

were forgotten. He remembered nothing except the girl by his side, whose maddening bosom rose and fell under his very gaze. At that moment she belonged to no class; had no virtues, no faults. All the inessentials of her being were stripped away, and she was merely a woman, divine, desired, necessary, waiting to be captured. She sat passive, expectant, the incarnation of the Feminine.

He took her hand and felt it tremble. At the contact a thrill ran about him, and for a second a delicious faintness robbed him of all strength. Then with inexplicable rapidity his mind went unerringly back to that train-journey to William's funeral. He saw the cottage in the fields, and the young mother, half robed and with sleep in her eyes, standing at the door. Exquisite vision!

He heard himself speaking,—

“Laura . . .”

The little hand gave a timorous encouragement.

“Laura . . . you are going to marry me.”

The intoxicating pressure of her lips on his was answer. Heedless of publicity, he crushed her against his breast, this palpitating creature with the serious face. Ah, she could love!

It was done. The great irretrievable moment had gone to join a million other moments of no