

She singled him out presently by a glance and tone that were specially for him.

"Won't you let me give you some tea, Mr. Grey?"

He crossed to her instantly. How exquisite of her! he thought, with a rush of that gratitude every large-hearted man feels for the favours of the woman he loves. How exquisite to put him in touch with that past time! He bent down to take the cup from her hand with a movement of almost worship. He was no longer quite contemptible in his own eyes since she coupled him with a remembered episode. He shared that memory with her alone—their tea together at Pine Mill. She meant him to recollect, he knew. That day she had belonged to him; her beauty, her intellect, her womanly grace, he had held her thought, dominated her. He had crushed memory of her, denied her right, put the temptation of her presence sternly on one side for duty's sake—for his wife's sake—and his wife had mocked his conception of man's love, laughed at his hunger and thirst for affection!

Well, that one day had been his, at least. Let him be grateful for it. It had been given him by a woman whom many worshipped—it had been adorable of her just to be a woman to him alone, and not Geraldine Ward, who belonged to the world.

His face grew soft as he looked at her. For a time he had lost his bearings—he would not lose them again. In his new mood he read new meaning into the circumstance: the little court about her did not exclude him—he had a place none of these had had. She was the artist to them—to him she had been the woman.

He surprised Geraldine by his sudden animation. Again she was interested, charmed, gratified by his power to dominate. A woman likes to know that the man who holds her thoughts can rule others—likes better to see that the man, who is humble to her, commands humility from others.

In the hour that followed Howard held attention, then when her pride in him was at its height, when she expected momentarily

to be alone with him, he left her with her last remaining guest.

At this hour Melbourne was luxurious and at ease. Carriages rumbled along the broad road with fur-clad occupants hastening home to dine, cabs and trams were invitingly near, but Howard was in no haste to get out to Toorak. He turned into Collins Street, and walked at a brisk pace towards the Treasury Gardens. The stir and life of the streets, the cool clear air revived and inspirited him after the enervation of the last twenty-four hours. His old resistance was coming to the fore; his mouth took on its most dogged expression; he looked so hard that several beggars on the pavement were astonished when the least likely man of the hurrying stream of men and women stopped to tender unsolicited alms.

"Poor defeated devils!" he thought. Defeat was at all times more pitiable to him than death; it was especially painful to contemplate just now.

He turned into the gardens out of the noise of the traffic. He wanted to be alone to think, and walked along the avenue of elms, between the winter branches of which the clear frosty sky shone with silver stars. The white statues on either side of the path, gods and goddesses of myth gleamed whitely among the trees; broken patches of light between the tracery of leaves linked him with the city beyond, else he was alone save for the hurried contact of a passer-by. He walked to the bridge, and stood looking down into the quiet water flowing beneath as though he sought some solution in its depths. He tried deliberately to face himself, to face the future. At all costs he determined Caroline must not suffer. Any martyrdom must be endured by himself first.

What was to be done? the point was this. It was too late to contemplate what might have been done. His irritation had died, defiance slain by a word of kindness. He stretched out his hand yearningly to the vision of his mind, which possessed the best he had to give. Every line, every curve of Geraldine's figure stood out distinctly to