

cated her, not to a greater, but to a longer suffering? He might have defiled a beautiful memory. He must have done so had he acted differently. But if he had defiled it, might not Hermione have been the subject of a great revolution? Horror can kill, but it can also cure. It can surely root out love. But from such a heart as Hermione's?

Despite all his understanding of women Artois felt at a loss to-day. He could not make up his mind what would have been the effect upon Hermione if she had learnt that her husband had betrayed her.

Presently he left that subject and came to Vere.

When he did this he was conscious at once of a change within him. His tenderness and pity for Hermione were replaced by another tenderness and pity. And these were wholly for Vere. Hermione was suffering because of Maurice. But Vere was surely suffering, subconsciously, because of Hermione.

There were two links in the chain of suffering, that between Maurice and Hermione, and that between Hermione and Vere.

For a moment he felt as if Ver were bereaved, were motherless. The sensation passed directly he realised the exaggeration in his mind. But he still felt as if the girl were deprived of something which she ought to possess, which, till now, he had thought she did possess. It seemed to him that Vere stood quite outside of her mother's life, instead of in it, in its centre, its core; and he pitied the child, almost as he pitied other children from time to time, children to whom their parents were indifferent. And yet Hermione loved Vere, and Vere could not know what he had only known completely to-day—that the mother often felt lonely with the child.

Vere did not know that, but surely some day she would find it out.

Artois knew her character well, knew that she was very sensitive, very passionate, quick to feel and quick to understand. He discovered in her qualities inherited both from her father and her mother, attributes both English and Sicilian. In appearance she resembled her father. She had "thrown back" to the Sicilian ancestor, as he had. She had the Southern eyes, the Southern grace, the Southern vivacity and warmth that had made him so attractive. But Artois divined a certain stubbornness in Vere that had been lacking in the dead man, a stubbornness that took its rise not in stupidity but in a secret consciousness of force.

Vere, Artois thought, might be violent, but would not be fickle. She had a loyalty in her that was Sicilian in its fervour, a sense of gratitude such as the contadini have, although by many it is denied to them; a quick and lively temper, but