

I find you the book you want? I really think I know better than their owner where your books are. I was quite absorbed in your Wordsworth proofs. What book shall I find for you?"

"That can wait. I have an explanation to make." He drew himself up, resolute at last. "I want to say that what that drunken young man told you last night is true; but a half truth is often worse than a lie. This—this horror—this thing has happened to me five times in my life. I could not leave you in the belief that I am a common—"

She broke in: "Oh, don't! I do not want to know. You are very good to wish to say what must cost you so dear. I do not wish to hear it. I—a man's whole life counts for something, Mr. Grace, and I know what yours has been." She seemed, as she stood before him, to be a larger personality than he had known in the quiet past. She had the dignity which some little women possess. A beautiful tenderness was in her tear-filled eyes.

There was a moment of silence after she ceased to speak. The gentle truth of the excuse overcame the strong man. He had wondered again and again what she would say. He had never dreamed that she could or would be anything but shocked, or would fail to feel the disgust the remembrance had for him. He sat down, with his hand on his forehead. The woman stood before him. Boundless pity, born out of the first love of a restrained and limited life, rose up and captured her.

The man was as much a child as she had been the night before. He shook with the passion of an emotion he was unable to restrain.