

and glasses, drew up two great chairs that lodged us lovingly like the embracing arms of a mother—and we settled ourselves for a long intimate talk.

And how we talked! Of all things, vague and tangible, the ideal and the real, the rush of action and the calm of contemplation; but of that which lay heavily on our hearts we gave no utterance. . . . A profound pause such as happens only when the atmosphere is surcharged with intensest sympathy; a pause, when the finger of one is laid upon the heart throbs of the other—such a pause fell upon us. It was a supreme moment, fathomless and solemn. We heard the ticking of our watches, the dull rumble of life in the street. The Professor's kind eyes rested on mine. . . . "Robert is dead," he said, "you know it. I feel that you do."

"Yes," I answered, "tell me of his life. We drifted apart after his marriage. I cannot think of him as dead; so rarely equipped was he in mind and character, so buoyant and brilliant."

"Ah," sighed the Professor, "Robert Colton died in the flesh to-day, but Robert Colton died in the spirit just nine years ago."

"What do you mean?" I gasped.

"I mean that in one life there is more than one death. Believe me, there are diseases of the spirit, more acute, more subtle, more insidious, more impossible of help than all the ills of mortal flesh. Have you never heard of a starved soul dying within a living body? Colton, to diagnose him psychologically, died of canker of the soul. I know, I saw it in his face. He had the look of a thirsty man seeing water always, tasting it never. That look of unsatisfied, gnawing unrest, of secret consuming fever. A breathing body bearing in its frame the corpse of a soul. He was that uncanny thing, a haunted human house."

"Langley, you must tell me all. I cannot follow you. The conditions of his life seemed perfectly adjusted to the rounding of a brilliant literary career. Talented, imbued with ambitious energy, and rich beyond all

thought of material responsibilities, what was the canker?"

"My boy," he answered, "it's a long story, the story of a life. I know it in all its complexities. Its opening promise and closing chaos. It is infinitely sad. The desperate conflict of the Ego: the spiritual defeated, yet ever combating the material. The deadly encroachment of environment that by persistent intrusion overpowers the most exalted aims and slays the most ardent hopes. Fatalists call it the tyranny of circumstances, and in Colton's case we see its despotism."

"Why this discord? I don't see how Colton got into the wrong niche. We expected splendid work from his pen; yet I never heard of him, except casually, as an ordinarily successful man."

"That is just it. He carved his special niche carefully enough, but the arm of Destiny swooped down and lifted him bodily out of it. Like St. Paul, he was unhorsed."

The Professor settled himself more comfortably in his chair, and began his story.

"You remember," he said, "that at college Colton ranked as a man of fine mentality, possessing distinct literary ability with the half-philosophical, half-poetical temperament that accompanies it. Endowed with sound literary judgment and a critical faculty, which, if carefully nurtured, would have placed him among the foremost essayists of our time. His earliest writings showed the finish of a mind not immature; they were distinguished by a style lucid, brilliant and perfectly polished. In a word, I detected the glowing promise of a Walter Pater. His prose gemmed with flashes of poetic fancy, his poems dowered with abundant thought. I watched his unfolding with the pride of a father, and rejoiced that he would be permitted 'to sing to the Muses and let the world go by.' Here is one, thought I, who may sit in velvet ease and gently woo his Art, who may live on a purely ideal plane free from the sickening concerns and sordid cares of life, who may give himself up to the luxurious indulgence of his inclination."

"What happened?" I asked. "He was