

Everything he did now, he—perhaps best of all his judges—knew to be heavy and forced.

"I myself," he said, in sadly honest self-contempt, "would never care to read, much less to buy, the gray stuff which is all I can write now."

Then he leaned back, and his quill still between them, held the thin, nervous fingers before his eyes.

"It is no use. Yet what man can bear to do nothing? To seek help from Oliver—even if he knew I was alive to need it—is impossible, for I'm a Basset still though I shall never own to it. Not that I have need to be proud of that name, though. In its best days it never had any value in my eyes, and now that I have forfeited my identity would I, after making myself conspicuous, come again to life to be the cynosure— But something must be done. I could get manual labor, perhaps, and willingly would; but there's not strength enough left in me now. I don't know why, for I'm not ill, only growing bony, and—old in the head sometimes. Sleepy. The consequence" (with a cynical little smile) "of being delivered over to luxury is idleness."

Steven was lying back in his chair, and the room was very silent, so no wonder the heavy lids fell over his eyes, and the lined face (which held its look of power through all its physical weakness) fell upon his clasped hands. Beyond a doubt he was falling asleep, at this hour, when most busy men turn out to lunch. He was indeed so far on his way to sleep, that he was only half aware of a knock on his door, and that after a pause it was opened noiselessly. Presently his eyes unclosed, and he saw someone, dressed in black, standing before the mantel-piece, and gazing at the photograph of Mrs. Frayd in its ornate frame. How could he know that this was Derry's excuse for not at first looking in his direction? How could he know it was not a dream? As he looked, she turned and quietly came toward him, uttering his name almost in a whisper.

Stunned as it seemed, he rose to his feet, then had to lean for actual support against his chair, while his hollow eyes devoured the tender face before him.

"Steven."

Once again Derry pronounced his name, not in a whisper this time, but with a thrill of joy, and she took up his chin, unsteady hand and held it between her own, stroking it and laying it at last against her cheek.

"Steven, I have come." Then she stood trembling in alarm, for she had never before in all her life heard a man sob.

Holding his hand still in both of hers, she waited silently, with smiling lips, but most pathetic eyes, until the strong restless sobbing ceased.

"Yes, Steven," then she said, and almost cheerfully, "I have come—I mean we, Pat and me. Pat is my father. Perhaps you do not know. We have come for you—I mean," readily, in his silence of great repression, "we came to do dad's eyes good because he had tried them too much, and a holiday was recommended. And Uncle Joseph lives here, and he wanted to see us, and"—still not the interruption which she longed for, no help in telling, only this strong self-control—"and we wanted to see Uncle Joseph awfully. So we thought of a trip in a Cunarder to— to find you, Steven."

The truth had burst through all her touching childish disguise, even without his encouragement. "Oh, Steven, we want to—only" (with a gulp) "we want to tell you what we owe you—dad and I, and Uncle Joseph"—who had never heard Steven's name!

Still that touching silence of restraint, still his hungry eyes devouring her, "What do we not owe you, Steven? This"—with a sudden change of tone—"is like your room at Harrack's. I mean not at all like our parlors there, is it? There are no admirals dying in a crowd on deck, in shirt-frills starched, are there? And no brown pipes under it—under them. Oh, how that pipe covered me with confusion that first morning! I remember so well, I shall never forget it. Shall you? Of course you will. It—it was nothing to remember, only you sneaked away—is that a right word?—so very demonstratively, Steven. It was written so plainly across the back of your head that you had seen it all, and wanted to get away before I caught sight of you, and that you were very sorry for my imbecility, and pledg-