

Something for her he had done, and something Vere had done. But how little it all was !

To-day a new light had been thrown upon Hermione, and he realised what she was as he had never realised it before. No, she was right. She could never live fully in a girl child—she was not made to do that. Why had he ever thought, hoped that perhaps it might be so, that perhaps Vere might some day completely and happily fill her life ? Long ago he had encouraged her to work, to write. Misled by her keen intelligence, her enthusiasm, her sincerity and vitality, by the passion that was in her, the great heart, the power of feeling, the power of criticising and inspiring another which she had freely shown to him, Artois had believed—as he had once said to her in London—that she might be an artist, but that she preferred to be simply a woman. But he found it was not so. Hermione had not the peculiar gift of the writer. She could feel, but she could not arrange. She could discern, but she could not expose. A flood of words came to her, but not the inevitable word. She could not take that exquisite leap from the known into the unknown which genius can take with the certainty of alighting on firm ground. In short, she was not formed and endowed to be an artist. About such matters Artois knew only how to be sincere. He was sincere with his friend, and she thanked him for being so.

One possible life was taken from Hermione, the life of the artist who lives in the life of the work.

There remained the life in Vere.

To-day Artois knew from Hermione's own lips that she could not live completely in her child, and he felt that he had been blind as men are often blind about women, are blind because they are secretly selfish. The man lives for himself, but he thinks it natural, even distinctively womanly, that women should live for others—for him, for some other man, for their children. What man finds his life in his child ? But the woman—she surely ought to, and without difficulty. Hermione had been sincere to-day, and Artois knew his blindness, and knew his secret selfishness.

The grey was lifting a little over Naples, the distant shadowy form of Vesuvius was becoming clearer, more firm in outline. But the boatman rowed slowly, influenced by the scirocco.

How, then, was Hermione to live ? How was she to find happiness or peace ? It was a problem which he debated with an ardour that had in it something of passion. And he began to wonder how it would have been if he had acted differently, if he had allowed her to find out what he suspected to be the exact truth of the dead man. Long ago he had saved her from suffering. But by doing so had he not dedi-