

live our own lives, without pretending to the world to be what we are not—'

'My darling!' he exclaimed; but somehow the warmth of his protest was chilled by that impassive demeanor; it was no outburst of temper that had summoned him down from London. 'Sylvia! why won't you tell me your reasons? What is it you want altered? I have tried in every way to make your life just as you wished it—'

'I know you have,' she said; 'you have been kindness itself. But it is not a thing to be reasoned about. If you do not know already how far we are apart, how can I tell you? We ought never to have married. We have not a single thought or feeling, a single opinion, occupation, or interest, in common. I have tried to bear it—God knows how I have tried, night and day, to school myself into believing that it was only the natural way of the world. I can not believe it; I can not believe that any other woman has suffered what I have suffered, and now I must speak. Your life is in your work. I am only an incumbrance to you—a something apart from yourself and your interests, that demands attentions with are paid by you as a duty. I wish to release you, and to release myself from a life of hypocrisy which I can not any longer bear. Have I said enough?'

He stood for a moment or two absolutely silent: he never forgot those moments during his life.

'You have said enough,' he answered, calmly; and then he absently turned to the window. The daylight was going; the hush of the evening had fallen over the birds; there was not a leaf stirring. 'Yes, you have said enough. You can not expect me to answer what you have said, at once. Apparently you have been thinking about it for some time. I must think about it too.'

He took up his hat, which he had mechanically placed on the table beside him, and passed out into the garden. His face had a strange grey look on it; the eyes were sunken and tired. Probably he himself scarcely knew that he opened the great wooden gate, went out into the road, and then by-and-by chose a familiar path across the fields, where he was not likely to meet any one. He did not seem to care whither his wandering steps led him. His head was bent down, and at first he walked slow-

ly, with the gait of one who was infirm or ailing; but presently he quickened his pace, his manner became more nervous and excited, occasionally he uttered a word as if he were addressing some one in an imaginary conversation.

The woods grew darker; the first stars came out. Far away there was the sound of a cart being driven home in the dusk; but all around him was still.

Then he came to a stone bridge over a small river; and here he paused for a time, leaning his arms on the parapet, and staring down—without seeing any thing—at the black water. How could he see any thing? For the first time since he had reached manhood's estate he was crying bitterly.

He was now a good many miles from home; but his wanderings had brought him no relief. It was all a mystery to him; he knew not what to do. How could he move by any piteous appeal that cold resolve? It was no mere whim or fancy he had to deal with, but something at once strong and subtle, a conviction of slow growth, a purpose that despair had rendered inflexible. But the origin of it? His brain refused to act; he wondered whether he too were going mad.

Now a short distance from this river there stood a house that he knew; and as he aimlessly began to retrace his steps, he passed the gate. There was a light burning in one of the rooms; the window was open; he heard a faint sound of music. Suddenly it occurred to him: surely Lady Sylvia, before she had come to this terrible resolve, must have spoken, in however indirect a fashion, of her manner of life, to some sympathetic woman friend; and to whom more likely than this kind person for whom she had professed so great an admiration and love? He went nearer to the house; she was alone in the room, playing some sufficiently sorrowful melody to herself. In his desperation and bewilderment, he determined that he would demand the counsel of this kind friend, who would at least understand a woman's nature, even supposing that she was not in Lady Sylvia's confidence. He was too anxious and perturbed to think twice. He entered the house, was at once shown into the drawing-room, and there and then told the whole story to his startled listener.