

A SKETCH OF A TEMPERAMENT

am satisfactory now—to you who think beauty vain. The rest of me—and it is a good deal—lies on my dressing-table at home. I shall never put it on again—never!’

But she was a woman; and her lips quivered, and there was a tear in her eye, as she exposed the ruthless treatment to which she had subjected herself. The cruel morning rays—as with Jocelyn under Avice’s scrutiny—showed in their full bareness, unenriched by addition, undisguised by the arts of colour and shade, the thin remains of what had once been Marcia’s majestic bloom. She stood the image and superscription of Age—an old woman, pale and shrivelled, her forehead ploughed, her cheek hollow, her hair white as snow. To this the face he once kissed had been brought by the raspings, chisellings, scourgings, bakings, freezings of forty invidious years—by the thinkings of more than half a lifetime.

‘I am sorry if I shock you,’ she went on huskily but firmly, as he did not speak. ‘But the moth eats the garment somewhat in such an interval.’

‘Yes—yes! . . . Marcia, you are a brave woman. You have the courage of the great