

been turned into a nursery. But when he reached the door, and had opened it, he stopped. He felt that he dared not go to the child just then, till he had thought, considered, till he had recovered complete possession of himself, till he had arrived, perhaps, at some conclusion. And he left the door open and went back to the library.

Now he was able to make that calculation which, just before, had been impossible to him. And his face showed a greater pallor.

Yet he did not believe a word of all this. With contempt he told himself so. He repeated it to himself again and again.

His wife and Cesare Carelli! Why, they had scarcely known each other. They had been the merest acquaintances. And, apart from that, who that had ever really known Doloretta could for a moment suspect her of such an action? She rose up before his memory. It was as if he saw her standing in the room, with her large and wistful eyes, her almost sad lips and slightly down drawn brows. He thought of the nickname some had given her, Gazelle. He heard again the sound of her voice. How could such a woman commit such an action as this letter attributed to her? Why her whole being would shrink from the mere thought of it. Body and soul she would abhor it. And, besides, she had loved him. She had certainly loved him deeply, always.

Had not she?

Suddenly he remembered how often, before his going to Sicily, he and Dolores had been separated. He remembered the life at Frascati, his wife's departure to Como, her long stay in Rome alone later on in the almost deserted palace. He remembered his visits to England, his pre-occupation with the affairs of Edna Denzil, and with the children. Not for a moment, even now, did he blame himself. But he remembered that Dolores had declined to go on living at Frascati, and he remembered that she had been very often alone.

Had she been alone all that time?

He snatched at the letter again. He re-read it, forming every word with his lips. Montebruno had killed himself in that pergola at Casa Truschi. The whole Roman world