

mere dullness. At least that there was something more for others though not for me. One could not help learning that. One passed a man and a woman walking together, just like any others, dressed like any others, but one chanced to look into the woman's face as one passed, one saw her eyes, and one knew that there was much more . . . and then you came, and one no longer knew merely that there was much more but one knew what that much more was . . . and then Ethne came . . . and you turned to her . . . and in a very little while one was sad and sorry that you had ever come into one's life . . . But these last months have been the worst."

And at that sentence she stopped. Durrance did not move for a while and there gradually stole into Mrs. Adair's mind a vague but very real fear. What would come of her words? How would

he answer them? There would be consequences. Ethne to face for instance. But Durrance had filled up the gaps and breaks in her speech. There was something after all in what she had said. Mrs. Adair had not had the best of times. When he spoke to her there was nothing but gentleness in his voice.

"I am very sorry," he said, and rather remorsefully. "When these things happen to men they bring less trouble. We can get about the world and do things—at least some of us can—and so life's easier on the whole. I am very sorry."

He said good-night and walked homewards along the path through the lawn. Mrs. Adair sat still upon the terrace until a cloud obscured the moonlight. Then she rose with a shiver and went back into the house.



CHAPTER XIX.—TWO MEN IN DIFFICULTIES

DURRANCE had made up his mind what course to pursue while he was listening to Mrs. Adair. His body-servant was waiting up for him when he came across the fields to his own house of "Guessens," and he went at once into his own study. The name, indeed, hardly suited the room, for it had always been more of a gun-room than a study.

"Is it late?" he asked, and his servant looked at the clock and answered—

"Half-past twelve."

"Get me a Bradshaw," said Durrance, "and look up the trains to London."

"You can leave Kingsbridge at eight-six," said the servant. "You reach London at a quarter to three."

"Very well; we travel by that train and we shall be away a couple of nights. You can turn the lights out and go to bed."

Durrance was slow to follow his servant's example. He sat for a little while in his chair and then began to

walk gently about the room. There were cups here and there on the mantelshelf and upon tables, and one by one he took them up and touched them and fondled them in his hands, wondering whether, now that he was blind, they were still kept bright and clean. His black hour was upon him, and he found a kind of comfort in the feel of them. He knew them by their shape and their position. This one, a thin-stemmed goblet, he had won in a regimental steeplechase at Colchester; he could remember the day, with its clouds and grey sky, and the dull look of the fields between the hedges. That pewter, which stood upon his writing table and which had formed a convenient holder for his pens, had been acquired very long ago in his college "fours" when he was a freshman at Oxford. The hoof of a favourite horse, mounted upon silver, made an ornament upon a sideboard. And as he walked about the room, fingering this trophy or that, he was as one who turns over the leaves of an old diary and reads here