

She stops, her tale ended, sighing with the inexpressible relief of that lifted load. Speech from him now would be no interruption—would be kindly, rather, and welcome. Yet he still stares blankly before him. Why has she told him that painful tale? Is it that he may carry a more lenient judgment of her through the rest of his life—that life to be finally severed from hers? Or is it with some hope that that told tale may keep him for ever beside her? She does not love him. She loves Byng. But, as he has often told himself, she is not of the stuff of which great constancies are made. And, since Byng has forsaken her, whom has this pliant creature, that nature made so clinging and circumstances so lonely, left to throw her tendrils round, except him? She does not love him, and yet in the depth of his heart he knows that, if he wished it, he could make her love him. Shall he wish it? Shall he stay—stay to have those exquisite eyes, tear-washed, and yet laughing, watching for his lightest wish; that tripping step keeping time to his up the hills and through the valleys of life; that delicate sympathy, soaring with his highest thoughts, and yet playing with his lightest fancies? Shall he?

Elizabeth is looking down upon the asphodels, stooping to stroke, as if it were a sentient thing, a great plummy plant, like a sort of glorified fennel, out of whose fluthery breast a puissant sheath rises, from which an unfamiliar flower is pushing. What a fascination there is in this alien vegetation, in which every shut calyx holds a delightful secret!

Shall he? For himself, he believes her story implicitly, feeling, indeed, with a shock of mixed surprise and remorse, what a past want of faith in her is evidenced by his unspeakable relief at its being no worse a one. But who else will believe it? And the more penetratingly sweet, the more poignantly dear she is to him, the sharper to him will be the agony of the eye averted from her, the suspicious whisper,