

DISJECTA MEMBRA POETAE

with her. It was the correct thing, and therefore it was not a little surprising that Lucia did not do it. An expression of disapproval passed over his pale, fastidious face.

"Father won't mind," she said.

"No, but I should." He said it in a tone which was meant to settle the question.

She sat still, turning over the pages of the manuscript which she had again taken on her lap.

"I suppose he is very dreadful. Still, I think we ought to do something for him."

"And what would you propose to do?"

There was an irritating smile on her cousin's face. He was thinking, "So she wants to patronize him, does she?"

He did not say what he thought; with Lucia that was unnecessary, for she always knew. He only said, "I don't exactly see you playing Beatrice to his Dante."

Lucia coloured, and Horace felt that he had been right. The Hardens had always been patronizing; his mother and sister were the most superbly patronizing women he knew. And Rickman might or might not be a great man, but Lucia, even at three and twenty, was a great lady in her way. Why shouldn't she patronize him, if she liked? And he smiled again more irritatingly than ever. Nobody could be more irritating than this Oxford don when he gave his mind to it.

"Lucy—if you only knew him, I don't think you'd suggest my bringing him down here."

He was smiling still, while his imagination dallied with the monstrous vision.

"I wouldn't have suggested it," she said coldly, "if I hadn't thought you'd like it."

Horace felt a little ashamed of himself. He knew he had only to think about Lucia in her presence to change the colour on her cheeks, and his last thought had left a stain there like the mark of a blow. Never had he known any woman so sensitive as his cousin Lucia.

"So I should like it, dear, if it were possible, or rather if he were not impossible. His manners have not that repose which distinguishes his *Helen*. Really, for two and twenty, he is marvellously restrained."