

faced the girl, who sat with her hands folded in her lap, looking at him with unreadable eyes.

"Did you ride over here," he asked, "simply to tell the story of your life to a stranger?"

"You must regard it, I suppose, as a sort of confession," she said.

"No, my child," he answered; "it was more like a piece of frank boasting."

"I did not mean it like that," she responded quickly. "It was simply a sort of introduction, a preface."

"To what?"

"I don't know."

Father Gregory laid his hand gently upon her shoulder. "My daughter," he said very tenderly, "tell me."

Suddenly she looked up at him, and a flush of colour came into her pale cheeks. "Yes," she cried. "That's it! That's what I came to you for! I wanted to see you look at me like that, with all that blessedness in your face. Oh, man, don't you see I'm miserable, miserable? Don't you see there's something I want, something my life lacks. . . ?"

She broke off, checking the flow of her words with an effort.

"Don't I see?" he said, with a gesture almost of despair. "Why, to me your life lacks everything, because it lacks one thing; it is vain and empty because it is not filled with the only essential thing!"

"Oh yes, I know what you mean," she interrupted, and her voice was dull with disappointment. "You are going to say that what I lack is religion."

Father Gregory raised his hand. "You are wrong," he replied. "Religion is not the essential thing for you."

"What is, then?" she asked.

"Christ," he said.

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