

"You set me too high still, dear, and yet you know that I was too small and weak for you with your great work. That was why I failed you at the end. It wasn't my fault that I betrayed you. I couldn't help it, so . . ."

"Don't speak of my betrayal. I thank God for it, and see now that it was the best that could have happened."

She closed her eyes. "Is it your own voice, dearest? Really yours? I could almost fancy it is the voice I hear in my dreams. But if the woman who loved you had been one of the great heroines . . ."

"I don't want one of the great heroines. I want a woman, a sweet, true woman, and if her love for me blinds her to everything else . . ."

"Hush! I shall wake and the dream will pass."

A little jet from his heart of flame burst out in spite of his warning brain, and he was carried away for the moment.

"My poor darling, you must get well for my sake. You must think of nothing but getting well. Then we'll go away somewhere—to Switzerland, as you said in your letter. Or perhaps to England, where you were born, and where your father lived his years of exile. Dear old England! Motherland of liberty! I'll show you all the places."

She was dizzy with the beautiful vision.

"Oh, if I could only go on like this for ever! But I mustn't listen to you, dearest. It's no use, you know. Now, is it?"

The spirit which had exalted him for a moment took flight, and his heart rose into his throat.

"Now is it?" she repeated.

He did not answer, and she dropped back with a sigh. Ah, it was cruel fencing. Every word was a sword, and it was cutting a hundred ways.

At that moment a newsman below cried: "Result of the Plebiscite—Election of the President of the Republic," and a little later a band of music passed down the street. Roma, who loved bands of music, asked Rossi to lift her up that she might look at it. A little drummer boy was marching at the head of the procession, gaily rolling his rataplan.

"He reminds me of little Joseph," she said, and she laughed heartily. Strange mystery of life that robs death of all its terrors!

He put his arm about her to support her as they stood by the parapet, and this brought a new tremor of affection, as well as a little of the old physical thrill and a world of fond and