

"And, *a fortiori*, that I would mind mine?"

Dale did not reply. For some odd reason he is devotedly attached to me, and respects my opinion on worldly matters. He walked to the window and looked out. Presently, without turning round, he said:

"I suppose she has been rubbing it in about Lola Brandt?"

"She did mention the lady's name," said I. "So did Renniker at the club. I suppose every one you know and many you don't are mentioning it."

"Well, what if they are?"

"They're creating an atmosphere about your name which is scarcely that in which to make an entrance into public life."

Still with his back turned, he morosely informed me in his vernacular that he contemplated public life with feelings of indifference, and was perfectly prepared to abandon his ambitions. I took up my parable, the same old parable that wise seniors have preached to the deluded young from time immemorial. I have seldom held forth so platitudinously even in the House of Commons. I spoke as impressively as a bishop. In the midst of my harangue he came and sat by the library table and rested his chin on his palm, looking at me quietly out of his dark eyes. His mildness encouraged me to further efforts. I instanced cases of other young men of the world who had gone the way of the flesh and had ended at the devil.

There was Paget, of the Guards, eaten to the bone by the Syren—not even the gold lace on his uniform left. There was Merridew, once the hope of the party, now living in ignoble obscurity with an old and painted mistress, whom he detested, but to whom habit and sapped will-power kept him in thrall. There was Bullen, who blew his brains out. In a generous glow I waxed prophetic and drew a vivid picture of Dale's