

'Yes. She said: "Because I haven't given my husband a child he doesn't care for me any more." And last of all she said: "He will never care for me again unless I can give him a child. He blames me because we have no child. He doesn't say it, but he makes me feel it, every day and all the time." And then she cried again, and let me know how terribly she cared for you, and how terribly she felt it, your being always with that family. And at the last I said——'

'What?' asked Sir Theodore, in a strange voice, an awakened voice.

'I said, "I should like to bring it home to your husband what he's made you suffer."'

There was a long silence. Then the nurse got up.

'She made me give my promise on honour never to tell you. Well, I've broken it, and I had to. And this I will say, Sir Theodore, that never was there a man loved better than you have been, nor one that understood the way of a woman's love less than you. And this I will say, too, that whatever she may have done the real reason of its doing was you. Pretty well all the big things women do are done for men, I believe. Foolish it may be, but I suppose it's human nature. We are made so, and must put up with it.'

She paused. Tears were running down her cheeks. He sat gazing at her without a word.

'Good-bye, Sir Theodore.'

She pulled out her handkerchief.

With an effort he got up. He did not take her hand, but she took his.

'I'm sorry,' she said. 'But I had to tell you, promise or no promise. I felt I owed it to her.'

'Yes, you owed it to her.'

'And through it all, to my thinking, she never was bad. No, she was good right up to the end. She was, she was!'

'She was better than I!' he answered.

The nurse gripped his hand and left him.

As she went out of the room he sank down again on the sofa, and leaned forward, with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

'Better than I!' he repeated. 'Better than I!'