

*Douglas Wins*

in his great, warm palm. "I love you—have loved you always, I think, ever since that first evening we met. I want my answer now. I have waited a long time. Do you care for me?"

"Yes, I care for you," she answered, with the frankness which was one of her charms, "but whether it's in the right way—I mean the way you want—I don't know. Be patient with me until I explain."

He raised the little hand to his lips.

"No!" she said, with a gesture of disapproval, "you mustn't be too certain. I'm not. Don't take things for granted, Douglas, but help me. You know I loved Frank, would still be loving him if he had been different."

"Is that feeling not past now, Ray?"

"Yes, gone forever and ever. But, Douglas, I loved him passionately. He stirred all the depths of my nature. I gave to him what you give to me and what I am unworthy of, for I can never give it again."

His breathing was hard. His hand closed with an unconscious grip over the slender fingers he held.

"What can you give me, then, Ray?" he asked, with a hungry pleading in his eyes.

"Admiration and respect and honor without stint," she said slowly, weighing her words,