

"But do two people ever have exactly the same viewpoint? Don't we always have to make allowance for the difference in temperament?" She was suddenly anxious.

"You are begging the question, which is: Do these people misunderstand what you are doing for them?"

"Well, do they?"

"Yes."

"Oh!" she cried out. The truth hurt more than he imagined it would. "And I was innocent. In the beginning I wanted to please you, after—because I saw their terrible need." She was trying to defend her position, to set herself right in his eyes.

"Couldn't you do it without letting them know that you saw their ignorance?"

"What have I done?" Now she was more than anxious; she was afraid.

"How do you think it will help Nora Torby to let her hair curl and to wear becoming clothes?"

"Ah, I am beginning to see. It is my teaching that the body is a possession to be cared for, that our personal appearance affects our mode of thought, which is at fault."

"Do you know Jim Torby?"

"I have seen him, a grim, prematurely aged man, who looks as if the food of the world had given him indigestion."

"He is one of the few bigoted men in the neighborhood, but his zeal is so intense that his neighbors respect and look up to him. The others might let you do for their daughters unquestioningly, but Torby is of another way of thinking. He has a Puritanical strain that makes him despise physical attractiveness, and see in it only a snare set by the Evil One. Were it not for Nora's mother, he would have the child wear her hair cropped close like a boy's."

"And I have tried to awaken her vanity—she has such pretty hair! Of course he won't let her have the sewing machine. Will he take her out of my class?"

"So he says now, but if you drop these revolutionary teachings till the girls are fit to receive them, she may come back. I don't want you to offend Jim; in his rude way he is a power, and his stand may influence others."

"He is quite honest in his opinions?"

"I have found him so. His character is uncompromising, narrow but sincere. I don't believe he'd lie under any circumstances."

Loring moved restlessly. "Is a lie the

greatest sin in the world? Aren't there times when it is not only pardonable but justifiable? 'Polite' society fictions?"

"No, a plain lie, carefully thought out and nurtured to perfection."

"Such a lie is bound to corrupt the originator. Truth is nature's friend; a lie is her enemy."

"Beautifully said; I wonder if you really mean it? I beg pardon—I did not intend to be rude—but you have lived in the world, you know men and women of the world. Haven't you ever known of a circumstance when the truth would do more harm than the most flagrant lie?"

Her warmth betrayed a deeper interest in the question than idle argument. Hoffman knew she was asking because she had the knowledge of some such lie. Why had it been told—why nurtured? Was she trying to find some excuse for herself, or for another? It was not Jim Torby's attitude in the matter that made her clench her hands nervously, that made her lips tremble; it was something nearer. Hoffman had always been a student of human nature, and from the beginning he knew that this woman had gone through some grave experience. She spoke freely of herself, but had told little, clothing her confidence in generalities. He was puzzled for an answer.

"That is sophistry. The truth is not always pretty, but is clean; and we must purge our souls of lies before we can hold up our heads and look God in the face."

But Loring did not hold up her head. She let in sink lower when he had gone, while her shoulders drooped in dejection. She wondered miserably what Hoffman would say if she opened her heart to him. She confessed that she was about to dedicate the rest of her life to a lie. Was he right—would it corrupt her little by little, till she could no longer distinguish things fairly? Would it be better to say: "My child has no father that he can claim" than to shroud his parentage in her first husband's memory?

She dared not put him to the test now—he looked too sad, too weary; but she suddenly became conscious that she could not keep him in ignorance as she had planned. It seemed as if it had become his right to know. Suppose, knowing, he should withdraw his friendship from her and send her back to the city she had come to loathe? If he did, she could not protest; she had concealed the truth from him, and though he might not judge her harshly, he would judge her firmly. The desire to confide

in a part of the burden that his soul by confession, grew; two later, as she stood by the window watching the sun sink slowly behind the mountain tops, she made up her mind to tell him. She was lonely; she needed intellectual companionship; she wanted a man's virile mentality to brace her; she must wipe the page between them so that in future they could

beginning down to Dr. Hoffman's she had seen Dr. Hoffman's insight had warned him of the approaching crisis, and he was not surprised when Loring's knock sounded at his door. She came in, her cheeks flushed, her eyes dark with excitement. The wind had blown little wisps of hair under her fur cap, and she put her hands to smooth her disordered hair. She looked young, almost girlish, standing in front of the small mirror between the windows, but she saw that it was nervousness, not youth, that kept her fussing over her ap-

"I look less like a wild woman," she said, turning to face him.

She pushed forward a chair, and she sat in it gratefully. She was suddenly physically as well as morally, for when she sat in his room she had not realized the strain of her long struggle. It was a relief to get the matter out between them. Her beginning was abrupt.

"You have taught me to strengthen my will; you have taught me to exercise my judgment. Now, what will you do for me? I have done wrong, according to your code; I have been a brigand in love, and I am not repentant—I am only bearing my false burden alone." "I think it will make things easier if you confide in me?"

"So I am going to tell you the whole story of a woman who led a colorless life until a certain point. Then chance threw her into a man's happiness into her path, and she opened her arms to it."

IX.

A long time after she had finished her story, Loring sat and stared into the fire, waiting for Hoffman's verdict.

When he told her her tale had been a great sur-

prise. He had been sure that it was no ordinary trouble which drove her to him; he had grasped the fact that she had never

loved her husband, and that perhaps some other man's image filled her heart; but that, being legally married to the father of her child, she could plan such an elaborate scheme of deception for his sake was astounding. Here was an example of that rare love that gives all, even to renunciation. Having convinced herself that an establishment of her claim would lead to his disgrace, she had resolved upon a sacrifice that would keep his name stainless. Hoffman saw that she gloried in her ability to give this supreme test of her love. "Not what I want, but what is best for him," she said, and her face softened as she said it. She would devote the rest of her life to the little one whose coming was to be her recompense. Ah, yes, she suffered now, but surely in time her pain would be less, and Redding's memory would become a gentle sorrow, not an ache.

The question of Agnes—whether it was fair to her to let her occupy a position not legally hers, never occurred to Loring, though it did to Hoffman—not only then, but later, when the tangled lives of the three crossed again. But it was not counsel she asked for; it was sympathy. She had confessed, not because she felt in need of advice, but because her secret cast a shadow of restraint over the most perfect friendship of her life, and before the hour of her trial came she wished to clear up the mystery between them. Ethically, he might disapprove of her action, might say it was quixotic, but in his heart he would understand, for this was the sort of a thing he himself was capable of. As she revealed more and more of her inmost thought, as she let him peer into the dim recess where she had stored her romance, he saw the heart hunger of the woman, and realized that if she had adopted a predatory course in satisfying an underlying need of her nature, it was because that nature was an unusual one. The question in her eyes was not: "What do you think of my story?" but "Will you take your friendship from me because I am living that thing which you abhor, a lie?" And it was this appeal which he answered. When he spoke it was not to criticise, but to give her the sympathy she craved. Gravely he counseled her to let her grief add to her spiritual nature. His large charity made him pity her for the false situation she was creating for herself; he foresaw that trouble would come of it sooner or later, and he set himself to the task of preparing her to meet it.

"You won't let this make any differ-