

# Henry Northcote (IA henrynorthcote00snairich).pdf/371



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## XXXVII

### INDELIBLE EVIDENCE

For some time Northcote stood holding her hand and looking down into her eyes. A sense of deep wonder was percolating slowly to every part of his being. What a haven was here to embrace when the frail bark of his nature had been flung, like the cockle-shell that it was, upon the crest of tempestuous and multitudinous seas. How blind and undeveloped he had been not to have understood this before! From what ignominy could this anchorage have saved him! It would not have been necessary to founder upon the shoals had he been aware of this harbor that would have been so willing to embrace him. He was already broken into pieces; and those tears which appeared to suffuse his eyes with such facility and to suffuse hers with such a painful reluctance were falling from him.

"You must ignore that unmannerly attack in the *Age*," she said in a stern voice which yet was full of redress. "The enemies of the friendless have no kingdom into which they can enter. A few years hence, when you are a rich and honored man, you will forgive them for having once stabbed you."

The silence which followed her words was broken by the hard and intense breathing of the figure that clasped her.

"There is one thing I shall ask of you," said



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