

himself as a pioneer to the race, and he himself wanted considerable bolstering.

Nature had, in fact, endowed him with large protective faculty, implanted in him the instinct of the husband and father; these instincts he had denied and starved, and Nature has an implacable way of taking revenge. The truth which he had denied to himself so long seemed impossible now of belief—a whole-souled invincible love, creating its reality among unrealities.

He took the way beside the river. It was not in full flood, for there had been no rain to melt its snow source; its song was subdued, and the green ferns fringing its rim dabbled in its waters confidently, the white spray where it leapt over the boulders rose like the smoke from incense. Howard noticed these things, for Caroline had taught him observation. It would have been very good to have had her beside him on this live morning in her old spirit of comradeship, which he had missed more than he had missed anything in his life except—— He stooped to raise a stone from the crushed heads of a tuft of wild flowers that were getting decidedly the worst of it in a trial of strength. A passionless memory forbade him to pursue that particular line of thought, but a succession of pictures presented to him were of pessimistic hue.

And this happiness of the world, whence came it?—from faith which led to light and force? Who knew whether this love, against which he had fought, which he had repressed, might not have led to the harmony of life? He had been a spendthrift of his own manhood without real joy. The tragedy of his loneliness rose as a harsh savage menace—the very flowers of the field grew in company; the insects swarming under the stones were in colonies; the mated birds were singing from the trees—he only in all that matchless space was alone.

It was not good for man to be alone! Existence lost its best meaning, lost utility. He had lost the mastery of himself; his execution had become spasmodic. How could he produce an impression of beauty

and harmony when his fibre and force were consumed by this fever of unrest?

He found himself on the spot where he had picked up Frank's cap. He rehearsed again the reasons why men with irreparable dishonour—outlaws from hope, for whom there is no happiness—should not fling themselves into oblivion and be done with it, and cry "quits" once for all. The recurring discord of life, its exaggeration, its lurid combinations, its strained, spasmodic passions, were these, after all, worth the keeping?

He stooped for a stone, and dropped it into the pool. With set mouth and gloomy half-shut eyes, he watched the circles spread. To his excited imagination the ripples were made by the escaping breath of a man—a human soul was being choked out of existence down among the river weeds. Into his moment of madness there came the rustle as of a woman's skirts trailing over the grass.

He turned sharply and stood speechless with amazement, his right hand clutching a stone.

"I saw you from the distance. I know I could not be mistaken, and have recovered from my surprise," said Geraldine.

She looked fresh and fragrant, the very embodiment of womanly charm and beauty. The light of the morning was in her eyes, its flush on her cheeks. Her perfect mouth curved in a smile, the dusky tendrils of her hair curled and waved under her hat with the red roses.

"Why are you here?" he demanded almost sternly. It seemed to him that she was an apparition come to lure him from oblivion, that her beauty was illusion, her smile mockery.

But her smile faded, her eyes grew troubled as they rested on his ravaged face. He threw away the stone, and came a step from the brink. As though remembering, he lifted his hat, and she saw that the grey had spread from his temples and powdered his head.

"I am staying at the Mill," she said, with the resumption of her earlier tone of