

The Eternal Magdalene

come back. I want you to start all over again here—with my help. And whenever anything troubles you, I want you to come to me and tell me all about it. Things will be different now—I think I'll understand you. I want your confidence."

"I would always have come to you, father," the young man told him, "but I was afraid to. You were always so——"

"Go ahead and say it," Elijah Bradshaw put in when the other hesitated. "I was hard and unreasonable, wasn't I? . . . Well, I am not going to be that way any more."

"And Ruth?"

"Do you love her?" his father asked him.

"I love her—very much," the young man said simply. "And you would, too," he added, "if you knew her."

"I think I know her better now than I did before," the older man said.

"You have met her?"

"No, but I have been told about her."

"You mean the new woman here in the house told you?" Paul looked at his father, puzzled.

The other nodded.

"Who is this woman, father?" the son asked. "There's something strange about her. She is so different from any of the other servants."

Bradshaw did not answer. He put his hand on his son's shoulder. "Go to your mother, now," he said. "Be very good to her. She has been ill. Thank God, she is better now. She will be glad to see you."

The young man turned to leave the room, but his mother stood in the doorway, smiling with a new happiness.