

her chance of escape, for the lemonade bearer blocked up the doorway, and she found it impossible to be seen, feeling her husband's and Geraldine's presence like a culprit, trembling and ashamed.

The young man looked carelessly in, and seeing the dim recess occupied by Mr. and not Mrs. Grey turned abruptly away, glad no doubt to go to his prospective partner.

Caroline's pulse seemed to cover all other sound for a moment; the lights grew dim and faded, but her slender hand fastened with a grip that saved her from falling on to the palm, under which she stood; then flickering lights came back from the darkness, the strains of "The Blue Danube" and the sharper "swi-ssh" along the sands. Then her husband's voice subdued but earnest:

"I could not lose this opportunity of asking you—if indeed you have granted me a thought—to forgive what has seemed discourtesy, if not churlishness——"

Geraldine stopped him with a gesture. She had seated herself in the full light of a lamp suspended above her. Its amber glow shone on the dark hair and the milk-white skin, and shimmered over the gleaming satin of her gown with a soft warm radiance. Howard stood beside her, bending forward slightly, a solicitude in eyes and voice new to Caroline. By that strange sympathy which enabled her to feel ever with her husband apart from personal experience, she resented the slight imperious gesture that cut short his speech.

"Please no platitudes. You expressed your opinion when we first met—it was that geniuses wear better at a distance. I entirely acquiesce."

She turned her eyes to his with a careless smile, but Caroline saw them change expression.

"You have been ill?" she asked, "or have you overworked?"

"Neither," he answered, but his brows were drawn as if in pain; he avoided the eyes upon his face. "At least," he added hurriedly, "not physically ill—there are wearinesses not of the flesh——"

"I am one of them!" Caroline's thought

interjected. His smile was worse to see than woman's tears.

A slight pause followed his words. Geraldine removed her gaze, the white lids fell over the dark eyes, she unfurled her fan and swayed its feathers gently backward and forward.

"Fame has its penalties," she said in even tones. She held him just where he had placed himself—leagues away.

His face contracted. He drew himself up slightly. Caroline's hands, locked tightly together, she trembled for his conflict.

"True," he answered huskily, after a moment's speaking silence, "and its triumphs." He bowed with meaning that could not be mistaken.

There was another pause filled with music, then Geraldine's voice talking of Melbourne, of the people, of the party to-night. There was no suggestion in her words of comradeship, anything of a confidential past, yet Caroline knew that she was piqued, and that he was shaken by some emotion that was fighting with his will for mastery. From her dark shelter she watched him, forgetful of her position. If it were the execution of all her hope in him, all pride or trust in his manhood, she would see the act to its close. The overpowering desire to know the worst mastered her first instinct to save him humiliation. The hint of some regret was in his voice when he next spoke.

"Miss Ward," he said, "will you let me say to you—it is scarcely likely that we shall meet again, as you sail for England so soon—that I have been among the humblest admirers of your art? No, don't interrupt me! I have not offered you the trivialities, the commonplaces of courtesy—in my mind you were removed from triviality——"

The pause and the music again, the sigh on the shore. Some words trembled on his lips, but he substituted others.

"The featureless demonstrations of a religion are not religion. Am I right?"

How would she answer him? How meet his clumsy effort to tell her, and yet not tell her that she was his faith, a goddess to