stone steps led from terrace to terrace. As he set his foot upon the middle one of the third flight he felt it quiver beneath him. "Is this made ground?" he asked, a little anxiously. Marcella laughed back: "Yes! the Lord made it—with a very little help from my grandpa. This hillside was in what we country folks call benches—he flattened the benches a little, filled in new places, and turfed over the slopes, so they should not wash. At least, he began to do it—Uncle-Major has followed the pattern set him. We are mighty proud of our orchards, of the Hawk's Nest peaches. It is a brand that always commands the top of the market. You see nobody can cultivate anything quite so high up, because nobody has got just such another hillside to spreads in a big half moon. There are seventy-five acres in it, and we need not go higher. The earliest, truest, honestest gentleman, went to market three months back. Look down those rows, though, and tell me if New York can show anything more beautiful?"

"If it can, I have not seen it," Archer said, letting his eyes shift quickly and covertly from the laden trees to her face. Yet the trees were worth anybody's looking at. Through the deep green of healthy leaves, still rich and oily of surface in spite of the rain, there showed blushish rounds, and faintly yellow ones, and others of deep, glowing scarlet. The bough[illegible] downward. Their tips were muddy, but scarcely one was broken. Along the curving edge of each terrace grape vines stood in double rank, one inside, one outside a long wire trellis. Now the trellis was a wall of green stems and leaves and purple and tawny clusters. Below were the pear trees, laden with green and russet, and lowest of all a solid terrace of grapes. The fine essence of growth and ripeness hung and hovered in the mist that rose and curled about in defiance of the splashing rain.

"I am in love—with all I have seen here," Archer went on. It is a new world to me. I must be I have a sort of inherited aptness for it. I can never be grateful enough to Fate—and the storm."

"I love the rain so much it had to be good to me," Marcella said, saucily. "Only think how I should have got through this without you! You see how things go—it is whist, whist from breakfast to bedtime. And I hate whist, even if five could play. If you had not been here to entertain me I might have been forced to come up here and play scare-crow all day and every day."

"To escape—what, ennui or Mr. Blight?" Archer asked, laughing. Marcella looked at him severely. "I hate tautology," she[illegible]

"You[illegible] that ennui and Blight are synonyms?" Archer said. "Consider, my dear young lady! He has confided to me that he will one day have a quarter of a million—if only he marries to please his mother."

"What does that signify to me? I don't please her," Marcella answered, affecting to put her hand to her eyes. "Such good things of this world are clearly not for me. I'm predestined to take root here, like one of these trees—and live till I die."

"I don't believe any of them die," Archer protested. Marcella looked pensive. "I hate to admit it," she said, "but you are nearly right. There is one tree that dies. It has been planted over [illegible]. I mean trees of all sorts have been set in one particular place, and they always die after a year or two, though there seems to be nothing the matter. I wonder if——" she checked herself and flushed deeply. The thought had shot through her mind that this fated spot was perhaps the one from which her uncle's gold had been stolen.

"I have a story to tell Major Clayton. Will you come to-night and listen?" she asked, as they set their faces houseward. Marcella nodded. "If the rest are not to hear," she said. "One can endure even a bad story, if it is only exclusive."

"Mr. Blight, at least, will not be there," Archer said, his eyes twinkling. Marcella laughed tranquilly. "If you break up the rubber he is sure to propose to Sweet Alyssum," she said. "Oh, she is worlds too good for him, but she likes his mother and her expectations. I gave Uncle-Major a hint this morning—that is, I suppose, the reason he has time to listen to you."

All day the storm strengthened. It raged and roared its wildest toward nine o'clock that night, as Major Clayton sat with Marcella at his elbow, listening to his young guest. "All I shall say of my family," young Archer began, "is that my mother is Southern too—she was one of the Baltimore Teackles. I was born, indeed, in Baltimore, but all my memories are of life in New York. You know my father, sir. I don't need to tell you what he is—the bravest, truest, honestest gentleman, modest and faithful. The wonder to me is that he has made a living in that big town. Of course he has never made a fortune. He's in a bank there—not high up in it, but where he gets decent pay. He aimed to give me a college training. When I was twelve mother had a long illness. She had to go away for a year, or die. I heard the Governor tell her so. She looked at him with the sweetest smile and shook her head, saying, 'It would take all we have been saving for our boy's education.' I—but never mind! She went and came back well. Then I said to the Governor, 'I'm going in business, sir—didn't ask, just told him. He looked a little troubled, but when he found I was only for a big, clean-dealing firm, he patted my head and [illegible] nights with my books.

"I studied them pretty hard, but the[illegible] harder. Not to tire you, when I was twenty-[illegible] me a junior partnership. That was five [illegible] I take it—preferred to go on the street or myself. The firm offered me money—an [illegible], but cautious, tremendously cautious until, when I took it, I could feel I was risking only my own. Then I [illegible] big deals until just this year I jumped in [illegible] worth—every cent—on copper. A month back I figured my profits and I could keep my original stake yet take out fifty thousand dollars. I have been finding out, too, all I [illegible] about the Governor. Mother let me know the truth—he had the old Southern land hunger. It was the grief of his life that he had had to part with the family plantation. That was why he had not talked about it—it hurt too bad.

"Then I found out, also, by the luckiest chance, that Grayrock, his old home, could be bought back. It was bought back in a wink—but the Governor does not know it yet. I was on my way [illegible] water stopped me. From the county town I telegraphed [illegible] I am here and need you. Come at once. Bring mother [illegible] they will get here to-morrow at the latest. I must meet them, rain or shine. I mean to establish them here, to put the rest of that fifty thousand in trust for them—then——"

He broke off short, [illegible] for the first time losing its sharp evenness. After [illegible]'s pause he went on: "Then I said to myself, I will go back to the street, and play for all that is in the game. Now, [illegible] well! The whole world has changed since I—since I met Marcella. I want her for my wife, Major, much more than I want a fortune."

Marcella's eyes answered him. With a laugh that was half a sob he caught her in his arms. Major Clayton got up and took the girl from his hold, saying: "If you please, Mr. Archer, we will consider that—that you have not spoken, until you see and consult with your father."

A minute later he was alone listening to the storm's fury without in the [illegible] wrapped in rumination. He thought he understood everything now. Archer had not meant to steal—he had taken the hidden

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