

and more betrayal of the great share she whom he addressed had personally in his visible chagrin. Visible in the restless movement of his hand about his face. And audible in the way he crushed his words out, cut them short on their last letter, threw them behind him: "Listen to me, and believe what I say. I count the play not worth completion now. With you the life goes out of it. It has become nothing for me." Then his voice fell, and whatever it had of petulance settled down to determination. "As for what is written of the play, I tell you plainly, I shall destroy it. At least, it shall never be acted by anyone else. . . . Stop one minute, and let me finish. I have not a word or a thought of blame for you, Judith Arkroyd. It was a mad idea—the whole thing! Now I see plainly that it never could have been. Let us forget it—all!"

The face that he spoke to was none the less beautiful that its owner was frightened at his vehemence. It continued to be—to this fool of a man who had not the courage to run away from it, but who was not at liberty to love it—the face of six months ago that had been growing on him ever since. He would almost have been thankful—though he would not confess it to himself—for visible flaws in it; a squint, a twist, an artificial tooth or two betraying their extraction, or their predecessors'. A wig would have spelt salvation, as the Press puts it.

As for Judith, she was perfectly alive, by now, to the subintents of meaning woven into Challis's speech, for the easement of a feeling he could neither tell nor conceal. "Let us forget it all!" was so overtense in emphasis, if referring only to a disappointment about a part in a play, that it scarcely left room for an equable society response. Her tone of voice had to keep at bay any hint of a meaning that might have betrayed both into a recognition of the precipice they were so close to. As might have been expected, she lost her presence of mind, and overdid it. "I can't see any occasion for hysterics about it," said she. "Of course, I am awfully sorry, and all that sort of thing. But we live in a world, after all! And I suppose one must sometimes accommodate one's views to the necessities of Society. . . . Oh dear!—these people are quite close." She referred to their near approach to the assembled tea-