

II

THE PLURAL WIFE

"It was Esther Woodward," Ruth had said. It was Esther Woodward who had shadowed the life of the woman dearest in the world to me. And when I met Esther Woodward again for the first time after I had heard Ruth's story, the sight of her filled me with an anger that brought the blood to my face.

She had an air of aloofness and dignity, with the sort of beauty that is called statuesque, and a calm poise of the head that carried her heavily-coiled hair like a crown, proudly. *She proud!* I turned from her, trembling with an indignation that I could not hide. She had stolen another woman's happiness; and to do it she had broken not only the law of the