

# 1

'THERE is a man here, miss, asking for your uncle,' said Rose.  
And stood breathing.

'What man?' asked the young woman, who was engaged upon some embroidery of a difficult nature, at which she was now forced to look more closely, holding the little frame to the light. 'Or is it perhaps a gentleman?'

'I do not know,' said the servant. 'It is a kind of foreign man.'

Something had made this woman monotonous. Her big breasts moved dully as she spoke, or she would stand, and the weight of her silences impressed itself on strangers. If the more sensitive amongst those she served or addressed failed to look at Rose, it was because her manner seemed to accuse the conscience, or it could have been, more simply, that they were embarrassed by her harelip.

'A foreigner?' said her mistress, and her Sunday dress sighed. 'It can only be the German.'

It was now the young woman's duty to give some order. In the end she would perform that duty with authority and distinction, but she did always hesitate at first. She would seldom have come out of herself for choice, for she was happiest shut with her own thoughts, and such was the texture of her marble, few people ever guessed at these.

'What will I do with this German gentleman?' asked the harelip, which moved most fearfully.

The flawless girl did not notice, however. She had been brought up with care, and preferred, also, to avoid an expression of longing in her servant's eyes. She frowned rather formally.

'We cannot expect Uncle for at least another hour,' she said. 'I doubt whether they have reached the sermon.'

That strange, foreign men should come on a Sunday when she herself had ventured on a headache was quite exasperating.

'I can put the gentleman in your uncle's study room. No one ever goes in there,' said the servant. 'Except, there is no knowing, he could lay his hands on something.'