Gray might, but he’s too simple—unless she put him up to it.’

‘I thought I should never get round with the plate,’ said George. Mr Griffith, being a carpenter, which is respectable and well—to—do, which is honourable, had been made churchwarden, and part of his duty was to take round the offertory plate. This duty George performed in his father’s occasional absences, as when a coffin was very urgently required.

‘I wasn’t going to let them get anything out of me,’ said Mrs Griffith, defiantly.

All through the service a number of eyes had been fixed on them, eager to catch some sign of emotion, full of horrible curiosity to know what the Griffiths felt and thought; but Mrs Griffith had been inscrutable.

### III

Next day the Griffiths lay in wait for the postman; George sat by the parlour window, peeping through the muslin curtains.

‘Fanning’s just coming up the street,’ he said at last. Until the post had come old Griffith could not work; in the courtyard at the back was heard the sound of hammering.

There was a rat—tat at the door, the sound of a letter falling on the mat, and Fanning the postman passed on. George leaned back quickly so that he might not see him. Mr Griffith fetched the letter, opened it with trembling hands.... He gave a little gasp of relief.

‘She’s got a situation in London.’

‘Is that all she says?’ asked Mrs Griffith. ‘Give me the letter,’ and she almost tore it from her husband’s hand.

She read it through and uttered a little ejaculation of contempt—almost of triumph. ‘You don’t mean to say you believe that?’ she cried.

‘Let’s look, mother,’ said George. He read the letter and he too gave a snort of contempt.

‘She says she’s got a situation,’ repeated Mrs Griffith, with a sneer at her husband, ‘and we’re not to be angry or anxious, and she’s quite happy—and we can write to Charing Cross Post Office. I know what sort of a situation she’s got.’

Mr Griffith looked from his wife to his son.

‘Don’t you think it’s true?’ he asked helplessly. At the first moment he had put the fullest faith in Daisy’s letter, he had been so anxious to believe it; but the scorn of the others....

‘There’s Miss Reed coming down the street,’ said George. ‘She’s looking this way, and she’s crossing over. I believe she’s coming in.’

‘What does she want?’ asked Mrs Griffith, angrily.

There was another knock at the door, and through the curtains they saw Miss Reed’s eyes looking towards them, trying to pierce the muslin. Mrs Griffith motioned the two men out of the room, and hurriedly put antimacassars on the chairs. The knock was repeated, and Mrs Griffith, catching hold of a duster, went to the door.

‘Oh, Miss Reed! Who’d have thought of seeing you?’ she cried with surprise.

‘I hope I’m not disturbing,’ answered Miss Reed, with an acid smile.

‘Oh, dear no!’ said Mrs Griffith. ‘I was just doing the dusting in the parlour. Come in, won’t you? The place is all upside down, but you won’t mind that, will you?’

Miss Reed sat on the edge of a chair.

‘I thought I’d just pop in to ask about dear Daisy. I met Fanning as I was coming along and he told me you’d had a letter.’

‘Oh! Daisy?’ Mrs Griffith had understood at once why Miss Reed came, but she was rather at a loss for an answer.... ‘Yes, we have had a letter from her. She’s up in London.’

‘Yes, I knew that,’ said Miss Reed. ‘George Browning saw them get into the London train, you know.’

Mrs Griffith saw it was no good fencing, but an idea occurred to her.

‘Yes, of course her father and I are very distressed about—her eloping like that.’

‘I can quite understand that,’ said Miss Reed.

‘But it was on account of his family. He didn’t want anyone to know about it till he was married.’

‘Oh!’ said Miss Reed, raising her eyebrows very high.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Griffith, ‘that’s what she said in her letter; they were married on Saturday at a registry office.’

‘But, Mrs Griffith, I’m afraid she’s been deceiving you. It’s Captain Hogan.... and he’s a married man.’

She could have laughed outright at the look of dismay on Mrs Griffith’s face. The blow was sudden, and notwithstanding all her power of self—control, Mrs Griffith could not help herself. But at once she recovered, an angry flush appeared on her cheek bones.

‘You don’t mean it?’ she cried.

‘I’m afraid it’s quite true,’ said Miss Reed, humbly. ‘In fact I know it is.’

‘Then she’s a lying, deceitful hussy, and she’s made a fool of all of us. I give you my word of honour that she told us she was married; I’ll fetch you the letter.’ Mrs Griffith rose from her chair, but Miss Reed put out a hand to stop her.

‘Oh, don’t trouble, Mrs Griffith; of course I believe you,’ she said, and Mrs Griffith immediately sat down again.

But she burst into a storm of abuse of Daisy, for her deceitfulness and wickedness. She vowed she should never forgive her. She assured Miss Reed again and again that she had known nothing about it. Finally she burst into a perfect torrent of tears. Miss Reed was mildly sympathetic; but now she was anxious to get away to impart her news to the rest of Blackstable. Mrs Griffith sobbed her visitor out of the front door, but, when she had closed it, dried her tears. She went into the parlour and flung open the door that led to the back room. Griffith was sitting with his face hidden in his hands, and every now and then a sob shook his great frame. George was very pale, biting his nails.

‘You heard what she said,’ cried Mrs Griffith. ‘He’s married!’ ... She looked at her husband contemptuously. ‘It’s all very well for you to carry on like that now. It was you who did it; it was all your fault. If she’d been brought up as I wanted her to be, this wouldn’t ever have happened.’

Again there was a knock, and George, going out, ushered in Mrs Gray, the vicar’s wife. She rushed in when she heard the sound of voices.

‘Oh, Mrs Griffith, it’s dreadful! simply dreadful! Miss Reed has just told me all about it. What is to be done? And what’ll the dissenters make of it? Oh, dear, it’s simply dreadful!’

‘You’ve just come in time, Mrs Gray,’ said Mrs Griffith, angrily. ‘It’s not my fault, I can tell you that. It’s her father who’s brought it about. He would have her go into Tercanbury to be educated, and he would have her take singing lessons and dancing lessons. The Church school was good enough for George. It’s been Daisy this and Daisy that all through. Me and George have been always put by for Daisy. I didn’t want her brought up above her station, I can assure you. It’s him who would have her brought up as a lady; and see what’s come of it! And he let her spend any money she liked on her dress.... It wasn’t me that let her go into Tercanbury every day in the week if she wanted to. I knew she was up to no good. There you see what you’ve brought her to; it’s you who’s disgraced us all!’

She hissed out the words with intense malignity, nearly screaming in the bitterness she felt towards the beautiful daughter of better education than herself, almost of different station. It was all but a triumph for her that this had happened. It brought her daughter down; she turned the tables, and now, from the superiority of her virtue, she looked down upon her with utter contempt.

### IV

On the following Sunday the people of Blackstable enjoyed an emotion; as Miss Reed said,—

‘It was worth going to church this morning, even for a dissenter.’

The vicar was preaching, and the congregation paid a very languid attention, but suddenly a curious little sound went through the church—one of those scarcely perceptible noises which no comparison can explain; it was a quick attraction of all eyes, an arousing of somnolent intelligences, a slight, quick drawing—in of the breath. The listeners had heeded very indifferently Mr Gray’s admonitions to brotherly love and charity as matters which did not concern them other than abstractedly; but quite suddenly they had realised that he was bringing his discourse round to the subject of Daisy Griffith, and they pricked up both ears. They saw it coming directly along the highways of Vanity and Luxuriousness; and everyone became intensely wide awake.

‘And we have in all our minds,’ he said at last, ‘the terrible fall which has almost broken the hearts of sorrowing parents and brought bitter grief—bitter grief and shame to all of us.’...

He went on hinting at the scandal in the manner of the personal columns in newspapers, and drawing a number of obvious morals. The Griffith family were sitting in their pew well in view of the congregation; and losing even the shadow of decency, the people turned round and stared at them, ghoul—like.... Robert Griffith sat in the corner with his head bent down, huddled up, his rough face speaking in all its lines the terrible humiliation; his hair was all dishevelled. He was not more than fifty, and he looked an old man. But Mrs Griffith sat next him, very erect, not leaning against the back, with her head well up, her mouth firmly closed, and she looked straight in front of her, her little eyes sparkling, as if she had not an idea that a hundred people were staring at her. In the other corner was George, very white, looking up at the roof in simulation of indifference. Suddenly a sob came from the Griffiths’ pew, and people saw that the father had broken down; he seemed to forget where he was, and he cried as if indeed his heart were broken. The great tears ran down his cheeks in the sight of all—the painful tears of men; he had not even the courage to hide his face in his hands. Still Mrs Griffith made no motion, she never gave a sign that she heard her husband’s agony; but two little red spots appeared angrily on her cheek bones, and perhaps she compressed her lips a little more tightly....

### V

Six months passed. One evening, when Mr Griffith was standing at the door after work, smoking his pipe, the postman handed him a letter. He changed colour and his hand shook when he recognised the handwriting. He turned quickly into the house.

‘A letter from Daisy,’ he said. They had not replied to her first letter, and since then had heard nothing.

‘Give it me,’ said his wife.

He drew it quickly towards him, with an instinctive gesture of retention.

‘It’s addressed to me.’

‘Well, then, you’d better open it.’

He looked up at his wife; he wanted to take the letter away and read it alone, but her eyes were upon him, compelling him there and then to open it.

‘She wants to come back,’ he said in a broken voice.

Mrs Griffith snatched the letter from him.

‘That means he’s left her,’ she said.

The letter was all incoherent, nearly incomprehensible, covered with blots, every other word scratched out. One could see that the girl was quite distraught, and Mrs Griffith’s keen eyes saw the trace of tears on the paper.... It was a long, bitter cry of repentance. She begged them to take her back, repeating again and again the cry of penitence, piteously beseeching them to forgive her.

‘I’ll go and write to her,’ said Mr Griffith.

‘Write what?’

‘Why—that it’s all right and she isn’t to worry; and we want her back, and that I’ll go up and fetch her.’

Mrs Griffith placed herself between him and the door.

‘What d’you mean?’ she cried. ‘She’s not coming back into my house.’

Mr Griffith started back.

‘You don’t want to leave her where she is! She says she’ll kill herself.’

‘Yes, I believe that,’ she replied scornfully; and then, gathering up her anger, ‘D’you mean to say you expect me to have her in the house after what she’s done? I tell you I won’t. She’s never coming in this house again as long as I live; I’m an honest woman and she isn’t. She’s a—‘ Mrs Griffith called her daughter the foulest name that can be applied to her sex.

Mr Griffith stood indecisively before his wife.

‘But think what a state she’s in, mother. She was crying when she wrote the letter.’

‘Let her cry; she’ll have to cry a lot more before she’s done. And it serves her right; and it serves you right. She’ll have to go through a good deal more than that before God forgives her, I can tell you.’

‘Perhaps she’s starving.’

‘Let her starve, for all I care. She’s dead to us; I’ve told everyone in Blackstable that I haven’t got a daughter now, and if she came on her bended knees before me I’d spit on her.’

George had come in and listened to the conversation.

‘Think what people would say, father,’ he said now; ‘as it is, it’s jolly awkward, I can tell you. No one would speak to us if she was back again. It’s not as if people didn’t know; everyone in Blackstable knows what she’s been up to.’

‘And what about George?’ put in Mrs Griffith. ‘D’you think the Polletts would stand it?’ George was engaged to Edith Pollett.

‘She’d be quite capable of breaking it off if Daisy came back,’ said George. ‘She’s said as much.’

‘Quite right too!’ cried his mother. ‘And I’m not going to be like Mrs Jay with Lottie. Everyone knows about Lottie’s goings—on, and you can see how people treat them—her and her mother. When Mrs Gray passes them in the street she always goes on the other side. No, I’ve always held my head high, and I’m always going to. I’ve never done anything to be ashamed of as far as I know, and I’m not going to begin now. Everyone knows it was no fault of mine what Daisy did, and all through I’ve behaved so that no one should think the worse of me.’

Mr Griffith sank helplessly into a chair, the old habit of submission asserted itself, and his weakness gave way as usual before his wife’s strong will. He had not the courage to oppose her.

‘What shall I answer, then?’ he asked.

‘Answer? Nothing.’

‘I must write something. She’ll be waiting for the letter, and waiting and waiting.’

‘Let her wait.’

### VI

A few days later another letter came from Daisy, asking pitifully why they didn’t write, begging them again to forgive her and take her back. The letter was addressed to Mr Griffith; the girl knew that it was only from him she might expect mercy; but he was out when it arrived. Mrs Griffith opened it, and passed it on to her son. They looked at one another guiltily; the same thought had occurred to both, and each knew it was in the other’s mind.

‘I don’t think we’d better let father see it,’ Mrs Griffith said, a little uncertainly; ‘it’ll do no good and it’ll only distress him.’

‘And it’s no good making a fuss, because we can’t have her back.’

‘She’ll never enter this door as long as I’m in the world.... I think I’ll lock it up.’

‘I’d burn it, if I was you, mother. It’s safer.’

Then every day Mrs Griffith made a point of going to the door herself for the letters. Two more came from Daisy.

‘I *know it’s not you; it’s mother and George. They’ve always hated me. Oh, don’t be so cruel, father! You don’t know what I’ve gone through. I’ve cried and cried till I thought I should die. For God’s sake write to me! They might let you write just once. I’m alone all day, day after day, and I think I shall go mad. You might take me back; I’m sure I’ve suffered enough, and you wouldn’t know me now, I’m so changed. Tell mother that if she’ll only forgive me I’ll be quite different. I’ll do the housework and anything she tells me. I’ll be a servant to you, and you can send the girl away. If you knew how I repent! Do forgive me and have me back. Oh, I know that no one would speak to me; but I don’t care about that, if I can only be with you!’*

‘She doesn’t think about us,’ said George—‘what we should do if she was back. No one would speak to us either.’

But the next letter said that she couldn’t bear the terrible silence; if her father didn’t write she’d come down to Blackstable. Mrs Griffith was furious.

‘I’d shut the door in her face; I wonder how she can dare to come.’

‘It’s jolly awkward,’ said George. ‘Supposing father found out we’d kept back the letters?’

‘It was for his own good,’ said Mrs Griffith, angrily. ‘I’m not ashamed of what I’ve done, and I’ll tell him so to his face if he says anything to me.’

‘Well, it is awkward. You know what father is; if he saw her.’...

Mrs Griffith paused a moment.

‘You must go up and see her, George!’

‘Me!’ he cried in astonishment, a little in terror.

‘You must go as if you came from your father, to say we won’t have anything more to do with her and she’s not to write.’

VII

Next day George Griffith, on getting out of the station at Victoria, jumped on a Fulham ’bus, taking his seat with the self—assertiveness of the countryman who intends to show the Londoners that he’s as good as they are. He was in some trepidation and his best clothes. He didn’t know what to say to Daisy, and his hands sweated uncomfortably. When he knocked at the door he wished she might be out—but that would only be postponing the ordeal.

‘Does Mrs Hogan live here?’

‘Yes. Who shall I say?’

‘Say a gentleman wants to see her.’

He followed quickly on the landlady’s heels and passed through the door the woman opened while she was giving the message. Daisy sprang to her feet with a cry.

‘George!’

She was very pale, her blue eyes dim and lifeless, with the lids heavy and red; she was in a dressing gown, her beautiful hair dishevelled, wound loosely into a knot at the back of her head. She had not half the beauty of her old self.... George, to affirm the superiority of virtue over vice, kept his hat on.

She looked at him with frightened eyes, then her lips quivered, and turning away her head she fell on a chair and burst into tears. George looked at her sternly. His indignation was greater than ever now that he saw her. His old jealousy made him exult at the change in her.

‘She’s got nothing much to boast about now,’ he said to himself, noting how ill she looked.

‘Oh, George!’...she began, sobbing; but he interrupted her.

‘I’ve come from father,’ he said, ‘and we don’t want to have anything more to do with you, and you’re not to write.’

‘Oh!’ She looked at him now with her eyes suddenly quite dry. They seemed to burn her in their sockets. ‘Did he send you here to tell me that?’

‘Yes; and you’re not to come down.’

She put her hand to her forehead, looking vacantly before her.

‘But what am I to do? I haven’t got any money; I’ve pawned everything.’

George looked at her silently; but he was horribly curious.

‘Why did he leave you?’ he said.

She made no answer; she looked before her as if she were going out of her mind.

‘Has he left you any money?’ asked George.

Then she started up, her cheeks flaming red.

‘I wouldn’t touch a halfpenny of his. I’d rather starve!’ she screamed.

George shrugged his shoulders.

‘Well, you understand?’ he said.

‘Oh, how can you! It’s all you and mother. You’ve always hated me. But I’ll pay you out, by God! I’ll pay you out. I know what you are, all of you—you and mother, and all the Blackstable people. You’re a set of damned hypocrites.’

‘Look here, Daisy! I’m not going to stand here and hear you talk like that of me and mother,’ he replied with dignity; ‘and as for the Blackstable people, you’re not fit to—to associate with them. And I can see where you learnt your language.’

Daisy burst into hysterical laughter. George became more angry—virtuously indignant.

‘Oh, you can laugh as much as you like! I know your repentance is a lot of damned humbug. You’ve always been a conceited little beast. And you’ve been stuck up and cocky because you thought yourself nice—looking, and because you were educated in Tercanbury. And no one was good enough for you in Blackstable. And I’m jolly glad that all this has happened to you; it serves you jolly well right. And if you dare to show yourself at Blackstable, we’ll send for the police.’

Daisy stepped up to him.

‘I’m a damned bad lot,’ she said, ‘but I swear I’m not half as bad as you are.... You know what you’re driving me to.’

‘You don’t think I care what you do,’ he answered, as he flung himself out of the door. He slammed it behind him, and he also slammed the front door to show that he was a man of high principles. And even George Washington when he said, ‘I cannot tell a lie; I did it with my little hatchet,’ did not feel so righteous as George Griffith at that moment.

Daisy went to the window to see him go, and then, throwing up her arms, she fell on her knees, weeping, weeping, and she cried,—

‘My God, have pity on me!’

VIII

‘I wouldn’t go through it again for a hundred pounds,’ said George, when he recounted his experience to his mother. ‘And she wasn’t a bit humble, as you’d expect.’

‘Oh! that’s Daisy all over. Whatever happens to her, she’ll be as bold as brass.’

‘And she didn’t choose her language,’ he said, with mingled grief and horror.

###### \* \* \*

They heard nothing more of Daisy for over a year, when George went up to London for the choir treat. He did not come back till three o’clock in the morning, but he went at once to his mother’s room.

He woke her very carefully, so as not to disturb his father. She started up, about to speak, but he prevented her with his hand.

‘Come outside; I’ve got something to tell you.’

Mrs Griffith was about to tell him rather crossly to wait till the morrow, but he interrupted her,—

‘I’ve seen Daisy.’

She quickly got out of bed, and they went together into the parlour.

‘I couldn’t keep it till the morning,’ he said.... ‘What d’you think she’s doing now? Well, after we came out of the Empire, I went down Piccadilly, and—well, I saw Daisy standing there.... It did give me a turn, I can tell you; I thought some of the chaps would see her. I simply went cold all over. But they were on ahead and hadn’t noticed her.’

‘Thank God for that!’ said Mrs Griffith, piously.

‘Well, what d’you think I did? I went straight up to her and looked her full in the face. But d’you think she moved a muscle? She simply looked at me as if she’d never set eyes on me before. Well, I was taken aback, I can tell you. I thought she’d faint. Not a bit of it.’

‘No, I know Daisy,’ said Mrs Griffith; ‘you think she’s this and that, because she looks at you with those blue eyes of hers, as if she couldn’t say bo to a goose, but she’s got the very devil inside her.... Well, I shall tell her father that, just so as to let him see what she has come to.’...

###### \* \* \*

The existence of the Griffith household went on calmly. Husband and wife and son led their life in the dull little fishing town, the seasons passed insensibly into one another, one year slid gradually into the next; and the five years that went by seemed like one long, long day. Mrs Griffith did not alter an atom; she performed her housework, went to church regularly, and behaved like a Christian woman in that state of life in which a merciful Providence had been pleased to put her. George got married, and on Sunday afternoons could be seen wheeling an infant in a perambulator along the street. He was a good husband and an excellent father. He never drank too much, he worked well, he was careful of his earnings, and he also went to church regularly; his ambition was to become churchwarden after his father. And even in Mr Griffith there was not so very much change. He was more bowed, his hair and beard were greyer. His face was set in an expression of passive misery, and he was extremely silent. But as Mrs Griffith said,—

‘Of course, he’s getting old. One can’t expect to remain young for ever’—she was a woman who frequently said profound things—‘and I’ve known all along he wasn’t the sort of man to make old bones. He’s never had the go in him that I have. Why, I’d make two of him.’

The Griffiths were not so well—to—do as before. As Blackstable became a more important health resort, a regular undertaker opened a shop there; and his window, with two little model coffins and an arrangement of black Prince of Wales’s feathers surrounded by a white wreath, took the fancy of the natives, so that Mr Griffith almost completely lost the most remunerative part of his business. Other carpenters sprang into existence and took away much of the trade.

‘I’ve no patience with him,’ said Mrs Griffith, of her husband. ‘He lets these newcomers come along and just take the bread out of his hands. Oh, if I was a man, I’d make things different, I can tell you! He doesn’t seem to care.’...

###### \* \* \* \* \*

At last, one day George came to his mother in a state of tremendous excitement.

‘I say, mother, you know the pantomime they’ve got at Tercanbury this week?’

‘Yes.’

‘Well, the principal boy’s Daisy.’

Mrs Griffith sank into a chair, gasping.

‘Harry Ferne’s been, and he recognised her at once. It’s all over the town.’

Mrs Griffith, for the first time in her life, was completely at a loss for words.

‘To—morrow’s the last night,’ added her son, after a little while, ‘and all the Blackstable people are going.’

‘To think that this should happen to me!’ said Mrs Griffith, distractedly. ‘What have I done to deserve it? Why couldn’t it happen to Mrs Garman or Mrs Jay? If the Lord had seen fit to bring it upon them—well, I shouldn’t have wondered.’

‘Edith wants us to go,’ said George—Edith was his wife.

‘You don’t mean to say you’re going, with all the Blackstable people there?’

‘Well, Edith says we ought to go, just to show them we don’t care.’

‘Well, I shall come too!’ cried Mrs Griffith.

### IX

Next evening half Blackstable took the special train to Tercanbury, which had been put on for the pantomime, and there was such a crowd at the doors that the impresario half thought of extending his stay. The Rev. Charles Gray and Mrs Gray were there, also James, their nephew. Mr Gray had some scruples about going to a theatre, but his wife said a pantomime was quite different; besides, curiosity may gently enter even a clerical bosom. Miss Reed was there in black satin, with her friend Mrs Howlett; Mrs Griffith sat in the middle of the stalls, flanked by her dutiful son and her daughter—in—law; and George searched for female beauty with his opera—glass, which is quite the proper thing to do on such occasions....

The curtain went up, and the villagers of Dick Whittington’s native place sang a chorus.

‘Now she’s coming,’ whispered George.

All those Blackstable hearts stood still. And Daisy, as Dick Whittington, bounded on the stage—in flesh—coloured tights, with particularly scanty trunks, and her bodice—rather low. The vicar’s nephew sniggered, and Mrs Gray gave him a reproachful glance; all the other Blackstable people looked pained; Miss Reed blushed. But as Daisy waved her hand and gave a kick, the audience broke out into prolonged applause; Tercanbury people have no moral sense, although Tercanbury is a cathedral city.

Daisy began to sing,—

*I’m a jolly sort of boy, tol, lol,*

*And I don’t care a damn who knows it.*

*I’m fond of every joy, tol, lol,*

*As you may very well suppose it.*

*Tol, lol, lol,*

*Tol, lol, lol.*

Then the audience, the audience of a cathedral city, as Mr Gray said, took up the refrain,—

*Tol, lol, lol,*

*Tol, lol, lol.*

However, the piece went on to the bitter end, and Dick Whittington appeared in many different costumes and sang many songs, and kicked many kicks, till he was finally made Lord Mayor—in tights.

Ah, it was an evening of bitter humiliation for Blackstable people. Some of them, as Miss Reed said, behaved scandalously; they really appeared to enjoy it. And even George laughed at some of the jokes the cat made, though his wife and his mother sternly reproved him.

‘I’m ashamed of you, George, laughing at such a time!’ they said.

Afterwards the Grays and Miss Reed got into the same railway carriage with the Griffiths.

‘Well, Mrs Griffith,’ said the vicar’s wife, ‘what do you think of your daughter now?’

‘Mrs Gray,’ replied Mrs Griffith, solemnly, ‘I haven’t got a daughter.’

‘That’s a very proper spirit in which to look at it,’ answered the lady.... ‘She was simply covered with diamonds.’

‘They must be worth a fortune,’ said Miss Reed.

‘Oh, I daresay they’re not real,’ said Mrs Gray; ‘at that distance and with the lime—light, you know, it’s very difficult to tell.’

‘I’m sorry to say,’ said Mrs Griffith, with some asperity, feeling the doubt almost an affront to her—‘I’m sorry to say that I *know* they’re real.’

The ladies coughed discreetly, scenting a little scandalous mystery which they must get out of Mrs Griffith at another opportunity.

‘My nephew James says she earns at least thirty or forty pounds a week.’

Miss Reed sighed at the thought of such depravity.

‘It’s very sad,’ she remarked, ‘to think of such things happening to a fellow—creature.’...

###### \* \* \*

‘But what I can’t understand,’ said Mrs Gray, next morning, at the breakfast—table, ‘is how she got into such a position. We all know that at one time she was to be seen in—well, in a very questionable place, at an hour which left no doubt about her—her means of livelihood. I must say I thought she was quite lost.’...

‘Oh, well, I can tell you that easily enough,’ replied her nephew. ‘She’s being kept by Sir Somebody Something, and he’s running the show for her.’

‘James, I wish you would be more careful about your language. It’s not necessary to call a spade a spade, and you can surely find a less objectionable expression to explain the relationship between the persons.... Don’t you remember his name?’

‘No; I heard it, but I’ve really forgotten.’

‘I see in this week’s *Tercanbury Times* that there’s a Sir Herbert Ously—Farrowham staying at the “George” just now.’

‘That’s it. Sir Herbert Ously—Farrowham.’

‘How sad! I’ll look him out in Burke.’

She took down the reference book, which was kept beside the clergy list.

‘Dear me, he’s only twenty—nine.... And he’s got a house in Cavendish Square and a house in the country. He must be very well—to—do; and he belongs to the Junior Carlton and two other clubs.... And he’s got a sister who’s married to Lord Edward Lake.’ Mrs Gray closed the book and held it with a finger to mark the place, like a Bible. ‘It’s very sad to think of the dissipation of so many members of the aristocracy. It sets such a bad example to the lower classes.’

### X

They showed old Griffith a portrait of Daisy in her theatrical costume.

‘Has she come to that?’ he said.

He looked at it a moment, then savagely tore it in pieces and flung it in the fire.

‘Oh, my God!’ he groaned; he could not get out of his head the picture, the shamelessness of the costume, the smile, the evident prosperity and content. He felt now that he had lost his daughter indeed. All these years he had kept his heart open to her, and his heart had bled when he thought of her starving, ragged, perhaps dead. He had thought of her begging her bread and working her beautiful hands to the bone in some factory. He had always hoped that some day she could return to him, purified by the fire of suffering.... But she was prosperous and happy and rich. She was applauded, worshipped; the papers were full of her praise. Old Griffith was filled with a feeling of horror, of immense repulsion. She was flourishing in her sin, and he loathed her. He had been so ready to forgive her when he thought her despairing and unhappy; but now he was implacable.

\* \* \*

Three months later Mrs Griffith came to her husband, trembling with excitement, and handed him a cutting from a paper,—

‘*We hear that Miss Daisy Griffith, who earned golden opinions in the provinces last winter with her Dick Whittington, is about to be married to Sir Herbert Ously—Farrowham. Her friends, and their name is legion, will join with us in the heartiest congratulations.* ’

He returned the paper without answering.

‘Well?’ asked his wife.

‘It is nothing to me. I don’t know either of the parties mentioned.’

At that moment there was a knock at the door, and Mrs Gray and Miss Reed entered, having met on the doorstep. Mrs Griffith at once regained her self—possession.

‘Have you heard the news, Mrs Griffith?’ said Miss Reed.

‘D’you mean about the marriage of Sir Herbert Ously—Farrowham?’ She mouthed the long name.

‘Yes,’ replied the two ladies together.

‘It is nothing to me.... I have no daughter, Mrs Gray.’

‘I’m sorry to hear you say that, Mrs Griffith,’ said Mrs Gray very stiffly. ‘I think you show a most unforgiving spirit.’

‘Yes,’ said Miss Reed; ‘I can’t help thinking that if you’d treated poor Daisy in a—well, in a more *Christian* way, you might have saved her from a great deal.’

‘Yes,’ added Mrs Gray. ‘I must say that all through I don’t think you’ve shown a nice spirit at all. I remember poor, dear Daisy quite well, and she had a very sweet character. And I’m sure that if she’d been treated a little more gently, nothing of all this would have happened.’

Mrs Gray and Miss Reed looked at Mrs Griffith sternly and reproachfully; they felt themselves like God Almighty judging a miserable sinner. Mrs Griffith was extremely angry; she felt that she was being blamed most unjustly, and, moreover, she was not used to being blamed.

‘I’m sure you’re very kind, Mrs Gray and Miss Reed, but I must take the liberty of saying that I know best what my daughter was.’

‘Mrs Griffith, all I say is this—you are not a good mother.’

‘Excuse me, madam.’...said Mrs Griffith, having grown red with anger; but Mrs Gray interrupted.

‘I am truly sorry to have to say it to one of my parishioners, but you are not a good Christian. And we all know that your husband’s business isn’t going at all well, and I think it’s a judgment of Providence.’

‘Very well, ma’am,’ said Mrs Griffith, getting up. ‘You’re at liberty to think what you please, but I shall not come to church again. Mr Friend, the Baptist minister, has asked me to go to his chapel, and I’m sure he won’t treat me like that.’

‘I’m sure we don’t want you to come to church in that spirit, Mrs Griffith. That’s not the spirit with which you can please God, Mrs Griffith. I can quite imagine now why dear Daisy ran away. You’re no Christian.’

‘I’m sure I don’t care what you think, Mrs Gray, but I’m as good as you are.’

‘Will you open the door for me, Mrs Griffith?’ said Mrs Gray, with outraged dignity.

‘Oh, you can open it yourself, Mrs Gray!’ replied Mrs Griffith.

XI

Mrs Griffith went to see her daughter—in—law.

‘I’ve never been spoken to in that way before,’ she said. ‘Fancy me not being a Christian! I’m a better Christian than Mrs Gray, any day. I like Mrs Gray, with the airs she gives herself—as if she’d got anything to boast about!...No, Edith, I’ve said it, and I’m not the woman to go back on what I’ve said—I’ll not go to church again. From this day I go to chapel.’

###### \* \* \*

But George came to see his mother a few days later.

‘Look here, mother, Edith says you’d better forgive Daisy now.’

‘George,’ cried his mother, ‘I’ve only done my duty all through, and if you think it’s my duty to forgive my daughter now she’s going to enter the bonds of holy matrimony, I will do so. No one can say that I’m not a Christian, and I haven’t said the Lord’s Prayer night and morning ever since I remember for nothing.’

Mrs Griffith sat down to write, looking up to her son for inspiration.

‘Dearest Daisy!’ he said.

‘No, George,’ she replied, ‘I’m not going to cringe to my daughter, although she is going to be a lady; I shall simply say, “Daisy.”’

The letter was very dignified, gently reproachful, for Daisy had undoubtedly committed certain peccadilloes, although she was going to be a baronet’s wife; but still it was completely forgiving, and Mrs Griffith signed herself, ‘*Your loving and forgiving mother, whose heart you nearly broke.* ’

But the letter was not answered, and a couple of weeks later the same Sunday paper contained an announcement of the date of the marriage and the name of the church. Mrs Griffith wrote a second time.

‘*MY DARLING DAUGHTER,—I am much surprised at receiving no answer to my long letter. All is forgiven. I should so much like to see you again before I die, and to have you married from your father’s house. All is forgiven.—Your loving mother,*

‘*MARY ANN GRIFFITH.* ’

This time the letter was returned unopened.

‘George,’ cried Mrs Griffith, ’she’s got her back up.’

‘And the wedding’s to—morrow,’ he replied.

‘It’s most awkward, George. I’ve told all the Blackstable people that I’ve forgiven her and that Sir Herbert has written to say he wants to make my acquaintance. And I’ve got a new dress on purpose to go to the wedding. Oh! she’s a cruel and exasperating thing, George; I never liked her. You were always my favourite.’

‘Well, I do think she’s not acting as she should,’ replied George. ‘And I’m sure I don’t know what’s to be done.’

But Mrs Griffith was a woman who made up her mind quickly.

‘I shall go up to town and see her myself, George; and you must come too.’

‘I’ll come up with you, mother, but you’d better go to her alone, because I expect she’s not forgotten the last time I saw her.’

They caught a train immediately, and having arrived at Daisy’s house, Mrs Griffith went up the steps while George waited in a neighbouring public—house. The door was opened by a smart maid—much smarter than the Vicarage maid at Blackstable, as Mrs Griffith remarked with satisfaction. On finding that Daisy was at home, she sent up a message to ask if a lady could see her.

The maid returned.

‘Would you give your name, madam? Miss Griffith cannot see you without.’

Mrs Griffith had foreseen the eventuality, and, unwilling to give her card, had written another little letter, using Edith as amanuensis, so that Daisy should at least open it. She sent it up. In a few minutes the maid came down again.

‘There’s no answer,’ and she opened the door for Mrs Griffith to go out.

That lady turned very red. Her first impulse was to make a scene and call the housemaid to witness how Daisy treated her own mother; but immediately she thought how undignified she would appear in the maid’s eyes. So she went out like a lamb....

She told George all about it as they sat in the private bar of the public—house, drinking a little Scotch whisky.

‘All I can say,’ she remarked, ‘is that I hope she’ll never live to repent it. Fancy treating her own mother like that!

‘But I shall go to the wedding; I don’t care. I will see my own daughter married.’

That had been her great ambition, and she would have crawled before Daisy to be asked to the ceremony.... But George dissuaded her from going uninvited. There were sure to be one or two Blackstable people present, and they would see that she was there as a stranger; the humiliation would be too great.

‘I think she’s an ungrateful girl,’ said Mrs Griffith, as she gave way and allowed George to take her back to Blackstable.

### XII

But the prestige of the Griffiths diminished. Everyone in Blackstable came to the conclusion that the new Lady Ously—Farrowham had been very badly treated by her relatives, and many young ladies said they would have done just the same in her place. Also Mrs Gray induced her husband to ask Griffith to resign his churchwardenship.

‘You know, Mr Griffith,’ said the vicar, deprecatingly, ‘now that your wife goes to chapel I don’t think we can have you as churchwarden any longer; and besides, I don’t think you’ve behaved to your daughter in a Christian way.’

It was in the carpenter’s shop; the business had dwindled till Griffith only kept one man and a boy; he put aside the saw he was using.

‘What I’ve done to my daughter, I’m willing to take the responsibility for; I ask no one’s advice and I want no one’s opinion; and if you think I’m not fit to be churchwarden you can find someone else better.’

‘Why don’t you make it up with your daughter, Griffith?’

‘Mind your own business!’

The carpenter had brooded and brooded over his sorrow till now his daughter’s name roused him to fury. He had even asserted a little authority over his wife, and she dared not mention her daughter before him. Daisy’s marriage had seemed like the consummation of her shame; it was vice riding triumphant in a golden chariot....

But the name of Lady Ously—Farrowham was hardly ever out of her mother’s lips; and she spent a good deal more money in her dress to keep up her dignity.

‘Why, that’s another new dress you’ve got on!’ said a neighbour.

‘Yes,’ said Mrs Griffith, complacently, ‘you see we’re in quite a different position now. I have to think of my daughter, Lady Ously—Farrowham. I don’t want her to be ashamed of her mother. I had such a nice long letter from her the other day. She’s so happy with Sir Herbert. And Sir Herbert’s so good to her.’ ...

‘Oh, I didn’t know you were.’ ...

‘Oh, yes! Of course she was a little—well, a little wild when she was a girl, but *I’ve* forgiven that. It’s her father won’t forgive her. He always was a hard man, and he never loved her as I did. She wants to come and stay with me, but he won’t let her. Isn’t it cruel of him? I should so like to have Lady Ously—Farrowham down here.’ ...

### XIII

But at last the crash came. To pay for the new things which Mrs Griffith felt needful to preserve her dignity, she had drawn on her husband’s savings in the bank; and he had been drawing on them himself for the last four years without his wife’s knowledge. For, as his business declined, he had been afraid to give her less money than usual, and every week had made up the sum by taking something out of the bank. George only earned a pound a week—he had been made clerk to a coal merchant by his mother, who thought that more genteel than carpentering—and after his marriage he had constantly borrowed from his parents. At last Mrs Griffith learnt to her dismay that their savings had come to an end completely. She had a talk with her husband, and found out that he was earning almost nothing. He talked of sending his only remaining workman away and moving into a smaller place. If he kept his one or two old customers, they might just manage to make both ends meet.

Mrs Griffith was burning with anger. She looked at her husband, sitting in front of her with his helpless look.

‘You fool!’ she said.

She thought of herself coming down in the world, living in a pokey little house away from the High Street, unable to buy new dresses, unnoticed by the chief people of Blackstable—she who had always held up her head with the best of them!

George and Edith came in, and she told them, hurling contemptuous sarcasms at her husband. He sat looking at them with his pained, unhappy eyes, while they stared back at him as if he were some despicable, noxious beast.

‘But why didn’t you say how things were going before, father?’ George asked him.

He shrugged his shoulders.

‘I didn’t like to,’ he said hoarsely; those cold, angry eyes crushed him; he felt the stupid, useless fool he saw they thought him.

‘I don’t know what’s to be done,’ said George.

His wife looked at old Griffith with her hard, grey eyes; the sharpness of her features, the firm, clear complexion, with all softness blown out of it by the east winds, expressed the coldest resolution.

‘Father must get Daisy to help; she’s got lots of money. She may do it for him.’

Old Griffith broke suddenly out of his apathy.

‘I’d sooner go to the workhouse; I’ll never touch a penny of hers!’

‘Now then, father,’ said Mrs Griffith, quickly understanding, ‘you drop that, you’ll have to.’

George at the same time got pen and paper and put them before the old man. They stood round him angrily. He stared at the paper; a look of horror came over his face.

‘Go on! don’t be a fool!’ said his wife. She dipped the pen in the ink and handed it to him.

Edith’s steel—grey eyes were fixed on him, coldly compelling.

‘Dear Daisy,’ she began.

‘Father always used to call her Daisy darling,’ said George; ‘he’d better put that so as to bring back old times.’

They talked of him strangely, as if he were absent or had not ears to hear.

‘Very well,’ replied Edith, and she began again; the old man wrote bewilderedly, as if he were asleep. ‘DAISY DARLING,— ... Forgive me!... I have been hard and cruel towards you.... On my knees I beg your forgiveness.... The business has gone wrong ... and I am ruined.... If you don’t help me ... we shall have the brokers in ... and have to go to the workhouse.... For God’s sake ... have mercy on me! You can’t let me starve.... I know I have sinned towards you.—Your broken—hearted ... FATHER.’

She read through the letter. ‘I think that’ll do; now the envelope,’ and she dictated the address.

When it was finished, Griffith looked at them with loathing, absolute loathing—but they paid no more attention to him. They arranged to send a telegram first, in case she should not open the letter,—

‘*Letter coming; for God’s sake open! In great distress.* —FATHER.’

George went out immediately to send the wire and post the letter.

### XIV

The letter was sent on a Tuesday, and on Thursday morning a telegram came from Daisy to say she was coming down. Mrs Griffith was highly agitated.

‘I’ll go and put on my silk dress,’ she said.

‘No, mother, that is a silly thing; be as shabby as you can.’

‘How’ll father be?’ asked George. ‘You’d better speak to him, Edith.’

He was called, the stranger in his own house.

‘Look here, father, Daisy’s coming this morning. Now, you’ll be civil, won’t you?’

‘I’m afraid he’ll go and spoil everything,’ said Mrs Griffith, anxiously.

At that moment there was a knock at the door. ‘It’s her!’

Griffith was pushed into the back room; Mrs Griffith hurriedly put on a ragged apron and went to the door.

‘Daisy!’ she cried, opening her arms. She embraced her daughter and pressed her to her voluminous bosom. ‘Oh, Daisy!’

Daisy accepted passively the tokens of affection, with a little sad smile. She tried not to be unsympathetic. Mrs Griffith led her daughter into the sitting—room where George and Edith were sitting. George was very white.

‘You don’t mean to say you walked here!’ said Mrs Griffith, as she shut the front door. ‘Fancy that, when you could have all the carriages in Blackstable to drive you about!’

‘Welcome to your home again,’ said George, with somewhat the air of a dissenting minister.

‘Oh, George!’ she said, with the same sad, half—ironical smile, allowing herself to be kissed.

‘Don’t you remember me?’ said Edith, coming forward. ‘I’m George’s wife; I used to be Edith Pollett.’

‘Oh, yes!’ Daisy put out her hand.

They all three looked at her, and the women noticed the elegance of her simple dress. She was no longer the merry girl they had known, but a tall, dignified woman, and her great blue eyes were very grave. They were rather afraid of her; but Mrs Griffith made an effort to be cordial and at the same time familiar.

‘Fancy you being a real lady!’ she said.

Daisy smiled again.

‘Where’s father?’ she asked.

‘In the next room.’ They moved towards the door and entered. Old Griffith rose as he saw his daughter, but he did not come towards her. She looked at him a moment, then turned to the others.

‘Please leave me alone with father for a few minutes.’

They did not want to, knowing that their presence would restrain him; but Daisy looked at them so firmly that they were obliged to obey. She closed the door behind them.

‘Father!’ she said, turning towards him.

‘They made me write the letter,’ he said hoarsely.

‘I thought so,’ she said. ‘Won’t you kiss me?’

He stepped back as if in replusion. She looked at him with her beautiful eyes full of tears.

‘I’m so sorry I’ve made you unhappy. But I’ve been unhappy too—oh, you don’t know what I’ve gone through!...Won’t you forgive me?’

‘I didn’t write the letter,’ he repeated hoarsely; ‘they stood over me and made me.’

Her lips trembled, but with an effort she commanded herself. They looked at one another steadily, it seemed for a very long time; in his eyes was the look of a hunted beast.... At last she turned away without saying anything more, and left him.

In the next room the three were anxiously waiting. She contemplated them a moment, and then, sitting down, asked about the affairs. They explained how things were.

‘I talked to my husband about it,’ she said; ‘he’s proposed to make you an allowance so that you can retire from business.’

‘Oh, that’s Sir Herbert all over,’ said Mrs Griffith, greasily—she knew nothing about him but his name!

‘How much do you think you could live on?’ asked Daisy.

Mrs Griffith looked at George and then at Edith. What should they ask? Edith and George exchanged a glance; they were in agonies lest Mrs Griffith should demand too little.

‘Well,’ said that lady, at last, with a little cough of uncertainty, ‘in our best years we used to make four pounds a week out of the business—didn’t we, George?’

‘Quite that!’ answered he and his wife, in a breath.

‘Then, shall I tell my husband that if he allows you five pounds a week you will be able to live comfortably?’

‘Oh, that’s very handsome!’ said Mrs Griffith.

‘Very well,’ said Daisy, getting up.

‘You’re not going?’ cried her mother.

‘Yes.’

‘Well, that is hard. After not seeing you all these years. But you know best, of course!’

‘There’s no train up to London for two hours yet,’ said George.

‘No; I want to take a walk through Blackstable.’

‘Oh, you’d better drive, in your position.’

‘I prefer to walk.’

‘Shall George come with you?’

‘I prefer to walk alone.’

Then Mrs Griffith again enveloped her daughter in her arms, and told her she had always loved her and that she was her only daughter; after which, Daisy allowed herself to be embraced by her brother and his wife. Finally they shut the door on her and watched her from the window walk slowly down the High Street.

‘If you’d asked it, I believe she’d have gone up to six quid a week,’ said George.

### XV

Daisy walked down the High Street slowly, looking at the houses she remembered, and her lips quivered a little; at every step smells blew across to her full of memories—the smell of a tannery, the blood smell of a butcher’s shop, the sea—odour from a shop of fishermen’s clothes.... At last she came on to the beach, and in the darkening November day she looked at the booths she knew so well, the boats drawn up for the winter, whose names she knew, whose owners she had known from her childhood; she noticed the new villas built in her absence. And she looked at the grey sea; a sob burst from her; but she was very strong, and at once she recovered herself. She turned back and slowly walked up the High Street again to the station. The lamps were lighted now, and the street looked as it had looked in her memory through the years; between the ’Green Dragon’ and the ’Duke of Kent’ were the same groups of men—farmers, townsfolk, fishermen—talking in the glare of the rival inns, and they stared at her curiously as she passed, a tall figure, closely veiled. She looked at the well—remembered shops, the stationery shop with its old—fashioned, fly—blown knick—knacks, the milliner’s with cheap, gaudy hats, the little tailor’s with his antiquated fashion plates. At last she came to the station, and sat in the waiting—room, her heart full of infinite sadness—the terrible sadness of the past....

And she could not shake it off in the train; she could only just keep back the tears.

At Victoria she took a cab and finally reached home. The servants said her husband was in his study.

‘Hulloa!’ he said. ‘I didn’t expect you to—night.’

‘I couldn’t stay; it was awful.’ Then she went up to him and looked into his eyes. ‘You do love me, Herbert, don’t you?’ she said, her voice suddenly breaking. ‘I want your love so badly.’

‘I love you with all my heart!’ he said, putting his arms round her.

But she could restrain herself no longer; the strong arms seemed to take away the rest of her strength, and she burst into tears.

‘I will try and be a good wife to you, Herbert,’ she said, as he kissed them away.