

No *man* would have done otherwise. You surely do not feel hardly towards him?"

"We do not naturally love the lips and bless the voice that tell us of an incurable disease. O no," she added. "why should I think of him at all. He merely happened to point out what I half suspected myself. And yet the peculiar way this stranger crosses my path from time to time, almost makes me superstitious."

"And you seem to have peculiar power over him. He would have assuredly left us in the lurch at our tableau party had it not been for you, and I would not have blamed him. And to-day he seemed troubled and pained beyond expression when he read from your face, as I imagine, that you were the author of the picture."

"Yes, I saw that he discovered the fact, and this provokes me also. If he should speak his thoughts—"

"I do not think he will. I am sure he will not if you caution him."

"That I will not do, and I think on the whole he has too much sense to speak carelessly of what he imagined he saw in a lady's face. And now, Susie, good-bye; I shall not inflict my miserable self longer upon you to-day, and I am one who can best cure my wounds in solitude."

"Do you cure them, Christine, or do you only cover them up? If I had your creed nothing could cure my wounds. Time might deaden the pain, and I forget them in other things, but I do not see where any cure could come from. O Christine, you did me good service when in the deepening twilight of Miss Brown's parlor you showed me my useless, unbelieving, life. But I do believe now. The cross is radiant to me now—more radiant than the one that so startled us then. Mr. Fleet's words were true, I know, as I know my own existence. I could die for Him."

Christine frowned and said almost harshly, "I don't believe in a religion so full of crosses and death. Why could not the all-powerful Being you believe in take away the evil from the world?"

"That is just what He came to do. In that very character He was pointed out by His authorized forerunner: 'Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.'"

"Why does He not do it then?" asked Christine petulantly. "Centuries have passed; patience itself is wearied out. He has had time enough, if He ever meant or had the power to fulfil the promise. But the

world is as full of evil and suffering as ever. Susie, I would not disturb your credulous faith, for it seems to do you good. But to me Christ was a noble but mistaken man, dead and buried centuries ago. He can do for me no more than Socrates. They vigorously attacked evil in their day, but evil was too much for them, as it is for us. We must just get the most we can out of life, and endure what we cannot prevent or escape. An angel could not convert me to-day—no, not even Susie Winthrop, and that is saying more still," and with a hasty kiss she vanished.

Susie looked wistfully after her, and then bent her steps homeward with a pitying face.

Christine at once went to her own private room. Putting on a loose wrapper she threw herself on a lounge, and buried her face in the cushions.

Her life seemed growing narrow and meagre. Hour after hour passed, and the late afternoon sun was shining into her room when she arose from her bitter reverie, and summed up all in a few words spoken aloud, as was her custom when alone.

"Must I, after all, come down to the Epicurean Philosophy, 'Let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die?' I seem on a narrow island, the ocean is all around me, and the tide is rising, *rising*. It will cover *soon* where I stand, and then what becomes of Christine Ludolph?"

A look of anguish came into the fair young face, and a slight shudder passed over her. She glanced around a room furnished in costly elegance. She saw her lovely person in the mirror opposite, and exclaimed:

"What mystery it all is! I have so much, and yet so utterly fail in having that which contents. I have all that wealth can purchase; and multitudes act as if that were enough. I know I am beautiful. I can see that yonder for myself, as well as read it in admiring eyes. And yet my maid is better contented than I, and the boy who blacks the boots better satisfied with his lot than either of us. I am raised so high that I can see how much more there is or might be beyond. I feel like one led into a splendid vestibule only to find that the palace is wanting, or that it is a mean hovel. All that I have only mocks me, and becomes a means of torture. All that I am and have, ought to be, might be, a mere prelude, an earnest and preparation for something better beyond. But I am told, and must believe, that this is all, and I may lose this in a moment and forever. It is as if a noble strain of music commenced sweetly,