

reached to the table beside the fireplace and took a book that was lying there. He had to get the film from his eyes and the sob out of his throat before he could think of going to rest. He opened it at random ; it was a popular volume of a favorite English historian's. He had read it before and recalled its familiar passages with grateful pleasure. Suddenly he came upon one so pertinent to the very situation he was in that he read it with eyes dilated and pulses throbbing. Was it by chance this curious coincidence occurred? These were the lines he read :

"It is remarkable that the Jews, who of the three great nations of antiquity certainly produced in history and poetry the smallest number of illustrious women, should have furnished the world with its supreme female ideal ; and it is also a striking illustration of the qualities which prove most attractive in woman, that one of whom we know nothing, except her gentleness and her sorrow, should have exercised a magnetic power upon the world incomparably greater than was exercised by the most majestic female patriots of Paganism." *

Mr. Walton sat petrified, and stared over the open book into the fire before him. Clearly, some supernatural influence had directed him to this. A moment ago he was torturing himself with the, to him, vital problem : Which of the two types so strikingly represented by Miss Evelyn and Miss Marcia should best supply what was wanting in his life? And when all was said he was inclined to think the bright, vivacious, careless girl was the surer choice to make. A moment ago he had all but resolved to end all doubt and hesitation by writing to Miss Evelyn on the morrow and staking his future on her answer. But now how changed it all was! Now that the supreme female ideal was lifted up before him, and by no partisan hand either, as one of whom no other thing was known, except that she

was gentle and had had great sorrow—and yet as such had outreached and outlived all other and more dazzling types. Now that he had it put to him what the qualities are which *prove most attractive in woman*, he saw his way "as birds their trackless way." He closed the book, knelt humbly down before the sweet sixtine Madonna and her lovely Babe and prayed as he had not done for years. And after that, he felt that he could rest and sleep and dream and be at peace under one roof with Marcia! "If I can win her," was his last thought in the waning fire light; "If I can win her," was his waking greeting to the morning sun.

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Through all of the next day, Christmas eve, his mind had but one tenant. He made pretense of looking after his affairs, but it was plain to everyone that a keen sense of his loss, or something else was responsible for the pertunatory way in which he attended to them. Many should have been amused, no doubt, if they had known that a man in his unpleasant situation was made callous to it all as if he were a Hindoo hermit absorbed in the contemplation of all that was suggested to him by the three simple words: "Marcia, her gentleness and her sorrow." He went about deploring and despising the wasted months in which he had forgotten her, and the demented days in which she had seemed less lovely than the shallow, showy, perishable type he had preferred with forethought and deliberation. His prospect began to grow warrantably gloomy. He did not feel justified in making her a tardy offering of a love that was an aftermath, and what guarantee had he that she would let him care for her at all? He was not worthy of her in himself, and he certainly had not tried to make himself so. He grew despondent and discouraged as the twilight fell, and he wended his way towards her home. If chance favored him, he thought, he would put his whole case simply to her, unmask his past and confess

* Lecky—History of European Morals.