

"I wish your way didn't mean more suffering—innocent suffering."

He shook his fair head stubbornly.

"Most suffering is innocent. In any case, we've no choice. Some one's got to bear the brunt for the sake of the rest. It's damnably cruel, but that's the way of it—and it would be idiotic to put the burden on those who would feel it most." He was silent, watching her half-averted face. "You think that cowardly. But it's not cowardice. Look here, if you knew that you could save thousands by your own death—a hideous, lingering death, if you like—wouldn't you be glad to die?"

She started a little. A deep colour crept into her cheeks. She did not answer immediately. Her eyes, fixed intently on his face, were filled with a kind of surprise.

"Yes—of course."

"Of course. So would I. So would ninety-nine people out of a hundred. We're a far finer lot than we know."

"Perhaps we just say things like that," she said uneasily.

"Some of us have proved it," he retorted. "You or I may prove it to-morrow."

She did not answer. The express, feeling its way through the vast web of intersecting lines, ran proudly into the glare and bustle of the station. The neighbouring carriage disgorged a confusion of flurried passengers and unwieldy baggage into the corridor, where they were rescued a minute later by taciturn, omnipotent gentlemen in corduroy.

But the old lady sat quietly in her corner. As the man got up he glanced at her, and in that second she received an impression of intense, light-coloured eyes, fiery and yet aloof and preoccupied in their expression. She had the feeling that, though they looked at her, they did not really see her—that their vision was turned inwards on something of enduring and supreme significance. They were not pleasing. Their intensity was too much a part of the uncompromising, unconciliatory features. Even the fine, dominating brow repelled rather than attracted by its declaration of unbendable independence. It was nearly a brutal face. But the mouth saved him. The mouth, indeed, was in the nature of a betrayal, revealing an ability to suffer which the rest of the face stubbornly denied.

So much the old lady gathered in that second. Then her