

trust or easily love, but in those whose worth he had thoroughly proved he had a confidence as complete as that of a child. And where he placed his complete confidence he placed also his affection. The one went with the other almost as inevitably as the wave goes with the wind.

In their discussion about the emotion of the heart Artois had spoken the truth to Hermione. As he had grown older he had felt the influence of women less. The pleasures of sentiment had been gradually superseded in his nature—or so at least he honestly believed—by the purely intellectual pleasures. More and more completely and contentedly had he lived in his work, and in the life of preparation for it. This life could never be narrow, for Artois was a traveller, and studied many lands.

In the years that had elapsed since the tragedy in Sicily, when the husband of Hermione had met his death suddenly in the sea, almost in sight of the home of the girl he had betrayed, the fame of Artois had grown steadily. And he was jealous of his fame almost as a good woman is jealous of her honour. This jealousy had led him to a certain selfishness of which he was quite aware—even to a certain hardness such as he had hinted to Hermione. Those who strove, or seemed likely to strive, to interrupt him in his work, he pushed out of his life. Even if they were charming women he got rid of them. And the fact that he did so proved to him, and not improbably to them, that he was more wrapped up in the gratification of the mind than in the gratification of the heart, or of the body. It was not that the charm of charming women had ceased to please him, but it seemed to have ceased really to fascinate him.

Long ago, before Hermione married, he had felt for her a warm and intimate friendship. He had even been jealous of Maurice. Without being at all in love, he had cared enough for Hermione to be jealous. Before her marriage he had looked forward in imagination down a vista of long years, and had seen her with a husband, then with children, always more definitely separated from himself.

And he had seen himself exceptionally alone, even almost miserably alone.

Then fate had spun tragedy into her web. He had nearly died in Africa, and had been nursed back to life by this friend of whom he had been jealous. And they had gone together to Sicily, to the husband whose memory Hermione still adored. And then had followed swiftly the murder, the murderer's departure to America, saved by the silence of Gaspere, and the journey of the bereaved woman to Italy, where Artois had left her and returned to France.